

Dance as a Mnemonic Practice:  
Cultivating, Shaping and Activating a Memory of Cueca Dance through Research-Creation

Sebastian Ignacio Oreamuno

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Dance Studies

York University, Toronto, Ontario

March 2026

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## Abstract

In this dissertation I focus on dance as a mnemonic practice: a practice that commits to memory and re-members or pieces together anew ways of relating through movement. In this dissertation, I specifically take up and forward memory as a sense, inspired by anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Indigenous author, orator and Stó:lō rememberer Lee Maracle (2015). By taking up memory as a sense, then, I am suggesting that memory can be cultivated and shaped through dance. Dance as a mnemonic practice, then, considers how cultivating a memory has the potential to reinforce the status quo or deviate from it to create an expansive, otherwise memory of the dance form.

In this dissertation, I demonstrate how my multi-modal research-creation process allowed me to cultivate and shape a memory of cueca dance. Through a research-creation process, I bridged what I could not remember with what I could re-member by bringing together a set of practices and media to re-member and remember cueca dance at a distance (from family, from community, from Chile). These set of practices and media included sensorial encounters with pañuelos (handkerchiefs) and vocalizing rhythms; watching YouTube videos on cueca dance; listening and dancing to cueca music; and reading cueca literature. By scaffolding and layering my interactions with these media over a period of a year, I was able to cultivate an expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance or to become a memory of cueca dance.

The central questions guiding this research are: How do the ways of relating imparted and enacted through movement cultivate and shape a memory of a dance practice? And what are the implications of not attending to the cultivation and shaping of memory while learning a dance form? I argue that a critical memory practice in dance (scholarship and practice) is pertinent to

bring awareness to how dance forms inform perception; and to remind that dance forms are relational praxes that are often intertwined with other-than-human beings and lives. In short, what dance forms enact and present has consequences for ways of relating, being and becoming beyond that context.

In loving memory of Cleo and Figgy

## Acknowledgments

This work traverses lands and territories: a consequence of being an international and national migrant writing about a dance form that has been claimed by the Chilean nation-state. I was born in what is colonially known as Santiago: Chile's capital city located in the Central Zone of the country and on the traditional territory of the Mapuche, Wallmapu. The cueca dances that I focus on in this dissertation are also connected to this geographical area, either emerging in Santiago or from the surrounding countryside of the Central Zone.

I wrote parts of this dissertation in Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh, commonly referred to as Squamish—where I grew up after immigrating to Canada and where most of the dance memories in the Prologue take place. Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh is unceded land and the home to the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), which is composed of sixteen bands. Growing up in Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh taught me to appreciate the outdoors. During the summer, specifically, I would hike or mountain bike many of the trails in and around Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh. I also learned to live alongside and respect non-human life such as racoons, deer, bears, cougars and more.

I wrote most of this manuscript in Tkaronto or what is commonly known as Toronto. This is where I have been living, working, dancing and writing since 2014 and where I am currently located. Tkaronto is an area that has been the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. It has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. This territory is also covered by Treaty 13, signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, who are the current treaty holders; as well as the Williams Treaties, signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. This land is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes

region. Today, Tkaronto is home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities; as well as settlers from diverse backgrounds such as myself.

As an immigrant from Chile, and therefore a guest on this land, I have been fortunate to live here and learn different dance forms, continue speaking Spanish (my mother tongue), and conduct research that explores the relationship between dance and memory through the case study of cueca dance, Chile's national dance. I am grateful, and I recognize that I am privileged, to be able to do these things since Indigenous practices and knowledge systems in Canada, Chile and beyond have historically been purposefully banned and/or quelled and are currently in the process of being reclaimed and remembered.

This dissertation would not have been possible without my wonderful committee: my supervisor Danielle Robinson, and my committee members Bridget Cauthery and Ken Little. Thank you for guiding my thinking and supporting my ideas, and for your generosity. Our conversations have been stimulating and insightful. Thank you also Cristina Delgado Vintimilla and Clare Parfitt for agreeing to be a part of my oral examination committee and for your deep engagement with my work.

Muchas gracias tía Eliana y Caro. Thank you for sending me pañuelos, videos, thoughts, books and so much encouragement. Pancha, thank you for allowing me to bounce my thoughts off you on cueca dance performances. Y gracias por compartir conmigo tus experiencias con cueca. Gracias abuelita Sylvia por todo tu cariño y apollo. Thank you mom for helping me with interpretation; and dad for discussing Chilean politics with me and contextualizing the dictatorship through your lived experience.

Thank you to Liisa North and Caese Levo, the keepers of CERLAC's Special Collections, for helping me navigate the archives. Although, unfortunately, most of that

information did not make it into this dissertation, it nonetheless provided me with important information with regards to the Pinochet dictatorship and with respect to how cueca dance was engaged by Chilean exiles in a political manner in Canada.

Thank you to friend and colleague Amy Bowring from Dance Collection Danse (DCD) for directing me to The Community Folk Art Council of Metropolitan Toronto funds that DCD houses. There, I found more information on cueca dance in Toronto. Again, this information did not make into my dissertation, but it did offer important insights about the politics of dance.

The friends that I have made during my time at York have made the doctoral experience so much more enjoyable. Kristina Borg, Michelle Johnson, Eve Robertson and Jonathan Osborn, although most of us were in different years, I consider you my first “cohort”. Thank you for your helping me navigate the first few years of the doctoral program and for making the strike in 2018 bearable. Arpita Bajpeyi, Jackie Melindy and Josh Swamy, thank you for adopting me into your group. Our karaoke nights have made the last few years so much fun and special. Thank you Arpita, too, for co-choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* with me. I love what we created! Collette “Miss Coco” Murray, thank you for being such a support when I needed it and for finding a place for me in the Dance Umbrella of Ontario board. It was a pleasure to work with you in a different capacity. Emilie Jabouin, thank you for providing me with such important insights as I was finishing my doctoral dissertation. I really welcomed all your advice. My friends from anthropology—Jessica Caporusso, Juan Pablo Pinto, Kiah Leone and Lea Alilovic—thank you for your encouragement and insights at different times during the doctoral process. I have so appreciated it. Finally, a big thank you to Syreeta Hector, Adam Brown, Mallory Windsor, Brigid Burke, Jordan Nusbaum and Kyle Baird for all your support.

Thank you to my mentors and (also York) friends Jennifer Dick and Nava Waxman, I have learned so much from you. Jenn, thank you for experimenting with me and expanding my dance-making sensibilities. Nava, thank you for shifting my expectations of mark-making and for inviting me to be a part of your works. I am so indebted to both of you; and so glad that you were both a part of *Copucha + Gup Shup*.

My friends from U of T, José “Miggy” Esteban and Martin Austin, you are amazing. Thank you for being so welcoming. I look forward to more conversations.

Thank you Sashar Zarif and Aria Evans for being such amazing choreographers and letting me move how I wanted to move. I hope to create more works with you in the future.

A big thank you to my friends Katherine, Mark, Jannis and Nathalie for your faith in me. Nana and Papa, and Mickey, Rob and Brianna, ?ul nu msh chalap for welcoming me into your family with open arms, your care and generosity of spirit. You certainly shaped my thinking and, most importantly, my relationship with animals and non-human beings. My siblings—Connie and Corey, Cam and Joe and Val—thank you for your patience and emotional support; and the kiddos, Coco and Gusso, thank you for bringing so much energy, play and laughter into my life. This story is also for you. Last but certainly not least, Nadine, a huge thank you for being a listening ear and my rock, especially during the last phase of this degree. I literally could not have done it with you!

To anyone whom I may have forgotten, I sincerely apologize. It took a community to create this dissertation, so your absence in the acknowledgements reflects me, not you.

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I begin with dance memories that came up during my research process. This is a personal project and, as such, it makes sense to start with myself and some of the experiences that I am bringing into this research. Therefore, this cluster of dance memories serve to inform you of my positionality and to help you understand that this project has been in the making for a long time. Part of my positionality is my disability, which I bring up as a dance memory. Although this recollection is not a dance memory proper, I include it because it is still a part of my movement history.

I am inspired by French novelist and filmmaker George Perec's (2014) game and book *I Remember* as an entry point into each dance memory and the lessons that are embedded in them. Although the game is meant to be collective, calling up a memory that everyone in the space can recall, here, it is meant to invite you into my personal history with dance practices. I have chosen to present the dance memories in chronological order to give a sense of when each dance form entered my life. I have also chosen dance memories that kept coming up while doing my research and that, therefore, informed in some way or another my research. These are by no means all my dance memories. There were many more that I wanted to include because there are many more dance forms that I have amassed in my body. Still, these dance memories will provide you with a sense of how dance has impacted my body, my thinking, my memory. Maybe they will stick in your memory and/or spark memories for you. Let's begin...

My first dance memory involves dancing with my cousins in Chile. I remember dancing with them at their home; in the small courtyard where the adults would prepare barbequed meat as

well as in the living-dining room area. I remember dancing to “Lambada” or “Chorando se foi” by Kaoma as well as to cumbias, salsas and European and American pop. (I can still hear the lyrics of “Lambada” echoing in my memory even though I have not heard the song in a long time.)

I do not remember dancing to cueca music or even dancing a cueca with my cousins. For some reason, I do not think we did—cueca dance is not something I sense in the memory. I also do not remember learning cueca dance at school. Perhaps this is because I went to an all-boys Catholic school and we did not have girls around to partner.

Nevertheless, this memory with my cousins is fuzzy and nebulous and feels more like a foggy dream. It is not a scene unfolding like in a movie; it is more like a feeling that this happened and a collage of sensations with some details more defined than others. What is quite present, however, is a sense of enjoyment: I sense joy, happiness and having fun with my relatives. I remember dancing with my cousins and feeling like it was a lively, good time. I cherish this sense of shared enjoyment even if the scene is fuzzy because it means that I was there and that we danced. This dance memory, then, tethers me to my family. My memories of dancing in Canada are quite different because I did not grow up with family around. These memories are sharper and traverse spaces and groups.

I remember encountering line and square dancing when I was in grade four or five, after immigrating to Squamish, B.C., as an eight-year-old. The sharpest memory from this time is quite short. I remember being in the gym at Garibaldi Highlands Elementary: that beige and light brown gym with coloured marks on the floor tracing out the basketball court, maybe ... I was never good at sports. But I was good at dance. I remember being in the gym, in two concentric

circles: the boys on one side and the girls on the other, facing each other. (The memory must take place around Christmas time because we were dancing to “Jingle Bell Rock”.)

I remember doing a rock step while holding hands, rocking forward, then back and then forward again to the lyrics (“jingle bell / jingle bell / jingle bell rock ...”). Then, I remember doing another step—a grapevine I think—before changing partners. I remember that the boys always stayed in place as the girls moved onto their next partner. The memory fades off around here and, again, what echoes from this memory is a feeling of fun. Although I hated P.E., I loved dance week. Partly because I loved dancing, and I was good at it. Partly because I missed dancing. Square and line dancing reminded me of back home due to their social aspect. However, these dances were much more structured than what I remembered doing with my cousins; and the context lacked the warmth of a social gathering because it was at school. Later on, when I was older and would hear my friends’ parents talk about how Canadians had “no culture” I could not help but disagree. Their comments reminded me of the cultural practices that I had become accustomed to in Canada such as eating pumpkin pie, having turkey dinner at Thanksgiving, shaking hands, learning to speak English and even the line and square dances I learned in elementary and junior high school. Their culture was everywhere and dancing was a part of it.

I remember that around the time I was nine or ten years old my body began to move spontaneously. My spasms, as I call them now, started out of the blue and were subtle, at first. “Chiripiorcas” we would call them in my family. Chiripiorcas referenced the “involuntary” movements of Chaparrón Bonaparte, a character in the television series *Los Chifladitos* (1971-1972, 1980-1995)—a sketch-comedy series, similar to *Alternatino* or *Saturday Night Live*, that

follows the surreal adventures of two friends who live together. Chaparrón would sometimes stop in place and do a repetitive dance, his *chiripiorca*, until someone snapped him out of it. My involuntary spasms were similar: they would come about suddenly, stop me in place and make me move until they fizzled out. Calling them *chiripiorcas* made them less concerning, therefore I was never scared of them. It was just something that my body did and I got used to it quite quickly. I figured that my body just wanted to dance.

I remember dancing to music videos in the living room of the first house we rented in Squamish. Growing up, we did not always have cable; but when we did my sisters and I would watch YTV's Hit List, a music video television program that aired on Sundays. The Hit List was where we encountered pop music, pop stars and trending dance moves from the 1990s and early 2000s—dance moves that I would show off at school dances. I would usually have a VHS cassette ready to record the music videos and the choreography of my favourite pop stars, many of whom were women. (They had the best dance moves!) I remember trying to learn the choreography to Janet Jackson's "Together Again" (1997), Backstreet Boys' "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)", Britney Spears's "...Baby One More Time" (1998), Spice Girls' "Stop" (1998), Christina Aguilera's "Come on Over Baby (All I Want Is You)" (2000) and others.

I remember that, oftentimes, the pop star was surrounded by a group of dancers, both women and men, performing similar dance moves. I was captivated by their unison and loved the different formations. It was only when dancers paired off into women-men couples that gender differences in the dance moves became apparent. However, I never felt beholden to imitate the men. Is that odd? That a boy did not feel inclined to perform like the men in the music videos? I always considered men and women's dance moves as opportunities to play with a range of

movements. This became particularly fun when I would have to make up choreography for parts of the music video that had non-dancing scenes. Stitching the choreography satisfied my dancerly, creative side as well as the part of me that likes puzzles. It also fostered a sensibility for making dances with a variety of dance moves.

I remember that at some point in my teenage years I became really interested in the Greek gods. I was drawn to their stories, to their twisted relationships and to how the Greeks gave every aspect of nature a name and a persona. This kind of magic and understanding of nature was unheard of in Catholicism, the religion I was raised in.

I remember reading about Mnemosyne, the Goddess of Memory, and how she slept with her nephew Zeus who had transformed himself into a mortal shepherd—like I said, their relationships were twisted. Mnemosyne slept with Zeus-as-mortal-shepherd for nine consecutive nights and thus conceived the nine Muses. One of those Muses was Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance. It is interesting that the Greeks connected memory and dance (and the arts, more generally). There is an insinuation that memory is actively involved in the creation of dance since Mnemosyne birthed Terpsichore. At the very least, the story relates that there is a familial connection between Terpsichore and Mnemosyne. Now, this makes me wonder about the relationship between movement and memory: can dance exist without memory? Does dance carry memory? And is memory internal to dance and the arts, more generally?

I remember enrolling in my sisters' dance school once I was out of high school, attending university and finally felt free to start taking dance lessons. I remember that the dance teacher, who was also the owner, was kind enough to offer me lessons for free. I took ballet and

competitive hip hop dance—a white-washed variation of breaking that is quite removed from the form and the community—and, one year, I even took a style of jazz, but I do not remember which one. (It was not Fosse. I would have remembered that!) Nevertheless, it was ballet and competitive hip hop dance that I engaged with the most during my time at Howe Sound Dance Academy; and they shaped me in sometimes opposing ways.

I remember how upright, lifted and poised I felt when doing ballet; and the poses and jumps urged me to make myself lighter, weightless. (Gawd, I loved the jumping! It was my favourite part of ballet, especially the turning jump with a split at the end or *jeté entrelacé*.) On the other hand, I remember how competitive hip hop dance encouraged me to be grounded and loose. The poses and movements allowed me to give into gravity and feel my weight. My body got to be rounded instead of pin-straight, curves and angles instead of lines. I remember how the choreography always hit the beats, like the dance moves in the music videos, instead of moving smoothly through the music. I really enjoyed learning ballet and competitive hip hop dance at the same time; they kind of balanced each other. Now, I wonder what kinds of sensibilities and ways of relating these two forms fostered.

I remember that when I started dancing at Howe Sound Dance Academy, I was the only boy enrolled in ballet. Because I was the only boy, eager to dance and was not interested in certification, my teacher invited me to learn the women's Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) syllabus, which I did not mind. I was just happy to be training and dancing. I remember taking in all of the women's movement, including these delicate and dainty wrist rotations that I found so pretty.

I remember that some years later my teacher choreographed a ballet solo on me for the year-end show. Although I had been choreographing and performing my own solos, this was going to be the first time that I would be doing ballet in front of an audience. Up until that point, I had only taken ballet classes and not performed ballet. I remember that the first gesture, which coincided with me entering the stage, involved opening my arms wide, as if I was presenting myself to a public. I remember imitating the movement and giving it my own flair: I moved my wrists in that delicate, dainty way I liked so much. My teacher promptly corrected me by re-doing the gesture: her arms opened wide with purpose and force; palms faced her sternum and twisted up in one swift motion. No wrist flourishes.

She did not explain or say how the movement was different; she just showed me. And I saw it; I felt it in my body. I adjusted the movement and we continued with the choreography. But it nagged at me: why was it that what I had learned was at odds with how I had to perform? How come the ways that I wanted to move were at odds with how I was “supposed” to move? Why did I have to present as strong, masculine and “manly” in ballet? And why were wrist flourishes not considered manly? Given that I had been learning the women’s syllabus and that I was the only boy in those classes, I had mistakenly come to believe that ballet was more liberal with regards to how men “should move”, and, naively, that gender dynamics were not present in ballet.

I remember taking ballroom dance lessons at the Civic Centre in Squamish with N and some of our friends, two couples. We were in the large auditorium, the same space where I had learned gymnastics and taken lessons in Gōjū-ryū, an Okinawan karate style, when I was younger. I loved gymnastics because I was coordinated and flexible and because it challenged me to

become more coordinated and flexible through its acrobatic exercises. I could have taken lessons forever. However, my dad—a gymnast himself in his youth—pulled me out because I was not being taught the men’s repertoire. It was difficult to find another activity to do instead, but Gōjū-ryū felt like a good substitute. I enjoyed learning the katas—sets of movements used to practice self-defence and develop reflexes—because they resembled choreography. But I hated sparring. I ended up quitting Gōjū-ryū after I accidentally punched a boy in the face. Returning to the space in my twenties brought back a lot of good and bad memories. Nevertheless, I was happy to be back to learn more dances: specifically, the waltz, the tango and the jive. Yet, initially, I was nervous about learning to lead. I did not consider myself good at partner dancing and I also did not want the responsibility and pressure that came with that role. Honestly, I would have rather learned to follow.

However, I ended up being pretty good at leading—in a structured setting—and, because I was able to take up the dances and my role quickly, the father of one of my friends, who was also taking the class, nicknamed me “Mr. Twinkletoes”. The nickname seemed lighthearted, evoking the image of a coordinated, nimble man who was light on his feet. But it was a backhanded compliment. The sarcasm in his tone revealed the nickname as a homophobic remark. Mr. Twinkletoes: light, ethereal, (f)airy. Light, spark(le), flame(r). At the time, I found it interesting that he was queering me because I was performing the dances’ masculinity and the role of supportive leader/frame better than he could. Still, his comment reminded me that even though I was showing him up, I was showing him up in dance, which is always relegated to the realm of the feminine and the homosexual in Canada.

I remember asking my ballet teacher at Howe Sound Dance Academy if men ever went on pointe or donned pointe shoes. I was eighteen or nineteen and we were in the studio in Brackendale, standing on the grey Marley floor. She might have been choreographing a duet for me and one of the women students, presumably on pointe, but I cannot remember exactly. I remember her telling me that there were instances when men went on pointe such as when boys needed to strengthen their ankles; or when men performed the roles of Bottom (*The Dream*), the evil fairy Carabosse (*Sleeping Beauty*) and the “ugly” stepsisters (*Cinderella*); or when men performed in drag. In fact, it was she who pointed me towards Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo (The Trocks), a comic ballet company of men or masculine-presenting individuals who parody ballet conventions through drag. (The Trocks perform in drag as women *and* men since each Trock dancer has a drag persona for each gender.)

Although she did not say this, I realized at the time, by reading between the lines, that it was only during unique, non-traditional circumstances that men went on pointe. I wondered about that and this curiosity, the rare relationship between men and pointe in ballet, became the topic of my Masters research in 2014.

I remember hearing and reading many contradictory stories about whether men should or should not go on pointe during my Masters research. I was surprised by the number of stories that circulated and were meant to keep men off pointe. Or, to rationalize men going on pointe as an anomaly, these stories served to keep them away from centre stage—the space of the idealized/idolized ballerina on pointe—as well as maintain ballet gender conventions.

These stories became seeds that grew and ripened into questions: How do the stories we tell ourselves about our dance forms shape our dance forms and our relationships to them? How

do a dance form's stories, techniques and repertoires co-constitute one another? How might these circulating stories inhibit access to movement and/or articulate bodies in specific (gendered, racialized, classed, ableist) ways? What is the (bodily, mental, creative, societal) cost of propagating and maintaining a dance form's conventions? What kinds of effects do stories have on human relations? How might these stories affect how and what dancers remember about the dance form? And how could I move towards an approach to dance that opened up to possibilities? These questions led me to my daily practice in 2017 and have come with me into my PhD.

I remember the first day of my daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing like it was yesterday. It was the first day of summer in 2017. The afternoon light was coming through the window in my bedroom in the student housing apartment at York University. We faced west, so it was warm and well lit. I remember setting up my film camera to record my dancing. I did not know what I was going to do, how I was going to move in the space that I had prepared for myself in a corner of my bedroom. I remember pressing record, walking into the space and kneeling, ready to begin the dance portion of my daily practice. Just as I was about to start moving, Cleo, my calico cat, came into the space and changed the direction of my daily practice. I was not expecting her to involve herself; and her involvement forced me to adapt and let go of whatever plan I might have had for myself.

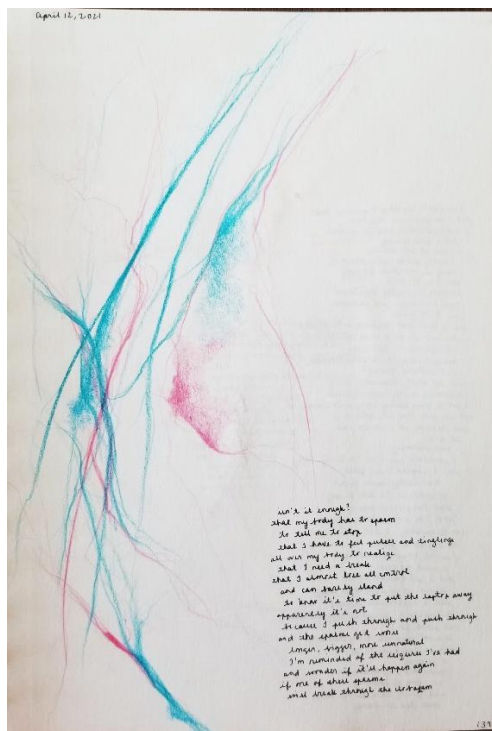
I remember touching her thick tortoiseshell coat, moving my hands slowly along her back, back and forth, and that gesture turned into circular movements: fingers began grabbing at the air like mini tentacles while my hands circled each other, folding inward and extending outward in sync with wrist circles. This gesture moved along a circular trajectory around Cleo

and me. The first drawing that I created echoed this movement (see Figure 5.11). And the first word, “GRATITUDE”, acknowledged Cleo’s involvement: I was grateful that she had come into the space and inspired the movement that became the dance that day. I was grateful that her presence made me take her into consideration to create a dance that included us both. I was grateful that she shifted my expectations of the daily practice. This moment defined what my daily practice would become: letting go of perfection and sensing for different ways of dancing, drawing and writing. Moreover, this daily practice has become a central method in my research on dance and memory.

I remember that the dance portion of my daily practice would often spark dance memories and, as such, became a way to critically reflect on how I had been taught to move throughout my life. Early on, I noticed that music had an immense effect on the ways I moved. For instance, I remember that whenever I would listen to classical music my body immediately turned into lines and wanted to move with ballet vocabulary. The music became a force that shifted my body and directed it towards a particular movement. It was not just classical music that did this; different genres directed my body to move in specific ways. This was a challenging connection to untether. It took a lot of practice: leaning into the inclinations and moving away from them in a different direction; pulling and pushing to sense for possibilities.

But the biggest lesson I learned was coming to see how I was performing ability: the ways that I would hide my gift and disability, the Chiripiorcas, from people to appear “normal”, to not be a burden, because I had to, because I was embarrassed, because it was personal, to belong, because the show had to go on... you name it. When I was younger, it had been so much easier to hide the spasms, to contain them; but as I got older, the spasms became much more

uncontrollable and hiding them almost impossible. They also became a gift because the tingling would let me know when I had reached my limits. I used my daily practice to confront this bad habit of performing ability, to question my intentions and come to terms with the reality of my body because this was how my body wanted to move. The spasms were my own personal movement. Not a learned technique or vocabulary, but a dis-ordered, disorientating, spontaneous, emergent movement. An energetic release. Two drawings and poems from my daily practice speak to this journey and mark the end of the dance memories.



isn't it enough?  
that my body has to spasm  
to tell me to stop  
that I have to feel pulses and tinglings  
all over my body to realize  
that I need a break  
that I almost lose all control  
and can barely stand  
to know it's time to put the laptop away  
apparently it's not  
because I push through and push through  
and the spasms get worse  
longer, bigger, more unnatural  
I'm reminded of the seizures I've had  
and wonder if it'll happen again  
if one of these spasms  
will break through the clobazam

Figure P.1: Drawing and poem from April 12, 2021 – Day 1392

my body can push through much  
 and still, it has its limits  
 the spasms manifest at those limits  
 and I'm lucky  
 I'm lucky that it's movement  
 that warns me that I've gone too far  
 I'm lucky that it's through movement  
 that I release pent up tension and charges  
 it's movement that seizes me  
 at those limits

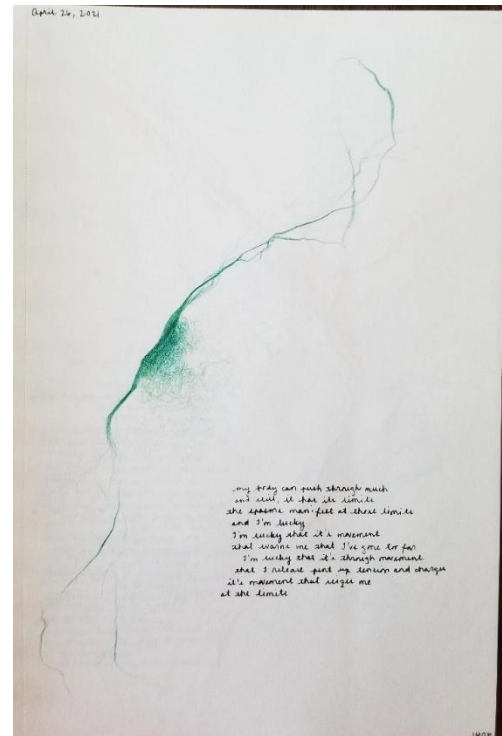


Figure P.2: Drawing and poem from April 26, 2021 – Day 1406

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These dance memories offer a brief history of my “dancified” body (Oreamuno 2019)—the techniques, vocabularies and spontaneous movement that I carry in and remember through my body. Although incomplete, this history gives insight into my past and to the questions that have been sparked, many of which became departure points for my doctoral research. I could not have written about dance and memory without acknowledging at least some of the dance memories that arose during the research process and how they are tethered to my immigration, queerness and disability. What is less apparent is that the numerous genres of dance I have learned and embodied—many more than I mentioned here—do not sit comfortably in my body. Oftentimes

they are in tension and require negotiation. This is a good thing because they help me see/sense the world from different perspectives.

I am reminded of Chicana feminist and cultural theory scholar Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) idea of "amasamiento", the act of kneading. In *La Frontera/Borderlands*, Anzaldúa (1987) talks about the borderlands—the physical Mexico-USA borderland as well as ideological borderlands—as a space of negotiation. For Anzaldúa (1987), this negotiation manifests as an act of kneading. Anzaldúa (1987) reveals, "*Soy un amasamiento*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only produces both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings" (81; original italics). "Uniting and joining" is a careful act, an act full of care, that folds in substances gently to create an expansive form. Amassing genres of dance has been an act of kneading: of folding in each dance genre to form a dancified body that leaves space for questions.

These dance memories demonstrate how attentive I have been to the incorporation of each dance form. These dance memories are important to me because they are my guides: they direct me towards other possible ways of moving. My daily practice has been instrumental for attending to these memories as guides because it has become a method for thinking critically about movement. Because I cannot undo what I have learned, I have become interested in finding possibilities within and between the movement vocabularies I carry. My daily practice has helped me achieve this by making space for each dance form as I move towards opening up.

My attention to movement through memory is one of the skills that I bring into this research on dance as a mnemonic practice. This skill has been a lifetime in the making. It has taken a lot of dancing, reflecting, research and remembering. It has been my compass throughout this research.

Dance as a mnemonic practice is a personal project with broader implications. This project is about how I cultivated a personal, embodied memory of cueca dance and how I remembered the dance form, or pieced cueca dance together anew, through a choreographic process. This project is also about how dance shapes memory, generally, and provides a window into the significance of a critical memory practice in dance. As such, this dissertation makes the case that dance is a mnemonic practice because dance forms cultivate and shape memory. The Introduction delves more into how dance is a mnemonic practice.

## Chapter 1 | Introduction

### 1.1 Remembering to Move (On), Differently

I have been deeply colonized: I grew up in Roman Catholic family that actively went to mass on Sundays, Christmas and Easter and I also attended an all-boys Catholic school. Even after moving to Canada at age eight, I was forced—my parents would say encouraged—to do my First Communion and Confirmation, major sacraments and rights of passage in the Roman Catholic religion that mark a deeper initiation into the church. To do my first communion and confirmation, I had to attend Catechism classes in which I learned about the Roman Catholic perspective of the world. Roman Catholicism teaches a heteropatriarchal view of the world: as explained in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God created the world in six days and when He was done, He formed Adam, the first man, out of red clay or earth. God gave Adam dominion over the natural world as well as a companion, Eve. Unlike Adam, however, Eve was not made of clay but, instead, out of Adam's rib. The Roman Catholic church, then, essentially forwards that men are superior to women and nature.

Paradoxically, I also grew up in a family that privileged Euro-Western scientific thought. My workbooks from Chile focus mainly on learning how to write and speak English as well as math. As such, it is my education in Canada that brought me closer to Euro-Western scientific thought, which I excelled at. I received straight A's in my high school science classes, which made me inclined to pursue medicine after I graduated. For two years at Capilano University (then, in 2002, Capilano College), I took pre-med science courses—particularly biology, genetics, chemistry and calculus—which further inculcated me into Euro-Western epistemology. At the time that I was taking these courses, professors were not situating their disciplines within

a global context nor were they reflecting on how their perspectives stemmed from a Euro-Western understanding of the world. I left the sciences after my second year, and decided to finish my undergrad in psychology, which too was governed by Euro-Western thinkers. My education, therefore, has been mainly aligned with Euro-Western ways of knowing.

I remember that when I first read *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* by political theorist, anthropologist and dance scholar Marta Savigliano (1995) in 2016, I was surprised to find out that I had been colonized. Although the manuscript is a comprehensive study of tango it also reveals the colonial process through which the dance form became consumable globally: how the dance form was appropriated from Argentina, re-packaged in Europe (specifically Paris), returned with the stamp of colonial approval and then exported to Japan. Paraphrasing French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and French psychoanalyst, political philosopher and semiotician Félix Guattari, Savigliano (1995) asserts, “The process of colonization does not stop with formal independence. Colonization colonizes; colonization reproduces itself; a successful colonization is one that is internalized by the colonized” (23). How could I, as Chilean immigrant, have been colonized? I did not understand at that time, what it meant that Chile had once been a colony of Spain especially because this had never been explicitly discussed in my household. Therefore, I did not know that settler colonists had subjugated Indigenous and Afro-descendent people as they attempted to create a republic independent from a colonial power; and that the ideologies that conquistadors, colonizers, and settler colonists had brought to what would become Chile had been passed down to me through my family. In short, I did not understand that I had been deeply colonized because, through my family, my Catholicism and my education, I had internalized this colonial process, successfully, as Savigliano (1995) points out. Reflecting on how I had grown up Catholic and invested in

Euro-Western scientific thought helped me tease out some of the ways that I had internalized this colonial process.

The Prologue offers other ways that I have been further colonized and have even self-colonized because, in most cases, I chose to engage in the dance practices. I sought out music videos, ballet, competitive hip hop, ballroom lessons, pointe work; dance forms that replicate colonial attitudes and aesthetics and that take up the practice of mastery. In *Unthinking Mastery*, postcolonial scholar and nonfiction writer Julietta Singh (2018) states that mastery, in all of its forms, is a colonial practice (9). As Singh (2018) points out, mastery is not only connected to the master-slave relationship (10), it is also founded on domination (7). I elaborate on this perspective in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, I chose to practice those dance forms and learn their techniques. In some instances, I successfully embodied the forms and articulated them back well to a teacher and/or an audience. However, the internalization process was not without its tensions because, over time, I started to notice that I was being made to move in ways that did not resonate with me as a queer, racialized, disabled man-presenting person. Why was I not allowed to do dainty wrist circles in ballet? Why did I have to lead in the waltz? Why did I have to present as masculine in the competitive hip hop routine? Why was it odd that I wanted to imitate the woman pop star's dance moves? Why did I feel the need to hide my disability? My daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing helped me to understand how colonization is ongoing: my Chilean heritage and many of the dance forms I loved and still enjoy were informed by colonial ideologies and practices. By engaging with them, I was re-membering or piecing together anew those ideologies and carrying them forward in everyday ways. Dancers of course have agency: they choose how to remember a dance form or what aspects they want to

remember; and they can also distance themselves from ideologies. But how might they access those possibilities? I believe that attending to memory is an important part of that answer.

“How do I decolonize myself?” Savigliano (1995) asks this question throughout the manuscript; and it is a question that worked its way into my body, forcing me to ask it of myself. Although we are writing twenty years apart, this question feels, even still, extremely pertinent. Savigliano (1995) has methods, some of which I borrow; but for me, part of the answer lies in attending to memory. For me, it was important to remember how dance forms had affected my movement and my body to reflect on “the process of colonization” (Savigliano 1995, 23), move away from those shapings and move towards otherwise ways of moving. I use the feminist definition of the term “otherwise” to refer to alternate practices, knowledges and worlds that are always already present but made peripheral, marginalized or disappeared (Fortuna 2018; Justice 2018; Maynard and Simpson 2022; Myers 2020). My daily practice, which I elaborate on below and in Chapter 5, helped me remember, revealing to me my inclinations and, consequently, the practices that had fostered those movements. Remembering became critical for reflecting on my inclinations and helping me move with and away from them to not reinforce or reiterate certain ways of moving and re-colonize myself, my body. In short, I had to remember in order to move (on), differently and re-member otherwise.

In the first section in the Introduction, “Dance as a Mnemonic Practice: Research and Significance”, I outline the topic of this dissertation and the research process. I define what I mean by the phrase “dance as a mnemonic practice”, emphasizing that I am thinking about memory as a sense. In this section, I also elaborate on how I cultivated an expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance through a multi-modal, sensorial research-creation methodology over the

course of a year. The significance of this research is that it brings memory studies into conversation with dance studies at the level of the senses.

In the following sections, “Memory in Memory Studies” and “Memory in Dance (and Performance) Studies”, I provide brief literature reviews on how these different fields have conceptualized memory, with a specific focus on embodied memory and collective memory. First, I trace these dimensions of memory through memory studies. Then, I track how dance scholars in dance studies have worked with embodied memory and collective memory and added to the field of memory studies by focussing on memory’s relationship with embodied practices. Where applicable, I also include performance studies scholars who have attended to these dimensions of memory. What I illustrate is that memory as a sense has been an under-examined dimension in both memory studies and dance studies.

In the fourth section, “On Research-Creation”, I clarify that I am thinking about research-creation as a Canadian practice-related research approach. As I explain, in the Canadian university, “research-creation” is the term that is used to name research practices that, oftentimes, subvert traditional methodologies and methods to make and think otherwise. I lean on *Knowings and Knots*, an edited volume by history of consciousness scholar and artist Natalie Loveless (2020) that focuses on research-creation as a research approach, to demonstrate the expansiveness of the term and how it traverses practice-based and traditional methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry in Canadian institutions. I connect what Loveless (2020) and other scholars say about research-creation to my own methods through examples. Therefore, I align myself with and situate the various (artistic and analytical) research practices that I engaged to learn (about) cueca dance within this Canadian genealogy of research.

In “Cueca Dance: An Overview”, I provide a brief history of cueca dance. I begin by acknowledging that cueca is a tripartite practice that is comprised of music, song and dance, which are all engaged simultaneously in a cueca performance. I mention that the focus of this dissertation is specifically cueca dance and, specifically, five cueca dances. In this section, I also reveal that cueca (dance) is deeply tied to Chilean nationalism. The short history of cueca dance that I outline demonstrates how cueca (dance) has become claimed by Chile through socio-political manoeuvres such as by forwarding that cueca (dance) is a mestiza art form, simultaneously inspired by Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Spanish practices and distanced from them. As I mention, this erasure is further propagated through the nationalization of the dance form in 1979 during the Pinochet dictatorship, which staked cueca dance as Chilean through a decree. I end the section by describing each of the five cueca dances that I examine in this dissertation.

In the sixth section, “Positionality: I Am My Movement, I Am My Memory”, I discuss the roles that movement and memory have played in shaping who I am. I mention my intersectional identity and how dance practices have not always aligned with my values and beliefs. Even though I have purposefully sought out dance forms to learn and embody, not all of them have served me. I also talk about how my memory works, recognizing that not everybody remembers in the same way. My memory conjures images and scenes. The only exception is when I am in dialogue. In this instance, I have to follow the trail of thoughts or the thread, which emerges in the moment.

In “Translation as ‘Adding To’”, the next section, I explain how I approached the practice of translation in this dissertation. Much of the cueca literature was in Spanish; therefore, I had to interpret into English ideas, concepts, perspectives, sensations and feelings. The act of

interpreting “meaning-to-meaning” made me realize that the act of translation is cumulative. As I explain, I settled on using a “+” sign to convey the idea of “adding to” or augmentation, which Brian Massumi (2002) advocates for as a strategy against “adding up”. I privilege Spanish in this document; and I use the “+” to connect Spanish quotes with their English interpretations.

In the final section, “Chapter Breakdown”, I offer an overview of each chapter. Each synopsis focusses on the main idea of the chapter and connects that idea to the topic of the dissertation: dance as a mnemonic practice. I forward that dance forms are intimately connected to memory and, therefore, are practices that commit to memory and re-member ways of relating through movement, which I elaborate on below. Because I am focussing on memory as a sense, I forward that dance forms are sense-based mnemonic practices that impact identity and human relations.

## 1.2 Dance as a Mnemonic Practice: Research and Significance

In this section, I define and elaborate on the phrase “dance as a mnemonic practice”. This idea is dependent on the conceptualization of memory as a sense, which I also explain. Moreover, I outline the research process that I engaged to illustrate how dance is intertwined with memory as a sense and how I fill a gap in scholarship by attending to that aspect of memory.

This dissertation focusses on an intimate relationship between movement and memory: dance as a mnemonic practice. I use the word “mnemonic” to refer to memory in its adjectival form, not as a “memory aid”, which is the common understanding of “mnemonic” or “mnemonics”. (There are instances when I use “mnemonic” specifically as “memory aid” and I will make that explicit in those moments.) Dance as a mnemonic practice is meant to highlight how dance forms as well as how they are practiced—socially, improvisationally and

choreographically, to name a few methods—are entangled with memory. What I propose is that dance forms commit to memory and re-member ways of relating through ways of moving. Committing to memory refers to a process whereby memory is engaged through a commitment to remember. In dance, this commitment relates to remembering and re-membering movement and, as I will discuss in this dissertation, the context that informs that movement. I define remembering as recalling and re-membering as piecing together anew. Although these processes are connected, I focus on the latter to think about the aliveness of memory. Finally, I use the phrase “ways of relating” to speak about the relationships that are enacted in dance such as how men- and women-presenting people relate to one another through movement. “Ways of moving” is shorthand for various kinds of movements including the postures, gestures, steps, movement phrases and trajectories that are part of the repertoire of dance forms.

In this dissertation, I specifically take up and forward memory as a sense, inspired by both anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Indigenous author and Stó:lō rememberer Lee Maracle (2015). In “The Memory of the Senses, Part I” and “The Memory of the Senses, Part II” (henceforth, “The Memory of the Senses”), Seremetakis (1994) argues that memory is a sense: because memory is intertwined with the other senses, the senses have a memory and memory is a meta-sense in and of itself. The author explains that memory is fostered through always already synesthetic encounters because each encounter draws simultaneously on memory as a sense and the memory of the senses to make sense or meaning in the moment. Moreover, Seremetakis (1994) asserts that memory is “culturally mediated material practice” that is emergent and contextual (9). What this suggests is that dance forms, which are cultural, embodied practices, will potentially have a material effect on memory as “sense organ” (Seremetakis 1994, 9).

I understand “sense” as a faculty with which to perceive and as a mode of perception since the senses can be crafted to perceive in particular ways (Latour 2004; Seremetakis 1994). Although it is common to speak about “the five senses” and to separate them, I prefer to think of the senses as an assemblage, as Seremetakis (1994) does, that is not limited to five faculties and, therefore, that includes kinesthesia, proprioception and more. As Seremetakis (1994) argues, the senses cannot be easily detached from one another because they are all activated to varying degrees in any given encounter (9). Moreover, the act of perceiving also involves drawing on past perceptions (Bergson [1896] 1911) or, as Seremetakis (1994) calls it, “the memory of the senses”. Sensing with the senses, then, means the simultaneous engagement of all the senses—with all the faculties the body has to perceive—and their memory to attend to a moment. Within this framework, a meta-sense is a faculty that activates the senses and their memory when perceiving. Memory can be considered a meta-sense, then, because this faculty draws from past sensorial experiences that are re-membered or pieced together anew from sense assemblages.

An example of how my body mediates memory might illuminate how memory is a sense. I remember that during my undergraduate degree in Psychology I started to have sensations that signaled to me that I wanted to contribute something in class. Specifically, the space just underneath my sternum would begin to feel hot and my body would begin to vibrate. I did not think these physical sensations were signs that I was nervous; rather, I understood them as my body making connections and getting ready to speak. I also remember feeling this need to wait: I had to wait for the thought to form and, importantly, I had to wait for a window to open up, a moment in the discussion that felt “right”. I would wait until I felt that window and then I would raise my hand to speak. Waiting for that window was crucial because it signaled to me that my thought was fully formed even if I still did not know exactly what I was going to say, but I

trusted the process. Sure enough, when called upon I would relay my thought calmly and coherently. Once I was finished, the hot sensation and the vibrations would subside and dissipate. I have come to understand those moments as working with memory as a sense because my memory was sensing through the moment by drawing connections between what I had learned from the course during the semester and in that specific class to conjure a thought or idea. How my body mediates memory as a sense is not unlike how Maracle (2015) discusses working with memory to read/feel the room in order to weave an oratory for the people who are in that space at that moment, which I elaborate on in Chapter 2. And In Chapter 6, I provide another example of working with memory as a sense when I explain how I created choreography by re-membering cueca dance through improvisation. By thinking with memory as a sense, I am trying to promote memory as an active bodily intelligence or “sense organ” (Seremetakis 1994, 9) that is helpful and that can be cultivated.

In *Memory Serves*, Lee Maracle (2015) illustrates the important role that memory plays in the futurity of a community and the non-human beings with which it shares land. Maracle (2015) argues that memory is relational as well as a relational praxis for everyone. It is a purposeful “culturally mediated material practice”, as Seremetakis (1994) forwards, because it serves to direct the path of the community. Rememberers, therefore, play a crucial role in the community as does remembering, which is simultaneously tied up with the past as with the future or where the community wants to end up (3). Although speaking about Indigenous communities, Maracle (2015) illustrates that memory and remembering can and must be cultivated; that memory must be engaged to foster a skilled sensibility for remembering.<sup>1</sup> Memory similarly plays an important

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<sup>1</sup> In Euro-Western culture(s), memory is also a practice that can be cultivated. Historian Frances Yates (1966), for example, describes the importance of memory palaces for orators in *The Art of Memory*; as well as how the art of memory was important for the Greeks. The difference, for me, between the art of memory and how Maracle (2015) evokes memory lies in the distinction between choreography and improvisation, mnemonics and memory as sense.

role in the futurity of a dance form. As dance scholar and choreographer Susan Leigh Foster (1997) argues in “Dancing Bodies”, dance forms are reliant on bodies to impart and propagate the practice to future generations. Dancers simultaneously embody and remember movement; they do not just acquire muscle memory, they also cultivate an embodied, sense memory of the dance form to be able to replicate it, recognize it and transmit it to others.

Dance as a mnemonic practice relies on the process of cultivation and, specifically, the cultivation of a personal, embodied memory. Cultivating an embodied memory requires reiteration, repeated encounters with the dance practice. Committing to memory, in this instance, is an embodied process that requires a commitment to remember the dance form. Committing the dance form to memory is pertinent for cultivating a personal, embodied memory of the dance practice. Re-membering is also important because piecing the dance practice together anew further reinforces the embodied memory that is being cultivated. Both committing to memory and re-membering can cultivate an expansive memory especially when what is being committed to memory and re-membered takes into account otherwise histories, stories and ways of relating through movement. Dance as a mnemonic practice, then, considers how cultivating a personal, embodied memory has the potential to reinforce the status quo and/or deviate from it to create an expansive memory.

The aim of my project was to cultivate and shape a personal, embodied sense memory of cueca dance by critically engaging with aspects of its collective memory. Individual memory is often defined as the personal, subjective recollection of a person’s own experiences, which helps form their unique identity (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1925; Landsberg 2004). Conversely,

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Mnemonotechnics and memory palaces require that the rhetorician walk from room to room in a linear fashion, activating the mnemonics that they had laid in each room. However, the way that Maracle (2015), an orator as well, evokes memory is as a sensorial weaving in the moment, dependent on those who are present. I discuss this in more depth in the following chapter.

collective memory is defined as the shared recollections—but not necessarily remembered in the same way—held by a group, society or nation, which shapes their communal identity (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1925; Hirsch 2012; Landsberg 2004; Nora 1939). Despite their distinction, individual and collective memory are intertwined and inseparable since individual memory contributes to collective memory and collective memory informs individual memory. This is illustrated by French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1925) in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (translated as *The Social Frameworks of Memory*), who discusses how interactions between individuals and the social frameworks or spheres they belong to, such as families, societies and nations, allows individual and collective memory to overlap because a memory can be part of both individual memory and collective memory. Therefore, both kinds of memory interact with one another and have the potential to cultivate and shape each other.

In this dissertation, I illustrate how I cultivated a personal, embodied sense memory of cueca dance, a dance form connected to my Chilean heritage as well as a Chilean collective memory and that I did not know at the time that I began my research. Through a research-creation process, I created a way of re-membering or piecing together anew a dance practice that did not exist in my body and, therefore, that I did not know and could not remember.<sup>2</sup> Through this process, I bridged what I could not remember with what I could re-member by bringing together a set of practices and media to re-member and eventually remember cueca dance at a distance (from family, from community, from Chile). These set of practices and media included sensorial encounters with pañuelos (handkerchiefs) and vocalizing rhythms, watching YouTube videos on cueca dance, listening and dancing to cueca music and reading cueca literature with a

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<sup>2</sup> A big thank you to Bridget Cauthery for helping me articulate this.

sensorial attunement. By scaffolding and layering my interactions with these media over a period of a year, I was able to cultivate a personal memory of cueca dance in my body.

By taking up memory as a sense, I am suggesting that the cultivation of a memory gives shape to that memory. The reiteration required to cultivate a memory, shapes that memory in a particular way. Cultivation does not so much give memory a form, it informs the nuances of that memory or the threads that can be drawn from memory, as Maracle (2015) would say, as well as how an individual might engage with that memory in a nuanced way. Here, I am thinking with how professions and practices cultivate senses: how a perfumier becomes a “nose” (Latour 2004); how a sommelier learns to distinguish between smells and flavours to develop a palate; how a musician trains their ear. In this dissertation, I demonstrate how my multi-modal research-creation process allowed me to cultivate and shape my personal, embodied sense memory of cueca dance. By engaging what I call a critical memory practice that attended to and questioned what was sticking in my memory I was able to shape my memory of cueca dance in a nuanced way.<sup>3</sup> Rather than throwing out aspects of cueca dance that felt outdated and/or harmful, like the heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies embedded in the form, I committed them to memory while also moving away from them so as to not replicate them. This practice helped me cultivate an expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance.

Two important works demonstrate how collective memories can be incorporated into the bodies of those who have not directly experienced the events or practices to which they refer: Marianne Hirsch’s (2012) *The Generation of Postmemory* and Alison Landsberg’s (2004) *Prosthetic Memory*. Hirsch (2012) forwards the concept of “postmemory” to think about how traumatic memories of violence are remembered by subsequent generations “by means of the

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<sup>3</sup> A big thank you to my supervisor Danielle Robinson for offering me language to talk about my critical attention to memory.

stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (5). Hirsch (2012) highlights how the transference of traumatic lived experiences between generations creates “a *structure* of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience” (6; original italics). Because postmemory points to the latent and relational effects and affects of catastrophes, Hirsch (2012) argues that the feminist work of postmemory is to create affiliative connections between generations, genders and communities (249).

Along a similar vein, Landsberg’s (2004) concept of “prosthetic memory” focuses on how mass media, particularly the screen medium of cinema, allows viewers to embody memories of events that they have not lived through. What Landsberg (2004) describes as prosthetic memory is a “new form of memory” that “emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past” at sites such as movie theatres, museums and other technologies of mass culture (2). As Landsberg (2004) explains, “In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person *sutures* himself or herself into a larger history” (2; emphasis mine). This “suturing” makes prosthetic memories “transportable” (3) and challenges understandings of memory that position it as either natural/organic or socially constructed, individual or collective (19). This is because prosthetic memory responds to a globalized world in which mass media technologies blur the boundaries between the private and public spheres, here and there, past and present. Significantly, Landsberg (2004) recognizes prosthetic memory as a new phenomenon due to “its reliance on commodification” because this practice “enables memories and images of the past to circulate on a grand scale” and, therefore, are “available to all who are able to pay” (18). Nonetheless, the usefulness of prosthetic memory, Landsberg (2004) argues, is the possibility for empathy and an ethical responsibility towards other people’s lived experiences and histories.

Hirsch (2012) and Landsberg (2004) illustrate well what kinds of memory can develop through (mediated) encounters with lived experiences and memories that are not one's own. However, in this dissertation, I prefer to think with memory as a sense because, as Seremetakis (1994) and Maracle (2015) forward, this type of embodied memory is always already in formation. In other words, what Hirsch (2012) and Landsberg (2004) attend to are the outcomes of interactions: the development of a postmemory (Hirsch 2012) for the descendants of survivors of traumatic events or of a prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004) for individuals who engage with other people's lived experiences through mass-mediated culture and technologies. Conversely, Seremetakis (1994) and Maracle (2015) begin from the premise that memory as a sense is always already actively engaged and in-the-making. For this reason, these authors maintain that it matters how individuals engage with human *and* non-human beings, such as food (Seremetakis 1994) and land (Maracle 2015), because these interactions will affect how memory as a sense is cultivated and shaped. Thinking with memory as a sense allows me to focus on *how* my personal, sense memory of cueca dance was cultivated and shaped by engaging with aspects of a collective memory of the dance form, instead of on *what* memory emerged through this process (i.e. postmemory, prosthetic memory and/or otherwise).

The central questions guiding this research are: How do the ways of relating imparted and enacted through movement cultivate and shape a memory of a dance practice? And what are the implications of not attending to the cultivation and shaping of memory while learning a dance form? I argue that a critical memory practice in dance (scholarship and practice) is pertinent to bring awareness to how dance forms inform perception, relationships and identities; and to remind that dance forms are relational praxes that are often intertwined with other-than-human beings and lives. In short, what dance forms enact and present has consequences for ways of

relating, being and becoming beyond that context. Therefore, a critical memory practice is necessary for an ethical engagement with dance.

Cueca dance was an ideal case study for this research because it is a complex popular dance form with many versions and variations, as I discuss below. Cueca dance's complexity means that it contains numerous collective memories since each cueca dance version and variation is connected to a community or a part of Chilean society. Moreover, in a study about the relationship between movement and memory, I needed a dance form that I had not yet encountered or that I had minimal recollection of. Even though I was born in Chile and moved to Canada when I was eight years old, I had no memory of cueca dance, aside from what I had heard from family members. My minimal knowledge (and memory) of cueca dance was important for being able to attend to how a dance form would cultivate and shape my memory.

Below, I discuss how memory has been conceived and forwarded in memory studies. Although memory is discussed in terms of collective memory, individual memory, embodied memory, memory as a sense and more, these types of memory are not disconnected from one another. Collective memory refers to the memory that a collective holds about events, practices and more (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1934; Nora 1939). Here, the term "collective" can refer to a small group, a community, a society and even a culture (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1934). Individual memory refers to the memory that an individual carries, which is informed by as well as informs collective memory or, more accurately, collective memories (Halbwachs 1934). My undergrad in psychology forwarded a cognitive and computational conceptualization of individual memory. This memory is connected to the mind (psyche) and is housed in the brain, where it can be imaged. In this dissertation, I step (far) away from a computational perspective and stick to the realm of embodied memory, which includes habits, impulses, reflexes, gestures,

postures, language and thoughts (since the mind is not separate from the body). The main focus in this investigation, however, is memory as a sense, a type of embodied, individual memory that is embroiled with collective memory.

This research was neither a reconstruction nor memorialization project. In this instance, re-membering was not a method to revive a dance from the past or a previous choreography. Specifically, I did not set out to reconstruct cueca dance or a specific cueca choreography. Re-membering was also not a method for remembrance. In this project, I also did not set out to memorialize cueca dance. Usually, memorialization is about remembrance, so that an event and/or person/people are not forgotten or do not become erased. Although memorialization through cueca dance does come up in this project, particularly through *la cueca sola* (the solitary cueca), this project does not delve into this aspect of collective memory. Moreover, I was not trying to salvage cueca dance from obscurity and, as such, this project was not about the memorialization of the dance form.

This project is about attending to how practicing a dance form such as cueca dance cultivates and shapes memory. Although I had initially intended to learn cueca dance in community, my research phase coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which made this impossible. However, this was a blessing in disguise because this research required that I learn cueca dance on my own to really attune to the memory that I was fostering about cueca. Learning cueca on my own permitted me to attend to the layered memory of cueca dance that was emerging. If I had learned cueca dance in community, I would have been directed by an instructor to reconstruct the dance form through my body and, thus, cultivated additional or different mnemonic layers about cueca dance. For example, I would have acquired a collective or community cueca dance mnemonics as well as cueca dance mnemonics based on my instructor's

priorities. This process would have been harder to intervene in and take a critical memory stance since I would have had less control over the memory that I was cultivating and shaping.

The approach that I took in this project allowed me to begin from within—my senses and memory in relation to the context that I created for myself—and extend outward towards a collective memory of cueca dance informed by cueca dance videos on YouTube and mostly secondary sources. This process would have been more challenging to do in a community context when an instructor is dictating the training. This situation, learning on my own during the pandemic, allowed me to think about and ask: if I did not have a dance teacher to guide my encounters with cueca dance, then what kind of process would allow me to learn about the form? How could I engage this process in way that aligned with my values and ethics? And how could I approach this process in a way that allowed me to attend to the embodied process of memory?

A research-creation methodology enabled me to investigate how dance is a mnemonic practice. Research-creation traverses practice-based and traditional methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry that, oftentimes, subvert traditional methodologies and methods (Loveless 2020). Importantly, this research methodology emphasizes practices that allow otherwise ways of knowing, being and becoming to come into view (Loveless 2020). Therefore, research-creation was crucial for a study on dance and memory, which allowed me to engage with practice-based research methods to attend to the cultivation of a memory of cueca dance.

I shaped my research-creation methodology according to my multi-media daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing, which I discuss at length in Chapter 5. Specifically, I used the dance portion of my daily practice and, what I call, an intuitive dancing method—sensing how my body wants to move by attuning to and, at times, moving away from my impulses and

inclinations—to encounter cueca dance over the course of a year.<sup>4</sup> Originally, the dance portion of my daily practice was an opportunity to move away from replicating my dance training—specifically my extensive ballet training but also the various other dance forms that I had been taught and that had shaped my movements, some of which I present in the Prologue—to find otherwise ways of moving. Through this process I began to engage with different movements and to sense how my body wanted to move. During my year of research, I used intuitive dancing but inverted the process: instead of moving away from my inclinations, I engaged intuitive dancing to feel how my body wanted to move with cueca dance to get to know cueca dance. In retrospect, I realize that I was borrowing a key aspect of cueca dance for this method, playing with distance and proximity: I would move towards cueca dance, circle the dance form and retreat (to process the encounter) and repeat. Moreover, the intuitive dancing method also transformed into a critical memory practice that attended to how my memory was being shaped by cueca dance over time.

From my multi-media daily practice, I developed an interdisciplinary research process that further permitted me to encounter cueca dance slowly over time. This multi-modal methodology became important for working with cueca dance outside of a physical community and to cultivate an individual memory of the dance form. I align this methodology to those of other dance studies scholars. In *She Is Cuba*, dance and performance studies scholar Melissa Blanco Borelli (2016) traces a genealogy of the mulata body in Cuba through three historical moments: 1) the nineteenth century; 2) the mid-twentieth century; and 3) the period from the 1970s to 1990s. Borelli (2016) uses a multi-modal methodology to re-member or piece together anew an alternative history of the mulata body as well as to develop the neologism “hip(g)nosis”:

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<sup>4</sup> I have been unable to find scholars that specifically do work on “intuitive dancing” or “intuitive movement”. However, Vida Midgelow (2014) attends to the importance of intuition in dance as well as Susan F. Melrose (2005).

an “embodied theory” (6) that “presents the *mulata* body as an intelligent, powerful materiality that can (re)write history, comment on socio-political situations, and question the construction of its identity and bodily inscriptions” (14; original italics). As Borelli (2016) recounts, “The development of the term *hip(g)nosis* and its corresponding theoretical framework” stems from “participant ethnographic work”, “dance practice, analysis, and historical excavation” and the examination of “literature, poetry, song, and historical information about the significance of the *mulata* in Cuba” (13; original italics). Alongside these methods, Borelli (2016) also engages with rumours and stories to supplement and circumvent hegemonic barriers such as “official” histories. Hip(g)nosis serves to “[enable] a new understanding of what a body can do and how it can respond to historically oppressive discourses about it” (27). This interdisciplinary methodology allows Borelli (2016) to commune with the “ghosts of women who dance for dollars” (104) and conjure from collective and embodied memory the *mulata* and the social histories of these dancers. Borelli (2016) thus illustrates that a multi-modal methodology can be useful for allowing the dead to speak and weaving an otherwise story. Along a similar vein, I engage a multi-modal methodology to move beyond official histories and draw out otherwise stories.

As I detail in Chapter 5, this research process consisted of four phases during which I brought in four distinct media, each one allowing me to move closer to cueca dance. The first phase, which began at the winter solstice in 2021, consisted of engaging with pañuelos (handkerchiefs) and cueca rhythms (3/4 and 6/8 time) in a sensorial manner during the dance portion of my daily practice. I even would engage in dances with pañuelos, allowing them to move me as well as moving them in a range of ways. My first encounters with cueca dance were sensorial and imaginative, not prescribed by steps, which allowed for open-ended engagement

and curiosity, a different entry point into the dance form. The next phase involved watching YouTube videos of cueca dance. Every Monday, beginning around the spring equinox in 2022, I would watch two or three cueca dance videos. Additionally, each day during the dance portion of my daily practice, I would sense what movements from the cueca dance videos were stuck in my memory and try them out to my rhythmic vocalizations. Therefore, I was slowly bringing new cueca dance vocabularies into proximity with my growing personal cueca movement vocabulary.

The third phase included listening and moving to cueca music; and I began doing this around the summer solstice in 2022. This occurred only during the dance portion of my daily practice, during which I would listen to three cueca compositions in a row and sense how I wanted to move. During this phase, I let go of my rhythmic vocalizations, focussing instead on listening to the cueca music. During the fourth and final phase, which began around the fall equinox in 2022, I began reading literature on cueca, generally, whenever I had the chance. This literature was mostly secondary source materials. Similarly to phase two, during the dance portion of my daily practice, I would sense what information from the literature had stuck to my memory, working through it as I moved to cueca music. Ways of relating that I had noticed in the YouTube videos, such as the gendering of movement and, at times, unequal power dynamics between men and women dancers, were confirmed by the literature. As such, this phase required negotiating committing written information to memory while also distancing myself from what the literature suggested I should embody as a man, such as the assertive and cocky demeanour of *el huaso*.

This scaffolded approach allowed me to stagger the media and carry each method on until the end of my research year. This staggered approach was important for attending to how each aspect of the research process was affecting me. Specifically, it allowed me to engage a critical

memory practice that intervened in what is typically an uncritical process. By sensing during the dance portion of my daily practice what would stick in my memory, I was able to notice and note how my individual memory was being cultivated and shaped by cueca dance because I was creating memories about the dance form from my observations.

Because of my history with dance practices, I was particularly interested and invested in noting the ways of relating and identities that are embedded in and embodied through cueca dance. For example, when I started watching the YouTube videos, specifically the performances of cueca dances, I noticed how differently the men-presenting dancer moved in comparison to the woman-presenting dancer. I immediately recognized the gendered ways of moving that each dancer was made to embody through the dance; and although I admired how the men performed their quick and complicated footwork, as a curious, queer individual, I was more drawn to how some women moved their hips. More importantly, the way that men would relate with women through the dance—advancing assertively and retreating with a smug expression—did not resonate with me. This instigated a desire to understand not just the movement in cueca dance, but how the movement was being shaped and perpetuated by ideologies, histories and stories since nothing emerges in a vacuum. In other words, I had noticed this kind of gender segregation before in dance practices—that men were made to move in this way and that women were made to move in that way, as I allude to in the Prologue—and I knew from those experiences that this was not just how people move and relate. There were other structures informing the ways of moving and ways of relating. My critical memory practice allowed me to attend to the heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies, histories and stories that cueca dance performs through movement and that shape memory.

As such, like Marta Savigliano (1995), I used cueca dance as a site of inquiry and a method. In *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Savigliano (1995) tangoes with tango: the author discusses the dance form comprehensively and critically, and mobilizes it to critique itself (its histories, stories and practices) as well as intellectualism, postmodernism and academia. Savigliano's (1995) tango method "is an attempt to poke at scholarly exercises that alienate, immobilize, and justify nonsensical politics by logically, rationally, and academically making sense" (17). As Savigliano (1995) explains, "The intertextuality already present in the tango provides richness of resources for confrontation and insurgency" (13). Tango also becomes a strategy. Savigliano (1995) confesses, "By assuming the tango attitude and taking it seriously, I can work at expanding its meaning and its power" (16). As such, tango serves as a theory-practice through which to make sense of and critically reflect on tango, its patriarchal roots, processes of colonialism and the political economy of passion. Savigliano (1995) demonstrates how a dance form can be used as a method to reveal the inner workings of hegemonic processes, such as the factory of colonialism, and put them into question. Similarly, I danced a cueca with cueca: I used my multi-modal methodology to get close to the dance but also to maintain a critical distance; that is, I played with distance and proximity and did not capture it. This critical distance helped me to attend to memory as a sense, ways of relating and identity and put them into question.

Once I had cultivated a memory of cueca dance, I engaged with choreography, another research-creation process and project, to activate and reveal to myself this memory. As I discuss in Chapter 6, near the end of my year of research, colleague, friend and PhD candidate Arpita Bajpeyi and I set out to create *Copucha + Gup Shup*, a piece informed by kathak and cueca dance elements that put both dance forms into conversation. As I will elaborate on in Chapters 4

and 6, what I call cueca dance elements are aspects of cueca dance that are imparted in the “how to” dance cueca videos on YouTube and that serve as building blocks for cueca choreographies. I used these cueca dance elements to re-member cueca dance or piece cueca dance anew. Rather than being a reconstruction project, a project about revival, choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* became an experiment to activate and attend to my memory of cueca dance.

*Copucha + Gup Shup* was also created in collaboration with thirteen dancers from the York Dance Ensemble (YDE), a pre-professional company in the Department of Theatre and Dance at York University in Toronto. The dancers’ Euro-Western contemporary dance training (in ballet and modern techniques) presented an interesting challenge and opportunity. Because the YDE dancers were not trained to articulate the dance forms Bajpeyi and I were working with—kathak and cueca dance, respectively—this meant that choreographing with cueca dance required that I also teach or impart cueca dance elements to the YDE dancers. Significantly, imparting cueca dance elements highlighted for me the memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated. My engagement with memory, then, became dependent on the community that I was in relation to in that moment, as Maracle (2015) maintains memory work should be.

The significance of this research is that it illustrates that dance forms are in an intimate relationship with memory as a sense. When a person engages with a dance form, the individual cultivates a memory of the dance form that becomes embedded in the body. Moreover, by committing ways of relating through ways of moving to memory, the dance practitioner commits to re-membering or piecing together anew the dance form. The cultivation and shaping of a memory sense through dance has been under-examined in memory studies and dance studies. This dissertation on dance as a mnemonic practice, then, brings memory studies into conversation with dance studies at the intersection of the senses to think about the impacts of

cultivating and shaping memory as a sense through dance and to advocate for a critical memory practice in dance.

### 1.3 Memory in Memory Studies

In this section, I provide a brief literature review of embodied memory and collective memory in the field of memory studies. Where appropriate, I also note connections between embodied or collective memory and the senses. I argue that memory studies have been mainly concerned with collective memory, embodied memory and how individuals, communities and societies carry and transmit memory to future generations (Bergson [1896] 1911; Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1934; Nora 1989). Within this framework, memory is an agent of the past because this faculty brings the past to the present so that it can be transferred. Moreover, memory as a sense, which is the focus of this dissertation, has been under-examined in this field. I turn to sensory anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Stó:lō rememberer, writer and orator Lee Maracle (2015) to fill in this gap.

Memory's connections to embodiment and sensorial experiences stem from two important works, French philosopher Henri Bergson's ([1896] 1911) *Matter and Memory* and French novelist and literary critic Marcel Proust's (1913) *À la recherche du temps perdu* (initially translated in 1922 as *Remembrance of Things Past* and then in 1992 as *In Search of Lost Time*). In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson ([1896] 1911) distinguishes between embodied habit-memory and a cognitive image-memory to think about different ways that memory brings the past into the present.<sup>5</sup> Bergson's ([1896] 1911) embodied memory is built up by repetition and is

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<sup>5</sup> Despite trying to overcome or lessen the degree of dualism, Bergson ([1896] 1911) still replicates the Cartesian split. Where Bergson's ([1896] 1911) separation between mind/spirit and body differs from Descartes's is along the temporal dimension. For Bergson ([1896] 1911), spirit resides in the past and the body in the present.

sensorimotor, activated by actions and sensations in the present. Image-memory, on the other hand, is spontaneously created because it emerges in a specific moment, cannot be repeated and is connected to ideas and thoughts. Although both are conjured by the present, embodied memory acts the past, whereas image-memory recollects or represents it (92). Embodied memory, then, is a kind of involuntary memory, acting on the world based on past repetitive acts; and image-memory is voluntary memory, bringing a past experience into the present that serves that present moment. While embodied memory and image-memory affect the senses, they are separate from sense organs even if by degrees (111-112, 164).

In the epic novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*, comprised of seven volumes, Proust (1913) also conceives of memory as an involuntary experience; in this case, however, it is image-memory that is involuntary. *À la recherche du temps perdu* recounts the narrator's memories of childhood as well as experiences into adulthood in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century high-society in France. Early in the novel, the narrator eats a madeleine while drinking tea, which triggers past memories. The madeleine episode is but one of many instances in the novel of involuntary memory, in which sensations such as sights, sounds and smells trigger memories for the narrator. In other words, Proust's (1913) involuntary memory is a force that is activated by the senses and that propels the narrator into the past. As such, this memory, too, is connected to the senses or, more accurately, to sensorial experiences in the present. Its activation by the senses, however, suggests that this involuntary memory is embodied but not a sense.

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1934) provides one of the earliest investigations on collective memory in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. Because this book has not been translated into English and my French is not fluent enough, I work with

theatre and performance studies scholar Colin Counsell's (2009) interpretation and summary of Halbwach's (1934) work from the Introduction to *Performance, Embodiment and Cultural Memory*. Halbwachs (1934) argues that the group is "memory's proper environment" (Counsell 2009, 5). Halbwachs (1934) proposes that "distinct bodies of memory" emerge from within social clusters of smaller scale such as "families, religious groups and social classes" (Counsell 2009, 4-5). Within this framework, memory is the "social artefact" of a collective (Counsell 2009, 5)—a collective memory drawn from the past—and can, therefore, differ between communities. What this suggests is that collective memory is multiplicitous and specific, plural and individual. Put differently, collective memory and individual memory inform one another. By attending to the social frameworks of memory, Halbwachs (1934) emphasizes the important connection between collective memory and social formations. However, Halbwachs (1934) dedicates little attention to the maintenance and transference of memories (Counsell 2009, 5). As such, the individual and the body—as transmitters of collective memory—get lost in the group (Counsell 2009).

In "Between Memory and History", French historian Pierre Nora (1989) places the body front and centre as the site of "true memory", which emerges through gestures, habits, skills, "inherent self-knowledge", reflexes and "ingrained memory" (13). Working with Bergson's ([1896] 1911) distinction between habit-memory and image-memory, Nora (1989) conceives embodied memory against "modern" archival memory, which "relies entirely on the materiality of the trace" (13). For Nora (1989), the shift from embodied memory to archival memory has "eradicated" this true memory (8), which has become "engulfed by history" (18). Nora's (1989) romantic view of the body and "so-called primitive or archaic societies" (8) as carriers of true memory leads the author to claim, "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there

are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory” (7). This conceptualization positions true memory in the past and neglects how modern “milieux” or environments cultivate and shape collective memory and embodied memory. Therefore, even though Nora’s (1989) centering of the body as a transmitter of memory is important, the historian ignores the webs of relations that bodies are a part of and that contribute significantly to mnemonic processes.

In *How Societies Remember*, social anthropologist Paul Connerton (1989) situates the body as central to mnemonic processes and discusses how it is that memory is passed on, addressing Halbwachs’s (1934) omissions. Also working with Bergson’s ([1896] 1911) distinctions, Connerton (1989) reinterprets habit-memory and image-memory as incorporating and inscribing practices, respectively. Moreover, similar to Nora (1989), Connerton (1989) places these practices along the temporal dimensions by stating, “The transition from an oral culture to a literate culture is a transition from incorporating practices to inscribing practices” (75). Nevertheless, Connerton (1989) concentrates on “acts of transfer of crucial importance, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices” (40), to demonstrate how societies transmit their past to future generations. Connerton’s (1989) investigation reveals that because commemorative ceremonies are performances that are “highly representational” (71), they cannot account completely for social memory. By turning to bodily practices such as postures, gestures and movements from comportment, behaviours and practices, Connerton (1989) illustrates that “bodily social memory” (71) is imparted through these acts of transfer. What the author highlights is that social memory is interconnected with embodied memory and, more importantly, dependent on embodied memory for its existence and transference. This means that embodied memory performs, maintains and transmits social memory.

One of Connerton's (1989) important contributions to memory studies is "acts of transfer" as a mechanism for the transmission of memory. Although Connerton (1989) alludes to the iteration of bodily practices as important for the transference of memory, the author does not address how iteration effectuates memory. This is an important aspect of acts of transfer because memory does not jump from one body to another, memory must be cultivated and shaped. What is missing from Connerton's (1989) embodiment and transmission of memory is a sensorial dimension.

This relationship between embodied acts and the cultivation of memory as a sense is underexamined in memory studies. In this field, embodied memory is neither sensorial nor emergent: memory is an agent of the past and the most that it can do is draw the past into the present. Collective memory, remembrance and memorialization, concerns of memory studies, focus on the past and attend to how a particular past is accessed, articulated or manifests in the present.<sup>6</sup> Memory plays an important role in these processes; however, relegating memory solely to the past, even to an embodied articulation of the past, limits what memory can do. Thinking about memory as a sense is an important addition to memory studies because this memory is emergent and can be fostered.

In "The Memory of the Senses", C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) argues that memory is a meta-sense in and of itself that traverses the senses (9). As "sense organ" (Seremetakis 1994, 9), memory is emergent as well as contextual. By stating that memory "is a culturally mediated

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<sup>6</sup> Memory studies' concern with the past has also led scholars in the field to think about the connection of memory and forgetting, where the latter is a process that covers over the past. I am specifically thinking about scholars such as Andreas Huyssen (1995), Marilyn Ivy (1995), Joseph Roach (1996), and Svetlana Boym (2001) whose discussions on memory are entangled with the process of forgetting. Their focus on how forgetting becomes an impetus for remembering the past can be seen in the various concepts they offer to think about forgetting: twilight (Huyssen 1995), the vanishing (Ivy 1995), deference (Roach 1996) and a direction (Boym 2001). These concepts highlight how the past is always in process of becoming forgotten and that memory is necessary to maintain and access that past in the present. These concerns, then, further relegate memory to the past.

material practice” (9), Seremetakis (1994) acknowledges that memory emerges from within a particular context and the ways of doing that are specific to that context. Seremetakis (1994), then, reminds that memory is culturally cultivated and shaped, a sensorial practice that serves a community. Moreover, by conceiving of memory as a sensorial practice, Seremetakis (1994) situates memory in the now.

Like Connerton (1989), Stó:lō rememberer, writer and orator Lee Maracle (2015) also acknowledges that memory draws the past into the present. However, where these authors differ, is in Maracle’s (2015) recognition that memory serves to guide a community towards a specific future in the present, in the now, as Seremetakis (1994) similarly argues. In *Memory Serves*, Maracle (2015) explains that memory serves a community by moving together towards a particular direction (2). Re-membering or piecing past events together in the now, then, is a mnemonic process that engages the past to orientate a community towards a particular (future) objective in the present.<sup>7</sup> Re-membering, here, is a sensorial, contextual and relational practice that serves a community’s futurity. By dislodging memory from the past, Maracle (2015) adds to what memory can do, highlighting memory as emergent and agentic and a space for intervention.

Additionally, for Maracle (2015), memory is a relational sense that is cultivated within a particular context and set of practices (1). The importance of a social milieu in fostering memory cannot be emphasized enough. Maracle (2015) further asserts the importance of relationships to the work of memory, highlighting that memory will work differently in societies that place “spirit to spirit relationships” at the forefront over those that do not (2). What is considered

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<sup>7</sup> In Indigenous communities, re-membering is an embodied mnemonic practice that requires an active engagement with memory. Moreover, re-membering is corporealized in the role of a rememberer who must work to “commit to memory” events that will direct the path of the community.

valuable for a community, then, will profoundly impact how memory emerges and for what it is engaged. Memory is not just an agent of the past here, it is emergent because it is a practice—“a commitment to remember”—that is cultivated by context. This “material approach to memory” (Seremetakis 1994, 9) cultivates memory as a sense and “directs” (Maracle 2015) it towards relational futurity.

I recognize that my research did not involve social relationships nor live encounters with people. This was a limitation due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to focus on the memory of cueca dance that I, myself, was cultivating and shaping. However, this project did engage with the “14th region of Chile”, that online space that has come to be known as the “region of *el exterior* or *el reencuentro* (reunion)” (Knudsen 2001, 78; original italics). I extend the concept of context beyond the physical and geographical space of Chile to include the virtual space. Chile’s 14th region provided me with media that contained people and their perspectives, which exists for the purpose of sharing Chilean culture and connecting Chileans around the world. All the YouTube videos I watched on cueca dance, the cueca music the I listened to and most of the literature on cueca (dance) were created by Chileans. Therefore, my research emerged in relation to Chile and Chileans even if at a distance.

The addition of Maracle (2015) to memory studies is pertinent because the author contributes a perspective of memory that begins from and focusses on interconnectedness. Memory studies’ focus is humans; whereas Maracle’s (2015) focus is on how memory emerges within and serves human-human relationships as well as relationships between humans and non-human. Moreover, the way that Maracle (2015) as a rememberer works with memory is a process that is “at once historical, sociological, political, legal, and philosophical” (54). While memory studies scholars also recognize how memory is connected to each of these disciplines,

often, these areas of studies are studied separately. As such, Maracle (2015) presents a conceptualization of memory that is not isolated from other disciplines because, as the author remarks, isolation is not “useful or fruitful to our [Indigenous] understanding” (55). Adding and beginning with Indigenous, Afro-descendent and Black perspectives on memory to memory studies, particularly in the Americas given the history of contact, would expand understandings of this significant and fascinating faculty.<sup>8</sup>

Memory as a sense transforms memory from an agent of the past to an agent for change. Memory as a sense moves across time because it simultaneously draws from the past and looks towards the future. This memory is useful for understanding how “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989) such as dance forms not only transmit but also cultivate and shape memory. The embodiment of memory is necessarily dependent on the senses.

#### 1.4 Memory in Dance (and Performance) Studies

In this section, I provide a literature review of how memory has been taken up in dance studies. I also offer some instances of performance studies’ engagement with memory. Along a similar vein to memory studies, dance studies have been mainly concerned with collective memory,

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<sup>8</sup> For those who are concerned with appropriating from Indigenous communities, I suggest reading Maracle’s (2017) chapter “Conversation 10: Appropriation” in *My Conversations with Canadians*, in which the author defines the purpose and consequence of appropriation. As Maracle (2017) explains, “The intention of appropriation is stealing, so in order for appropriation to occur, theft must travel with it and receive either resale for profit or personal royalties as benefit from its use. Theft must be the outcome for the appropriator, while the original owner must lose the use, benefit, authority, and ownership (as control) over the appropriated item; *otherwise it is simply sharing*” (101; emphasis mine). By writing a book on memory, Maracle (2015) was sharing and imparting knowledge. Not everything in the book is meant to be engaged or taken up, as I am not Stó:lō, Coast Salish or Indigenous; however, the main argument of the book, that memory serves for the futurity of all beings is a significant reason to engage with Maracle’s (2015) knowledge. Moreover, Maracle’s (2015) definition suggests that there are ways of working with Indigenous knowledges that honours it, as is also forwarded by Daniel Heath Justice (2018), Q’um Q’um Xiiem (a.k.a Jo-ann Archibald 2008) and many more Indigenous scholars (please see Greg Younging’s [2025] *Elements of Indigenous Style* 2nd edition for a guide for writing by and about Indigenous peoples). Importantly, Maracle’s (2017) definition is not meant to be applied across all racialized communities as each one will have different understandings of appropriation and protocols for engaging with their knowledges.

embodied memory and how dance forms carry and transmit memory to future generations (Buckland 2001, 2013; Desmond 1997; Fortuna 2018; Giese and Keightley 2022; also see Clare Parfitt's [2021] "Introduction: Dancing with Memory" for a comprehensive literature review of embodied memory research in memory studies and popular dance and its intersections with cultural memory). As such, memory as a sense has not been a focus in dance studies scholarship. As I explained in the previous section, within the framework of collective memory, memory is an agent of the past and not emergent. Although collective memory, embodied memory and memory as a sense inform each other, the relationship between dance and memory as a sense has been under-examined.

The anthology *Cultural Memory and Popular Dance*, edited by interdisciplinary dance scholar Clare Parfitt (2021), offers a range of studies on popular dance (in which social and folk forms are included), embodiment and cultural memory. The anthology demonstrates well how "[popular] dance practices are intimately intertwined with both personal and collective dimension of memory" (3). Parfitt (2021) reminds that popular dance practices "retain bodily knowledges over long periods of time through repeated movement sequences, rhythms, dynamics, spatial patterns and performer relationships" (3), or what I call ways of moving and ways of relating. These ways of moving and ways of relating are carried in embodied memory and tie back to the collective. Moreover, Parfitt (2021) asserts that "[their] mnemonic charge can also make popular dance practices targets of cultural control and vehicles for shaping body politics around nationalistic, heteronormative, White, capitalistic values through moral panics, policing, censorship and appropriation" (3-4). Embodied and collective memories can sometimes be at odds as well as co-opted to serve those in power (Parfitt 2021). This suggests that attending

to the workings of memory in dance (scholarship and practices) is of crucial importance because memory can serve as a site for potential liberation and re-orientation of practices.

Attention to collective memory is particularly important in the contexts of violent regimes when “official” nationalist memories and histories seek to erase oppositional stances, politics and movements and impose national repertoires. In *Moving Otherwise*, dance studies scholar and contemporary dance practitioner Victoria Fortuna (2018) presents a history of contemporary dance in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between the mid-1960s and mid-2010s that focusses on dance as a political praxis. Fortuna (2018) argues that contemporary dance is “a powerful mode of enacting politics in the contexts of political and economic violence” in the timeframe covered (x). Fortuna (2018) “employs the category of ‘contemporary’ to draw together the diverse group of practices” (10) that span studios, stages and streets. For example, Fortuna (2018) focuses on “dance practices that span concert works, community dance initiatives, and the everyday labour that animates dance, including rehearsals, classes, and urban travels to and from theaters and studios” (4), to illustrate how contemporary dance, as a constellation, intervenes politically in numerous spaces by “moving otherwise” to the state choreographies (4). “Moving otherwise” names how contemporary dance “offers alternatives to, and sometimes critiques, the patterns of movement and bodily comportment that shape everyday life in contexts marked by violence” (Fortuna 2018, 4). Fortuna (2018) employs the concept “moving otherwise”, then, “as a way of theorizing the relationship between movement and politics and as an interpretive strategy for reading the political effects of Buenos Aires-based contemporary dance” (6).

Fortuna’s (2018) work contributes to “the history of memory” of violence in Argentina (173)—a collective memory that extends beyond the 1960s to the Atlantic slave trade. Fortuna

(2018) brings attention to the racial dimension of Argentina's memory politics by discussing Oduduwa Danza Afroamericana dance company's involvement in the National Day of Memory for Truth and Justice march in Argentina. The author recounts that Oduduwa's involvement in the human rights march "strove to make an embodied connection between Orishá dance's link to the violence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Argentina's history of political disappearance, as well as the country's own historical erasure of black bodies and cultural influences" (Fortuna 2018, 172). Through the example of Oduduwa, Fortuna (2018) considers otherwise memories of movement and the movement of memories: the embodied knowledges that traverse bodies, time and place in Argentina and that point toward "unruly" and "multidirectional" histories of memory (178). Although Fortuna (2018) acknowledges that "Oduduwa's practice nuances questions about how memories are lived and transmitted through dances" (172), the author does not elaborate on the transmission of memory through bodily practices.

Focussing on the circum-Atlantic rim, in *Cities of the Dead* American theatre historian and performance studies scholar Joseph Roach (1996) provides an analysis of "the three-sided relationship of memory, performance, and substitution" (2). Central to the book is the concept of "surrogation", the process of substitution that is made as "actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relationships that constitutes the social fabric" of a culture (Roach 1996, 2), which permits both continuity and forgetting. Unlike Paul Connerton (1989), who suggests that bodily practices "contain a measure of insurgence against the process of cumulative questioning entailed in all discursive practices", Roach's (1996) process of surrogation proposes otherwise: bodily practices "attend to 'counter-memories,' or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by bodies that bear its consequences" (26). Through the idea of surrogation, Roach (1996) highlights "how culture

reproduces and re-creates” (2) through performances of memory. In other words, performative practices become ways of remembering despite attempts to violently forget circum-Atlantic memory.

Another important concept that Roach (1996) works with is “kinesthetic imagination” (26). This idea is evoked as the shared bodily movements and practices of specific communities. Roach (1996) forwards that surrogation and kinesthetic imagination can be traced to “performance genealogies”:

expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words (or in the silences between them), and imaginary movements dreamed in the minds, not prior to language but constitutive of it, a psychic rehearsal for physical actions drawn from a repertoire that culture provides. (26)

What Roach (1996) acknowledges here is that performances cultivate (a) memory in bodies which performers then remember, interrogate and/or impart. For this reason, a critical memory practice is important in dance.

However, these “mnemonic reserves” are mental or cognitive. Speaking about the kinesthetic imagination, for example, Roach (1996) states,

As a faculty of memory, the kinesthetic imagination exists interdependent but by no means coextensively with other phenomena of social memory: written records, spoken narratives, architectural monuments, built environments. [...] The kinesthetic imagination, however, inhabits the realm of the virtual. Its truth is the truth of simulation, of fantasy, or of daydreams, but its effect on human action may have material consequences of the most tangible sort and of the widest scope. This faculty, which flourishes in the mental space where imagination and memory converge, is a way of thinking through movements—at once remembered and reinvented—the otherwise unthinkable, just as dance is often said to be a way of expressing the unspeakable. (27)

The passage illuminates that the sensoriality of kinesthesia becomes subsumed by cognition, “the mental space where imagination and memory converge” (Roach 1996, 27). Movement, acknowledged here as the “kinesthetic” component, is governed by imagination, which

“flourishes in the mental space” (Roach 1996, 27). As such, the kinesthetic imagination is not a sensorial practice, it is a cognitive process that has an effect on movement, or as Roach (1996) acknowledges, it is “thinking through movements” (27).

What this passage also shows is that although Roach (1996) forwards that memory emerges through performance, the author nonetheless relegates memory to a mental activity. This is clearly acknowledged when Roach (1996) discusses the repetition of movement. As the author states, “The paradox of the restoration of behavior resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself: no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance. In this improvisational behavioral space, memory reveals itself as imagination” (Roach 1996, 29). Because “imagination and memory converge” “in the mental space”, as Roach (1996) proposes in the passage above, imagination and memory are imagined by the author as cognitive faculties. I partly disagree with Roach’s (1996) interpretation of improvisation, which frames memory as a cognitive activity through the connection to (a mental) imagination. Instead, I argue that “in this improvisational behavioural space, memory reveals itself as imagination ” and a sense: dancers must attune to the moment, their bodies, their environment and sense with memory, kinesthesia, imagination, the senses and more to conjure and re-member movement.

In “Dancing Bodies”, dance scholar and choreographer Susan Leigh Foster (1997) alludes to the importance of memory in dance practice, but does not delve deeply into this relationship. Foster (1997) focusses mainly on how bodies are shaped by different dance techniques and how dancers cultivate a “dancing bodily consciousness” (241). Foster (1997) argues that a dancing body is created through the methods and techniques used to instruct it (235). The author specifically examines ballet, Duncan technique, Graham technique,

Cunningham technique and contact improvisation to illustrate how each dance form constructs a specific dancing body and dancing bodily consciousness through dance training. Foster (1997) maintains that creating a dancing body takes time and that during that time the body becomes a “body-of-ideas” (235), the concept the author employs to think about how dancing bodies are not only shaped by techniques but also inculcated into that technique’s idea(l)s.

Foster (1997) further elucidates that a dancing bodily consciousness emerges from the images that are used in dance training. Alongside learning ways of articulating the body, dancers also learn a “repertoire of metaphors [...] not only to define the dancer’s body but also to establish the epistemological foundation for performing dance” (241). Such metaphors “serve both as markers and interpreters of developing bodily consciousness”; and “integrate the training of the body with aesthetic, social, and moral beliefs about the dance” (241). Foster (1997) admits, “With repetition, the images used to describe the body and its actions *become* the body” (239). Through iterative training, a dancer builds up a “body of metaphors” and “[consolidates] metaphoric knowledge” to produce bodily habits and a conceptualization of the body (Foster 1997, 239). These activities permit dancers “to acquire a historical sense of their bodily movements” (Foster 1997, 240).

What Foster (1997) calls “historical sense”, I call memory as a sense. Even though Foster (1997) recognizes that this historical sense is important for performance and for the transference of dance practices, the author does not delve deeper into the relationship between dance and memory. Moreover, the use of the word “aesthetic” by Foster (1997) is more related to “appearance” here—how the dancers embody the “look” of the dance they train in—more so than the sensorial dimension or the senses. I would argue, however, that both senses of the term aesthetic are related in dance training because dancers must acquire a sense of the dance to make

themselves “look” like the dance. Foster’s (1997) “historical sense”, then, suggests that dance training shapes dancers’ bodies as well as their memory: the techniques dancers learn foster tendencies and, thus, “orientate” their memory towards those movement histories (Ahmed 2006). I discuss the concept of “orientations” in more detail in the next chapter.

In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, comparative literature and performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) acknowledges the important connection between memory and performance. Taylor’s (2003) investigation of the “archive” and the “repertoire”, which is informed by Connerton’s (1989) inscribing and incorporating practices, seeks to legitimize embodied practices as epistemes. Inspired by Connerton (1989), Taylor (2003) asserts that performances “function as vital acts of transfer” (2), of which memory is a part. Significantly, like C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Lee Maracle (2015), Taylor (2003) also forwards that memory is a sense that is entangled with the senses and that memory’s emergence is contextual and relational. Echoing Seremetakis (1994), Taylor (2003) relates, “Memory is embodied and sensual, that is, conjured through the senses; it links the deeply private with social, even official, practices. Sometimes memory is difficult to evoke, yet it’s highly efficient; it’s always operating in conjunction with other memories, ‘all of them pulsing regularly, in order.’ Memory, like the heart, beats beyond our capacity to control it, a lifeline between past and future” (82). In alignment with Seremetakis (1994) and Maracle (2015), Taylor highlights that memory is intertwined with the senses and with other memories because the reach of memory spans the senses, extending to the past and tethering it to the future. Furthermore, by emphasizing that memory “links the deeply private with social, even official, practices” (82), Taylor (2003) reminds that while the process of memory can be generalizable, the way this (meta-)sense (Seremetakis 1994) is crafted is also particular and situated because it is dependent on context.

Although Taylor's (2003) memory is not the focus of the author's manuscript, it is pertinent for understanding how performances transmit ways of knowing through the senses.<sup>9</sup>

Dance studies' most explicit engagement with the senses occurs through the field's attention to kinesthesia. This centralization of kinesthetic sensing in auto/ethnographic practice and product is the focus of the kinesthetic trajectory of dance studies. Although dance research emerged from the American and British traditions of anthropology and European folklore (Frosh 1999; Thomas 2003), the kinesthetic trajectory of dance studies "grew internally, out of dance methodology" (Sklar 2000, 70). This trajectory recognizes movement "as a way of knowing": as "a medium that carries meaning in an immediately felt, somatic mode" (Sklar 2000, 70). Further, this lineage has contributed to and has expanded on concepts such as dance ethnologist Deidre Sklar's (2001) "kinesthetic empathy": "the process of translating from visual to kinesthetic modes" (198n3) or "a mode of apprehending kinetic qualities" (199n3).<sup>10</sup>

It is this kind of kinesthetic engagement that Sklar (2001) illustrates in *Dancing with the Virgin*, an ethnography about the three-day festival in Tortugas, New Mexico, that honours the Virgin of Guadalupe. Sklar (2001) invokes the sensing body as a site for knowledge acquisition and transmission that through the repetition of gestures and movements also readies her to "step into" the field (183). In a scene at the end of the ethnography, during which Sklar (2001) has returned for a final time to Tortugas, the author recalls and relates, "I saw the ladder teeter and

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<sup>9</sup> *The Senses in Performance*, edited by Sally Banes and André Lepecki (2007), dedicates seventeen essays to the important role that the senses play in performance. Although the editors acknowledge memory as a sense in the Introduction, citing C. Nadia Seremetakis, none of the essays in the anthology discuss the sensorial dimension of memory. Stephen Di Benedetto's article does mention sense memory; however, for the author, that memory is "embodied thinking" (128), which manifests through involuntary behaviour (130, 134).

<sup>10</sup> I want to acknowledge that the term "empathy" is contested in the autism community because of how it has been historically mobilized against people on the spectrum to dehumanize them, as a person on the spectrum informed audience members at a roundtable at the annual Dance Studies Association conference in 2021. Although Sklar (2001) does not engage "empathy" in reference to emotional responses, the term is loaded and requires much more attention, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

reached out to steady it without thinking. In a gesture, I slipped once again into the familiar rhythms of the fiesta work. My body adjusted. In the time it took for that single gesture, I stepped from outside to inside” (183). In this short passage, Sklar (2001) reveals the co-constitution of body, movements, gestures, sensing and fieldsite; and how this entanglement has fostered “a mode of kinetically apprehending” (199n3) the daily routines and rhythms in Tortugas as well as the space and choreography of the fiesta.

Although memory as a sense is entangled with “a mode of apprehending kinetic qualities” and plays a role in attending to the fiesta, Sklar (2001) does not explicitly discuss the cultivation of this memory. For example, in a passage that describes communing and preparing before the fiesta, Sklar (2001) recognizes that “[collective] memories were bodily memories, incorporated as gestures and inflections, rendering meaning of the fiesta itself” (42). Sklar (2001) emphasizes the importance of these moments in fostering memory and processing fieldwork when, later on in the ethnography, the author reveals, “In this state of somatic attention,<sup>11</sup> I would give myself a memory or idea from Tortugas to contemplate [...]. I allowed the image or sound to call up further fragments of sense memory. I could then watch, listen, feel, and register the progression of associations. I became a researcher at the site of my own body” (191). Working with sense memory is an important method for remembering and writing up the fiesta and, therefore, plays a significant role in attending to the context. However, because Sklar (2001) is not writing about memory, the author does not explicitly explain how the author’s fieldsite(s) cultivated and shaped this memory.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Here, Sklar (2001) is referring to a somatic state that the author would induce “by giving full attention to [her] breathing, as in Vipassana meditation or yoga” (191).

<sup>12</sup> Sklar (2001) does acknowledge how doing is transformative. The author remarks, “The potential for transformation lies in the property of *doing*: one does and feels oneself doing at the same time” (Sklar 2001, 184). Sklar (2001) calls “this way of apprehending, ‘dropping down into the body’”, which refers “to a research method: one attends to doing with proprioceptive awareness” (184). What Sklar (2001) describes here is a process for

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Another intersection between memory and the senses occurs in dance studies scholar Miriana Lausic Arratia’s (2026) ethnography *Tracing the Soul, Choreographing Transgression in Flamenco and Tauromaquia*. In this ethnography, Arratia (2026) investigates the interconnectedness between flamenco and tauromaquia, the extended definition of bullfighting or la corrida (1), as cultural and performative practices in Spanish, emphasizing their socio-political history. Arratia (2026) argues that both “are a type of choreographic writing, as both corporeal inscription and a field of spacing and timing bordered by death” (1). Arratia (2026) conceptualizes “transgression” as “the movement of the soul”: an “infinite and invisible gesture [that] is elucidated through the movement that opens the space, revealing structures that are not visible, absent bodies from the past, locating the unrepresentable; that is, death” (1). The author connects this movement of the soul to “duende”, a force that comes from “the beyond” and returns to it (71). As Arratia (2025) demonstrates, flamenco and tauromaquia performers with duende experience a suspension of time because they are in proximity to death (3, 72).

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fostering an “[awareness] of experiencing what one is ex-pressing” (184). I am interested in attending to how dance forms cultivate memory (as a sense).

Memory plays an important role in Arratia's (2026) analysis, serving as a bridge between past, present and future as well as individual and collective memories. Arratia (2026) focuses on memory as a phenomenological experience that is evoked through sensations as a significant part of the ethnographic process and product (8, 188). For example, in a similar way to Sklar (2001), Arratia (2026) engages with memory as a method to return to the fieldsite in order to write up the ethnography. In this way, Arratia (2025) engages with memory as an involuntary phenomenon in a similar way to Marcel Proust (1913), with whom the author aligns (184-185n113). Thinking with Diana Taylor, Arratia (2026) also remarks on how bodily practices transmit embodied memory (29, 62, 188). These kinds of phenomenological experiences allow the author to intertwine autobiographical experiences with the memories of participants, which create connections between individual and collective histories (189). Although Arratia (2026) attends to the sensorial dimension of memory, the author does not theorize memory as a sense (Seremetakis 1994) nor as a directive force (Maracle 2015). Because memory as a sense is not the focus of Arratia's (2026) investigation, the author does not theorize how the events and phenomena committed to memory have cultivated and shaped the author's memory.

What I have demonstrated is that memory as a sense has been under-examined in dance studies as well as in performance studies. Similar to memory studies, dance studies and performance studies have mainly focussed on collective and embodied memory as well as the transference of these memories through embodied practices. Although there are instances when memory as a sense has been acknowledged, such as by Sklar (2001) and Taylor (2003), this memory has not been the focus of their work despite its significance for their respective studies. This research on dance as a mnemonic practice specifically attends to memory as a sense.

### 1.5 On Research-Creation

In this section, I discuss research-creation, the methodology that encompasses the practice-based and traditional research methods that I engaged and that I will elaborate on in Chapter 5. I lean on *Knowings and Knots*, an anthology edited by history of consciousness scholar and artist Natalie Loveless (2020), which focuses on research-creation and the expansiveness of this approach to research.

In the UK, “practice-related research” or “practice-based research” are the terms that are used to describe methods and methodologies that “[encompass] many potential activities from artistic to analytical” (Skains 2018, 85). In the Canadian university, “research-creation” is the term that is used to name research practices that, oftentimes, subvert traditional methods and methodologies to make and think otherwise. *Knowings and Knots*, compiled by Natalie Loveless (2020), is composed of essays from and transcribed conversations between maker-thinkers at Canadian universities that offer numerous examples of what research-creation looks like in Canada, illustrating that this kind of research encompasses diverse activities. Following this Canadian genealogy of research, and for the purposes of this dissertation, I stick with the term “research-creation” when discussing the various (artistic and analytical) research practices that I engaged with during my research.

In a roundtable conversation, titled “The Intimacies of Doing Research-Creation”, the discussion between Loveless; literary education, cultural studies and the arts scholar Sarah E. Truman; political philosopher and artist Erin Manning; anthropologist Natasha Myers; and artist, curator and research-creation scholar Stephanie Springgay illustrates that research-creation traverses (and disrupts) conceptualizations of methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry that may or may not take up art to create and analyse research data (224, 228). The strength of

research-creation is its span and slipperiness because it allows for different people and projects to intervene in the academy in ways that are sometimes not legible or recognizable by the institution. As Loveless (2020) insists, research-creation “[asks] us to pay rigorous attention to ‘non-writerly’ forms as challenges to conventional knowledge production as inherited within the settler colonial spaces of the Canadian university” (230). Research-creation methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry exist alongside and even within traditional ways of knowledge production.

Based on the expansiveness of the term research-creation and its interdisciplinarity, I gather that limitations of this methodology, method and mode of inquiry depend on the project. Some research questions might require traditional methodologies and methods to provide a specific answer. However, this does not mean that research-creation methods or modes of inquiry are not embedded in these methodologies. For example, artistic practices, which is a limiting interpretation of research-creation (see Loveless 2020), are embedded in scientific methodologies. I remember that in my biology labs I had to draw cells by hand to learn about and get to know the cells. This technique reminded me a lot of drawing models or still life in an arts class. This leads me to believe that research-creation is already embedded in conventional methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry, often used to legitimize them, and perhaps there needs to be more education about how research-creation is already being engaged.<sup>13</sup> As such, I understand research-creation as already in conversation with and adding to conventional methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry, augmenting what can be known. Moreover, research cannot be gathered, presented and disseminated without some form of creation, writerly and non.

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<sup>13</sup> A theorization of the appropriateness or specificity of the term research-creation is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Research-creation often exceeds conventional disciplinary and institutional frames, as Loveless (2020) alludes to. Because it has the potential to exceed the “writerly” frame specifically, to invert Loveless’s (2020) statement, finding an appropriate form to present and disseminate research-creation can be difficult, as dance scholar and choreographer Vida Midgellow (2019) explains in “Practice-as-Research”. More so than conventional methodologies, methods and modes of inquiry, research-creation embraces messiness and the nebulous to attend to the unknowable or the “unthought” to think with Michel Foucault (qtd in Laura Marks 2000, 29). Gathering and packaging insights gained through research-creation within a context that favours “conventional knowledge production” (Loveless 2020, 230) and dissemination can present challenges.

What interests me about research-creation is that the emphasis is on cultivating otherwise ways of doing research to make visible otherwise ways of knowing. As noted earlier, I take the feminist definition of the term “otherwise” to refer to practices, knowledges and worlds that are always already present but made peripheral, marginalized or disappeared (Fortuna 2018; Justice 2018; Maynard and Simpson 2022; Myers 2020). For example, Springgay (2020) considers research-creation as “a way of *doing* theory/thinking that is bodily, experimental, and considers research (knowledge making) as a (speculative) event emerging from a practice, rather than preformed or predetermined” (226; original italics). Along a similar vein, Myers (2020) proposes that “research-creation is a mode of inquiry—a way of getting interested and involved in the world—that takes seriously embodied knowledge, craft, creativity, aesthetics, and *practices of making as immanent to the processes of making knowledge* and telling stories about both what is known and what remains unknown” (227; emphasis mine). What is being acknowledged and

highlighted by these scholars is that ways of knowing are “knotted” (Loveless 2020) with “practices of making” (Myers 2020). Therefore, research-creation attends to otherwise ways of knowing by engaging a different set of research practices.

My process of learning (about) cueca dance—a process that simultaneously involved learning to dance cueca as well as the histories and stories connected to the dance form—engaged with the pathos of research-creation. Early on in my project, I realized that I did not want to engage a research process that was already “preformed or predetermined” (Springgay 2020, 226). I wanted to invest in a “mode of inquiry” (Myers 2020, 227) that would help me investigate how dance is a mnemonic practice by slowly bringing me into proximity with cueca dance so that I could attend to how my memory of cueca dance was being cultivated and shaped. By starting with sensoriality instead of steps, which I will elaborate on in Chapter 5, my encounters with cueca dance began with curiosity and play and were, therefore, enjoyable and experimental. Furthermore, these different set of research practices centred memory over mastery. If I had stuck with mastering cueca dance, I would have been working within colonial disciplining strategies as Julietta Singh (2018) highlights in *Unthinking Mastery*. By being disobedient to these strategies through a sensorial methodology, I was able to attend to how cueca dance was shaping me and my memory and to reflect on that shaping.

Myers (2020) also asserts, “[Sometimes] we need to forget and unlearn what we think matters. We need to rearrange our sensorium and sense-making practices and disrupt disciplinary thought styles and ways of seeing so that other worlds within this world can come into view” (232). Thinking about my multi-media practice, what I can add to these insights is that by taking my focus away from product-oriented aims through my practice, I have been able to foster sensibilities that “disrupt disciplinary thought styles” (Myers 2020) and “conventional

knowledge production” (Loveless 2020) to sense “other worlds within this world” (Myers 2020). On a personal level, I have a better sense of how disciplining apparatuses such as the academic institution and traditional dance practices have shaped me and, therefore, what ways of relating and worlds these structures (re)create. This awareness, at times, makes it harder to participate in these systems, which is not something that is frequently mentioned by scholars who intervene in institutional structures.

An aspect of research-creation that resonates with me is the understanding that both theory and practice are separate spheres that both make and think. Manning (2020) recognizes that “each practice engages in its own, singular, ecology” (233). Therefore, I appreciate Manning’s (2020) concern “to trouble the too-easy hyphen between theory and practice” by advocating for “the differential between making and thinking across art and philosophy” (228). As Manning (2020) states, “This [is] not meant to conflate the two—we see philosophy and art as mobilizing knowledge and creativity in radically different ways—but to ask how the hyphen can work to activate new modes of inquiry and experimentation” (228). By disengaging from the binary logic that relegates thinking to the realm of philosophy and making to art, Manning (2020) reminds that philosophy and art have their own ways of making and thinking. Because both are creative and both generate ways of knowing, a simultaneous engagement with philosophy and art can “activate new modes of inquiry and experimentation” (228).

What I have found through my engagement with my multi-media practice of dancing, drawing and writing, which I describe in greater detail in Chapter 5, is that both philosophy and art are in conversation with and inform each other in subtle ways. My observation coincides with how Manning (2020) experiences the two modalities. Manning (2020) reflects, “But the crossing of art and philosophy for me is more diffuse than direct. I want to think philosophically because

it expands my capacity to engage in the world. I make art because it touches a nerve that is specific to what material/incorporeal intervention can do. *I want to value both practices as modes of thought and making in their own right*” (233; emphasis mine). What Manning (2020) acknowledges here is that both philosophy and art offer ways to expand one’s “tendencies”, what an individual tends toward (Ahmed 2016), for ways of relating in the world. Similarly, I have found that the artistic media I engage with in my daily practice—dancing, drawing and writing—stretch me in different directions and reveal to me the diverse ways of thinking that are possible when I make differently. The challenge, for me, has been finding the appropriate form to present and disseminate the insights gained from each medium so that others can understand.

Although I did not engage with each medium directly to learn (about) cueca dance, my multi-media daily practice as a whole offered a way of encountering cueca dance that I would not have had if I had only engaged with the dance form by only reading about it or by dancing it in community. As Myers (2020) illuminates, “Art making can reorient attentions and perceptions, and remake the relations between ontology and epistemology; [...] it can alter what counts as a generative method for getting to know a phenomenon” (232). By creating embodied data about cueca dance from unconventional methods, I was able to attend to the dance in a critical manner as well as attune to how my memory of the form was being cultivated. During the research phase, my daily practice allowed me to feel with and through cueca dance, which resulted in theoretical, embodied and sensorial understandings of the form. In Chapter 5, I will elaborate further on the methods that I used to cultivate a memory of cueca dance.

## 1.6 Cueca Dance: An Overview

In this section, I offer an overview of cueca dance, noting how it is part of a tripartite practice that has been connected to Chilean nationalism since the republic's inception. I provide a brief history of the tripartite practice, with a focus on the dance form. Finally, I note that there are numerous variations of cueca dance and describe the five that I will focus on in this dissertation: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa (the competitive rural-huasa cueca); 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava (the cheeky-fierce cueca); 4) la cueca sola (the solitary cueca); and 5) a queer(ed) cueca dance.<sup>14</sup>

Cueca is multiplicitous. The term “cueca” can refer to a musical genre, a song structure, a dance form or the whole tripartite practice. Sometimes, the song aspect is split into poetry and lyrics. This splitting tends to occur when the analysis revolves around the number of poetic stanzas (Claro-Valdés 1993; Torres 2008); or when scholars are interested in the syllabic structure of the lyrics and how it coincides with the music and its composition (Claro-Valdés 1993; González 2005; Stewart 2013). Because I am not engaging in either poetic or lyrical analysis, in the sections that follow I use the term “cueca song” to refer to this aspect of the tripartite practice. To lessen confusion, I will use “cueca” when referring to the tripartite practice as a whole and the terms “cueca music”, “cueca song” or “cueca dancing” when discussing a specific facet of cueca.

The focus of my dissertation is cueca dancing. Although cueca music, cueca song and cueca dance are intertwined, each facet also contains its own histories, stories and modes of engagement. What I have noticed is that folklorists and ethno/musicologists usually slip between cueca dance, cueca music and cueca song when discussing and analysing cueca generally.

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<sup>14</sup> Henceforth, I will refer to these cueca dances by their Spanish name.

Sometimes, these scholars use examples from cueca music and/or cueca song to discuss and address the historical and socio-political dimensions of cueca dancing. In some instances, the claims they make correctly address the issues in cueca dancing. However, by not beginning from a cueca dance perspective, these scholars also miss a lot with regards to what the dance aspect of this tripartite practice does. Because cueca dance places bodies front and centre, there is a different set of social and political implications that emerge from this aspect of cueca, which I will address specifically in Chapters 3 and 4.

Generally, cueca dance is part of a group of dance forms called “handkerchief dances”, which are found all over Latin America. As musicologist Jan Sverre Knudsen (2001) states, “A number of different forms of handkerchief dance are found in Bolivia, Argentina, Peru and Mexico. Some of them are known by other names, such as *zamacueca*, *marinera* or *chilena*” (65). As the name suggests, these dance forms are grouped together because the dancers hold handkerchiefs while dancing. Additionally, the Chilean cueca dance, like many of the other handkerchief dances, is a heteronormative partner performance and it can last anywhere between one-and-a-half to three minutes. During the performance, the dancers play with distance and proximity as they perform circular trajectories around the space while moving their handkerchiefs in the air, as I will elaborate in Chapter 4.

Cueca dance is deeply connected to Chilean national identity. Many scholars acknowledge that the Chilean cueca dance has its precursors in the Peruvian *zamacueca* (Espinosa 2009; Knudsen 2001; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019); however, this part of cueca dance’s history is oftentimes muted because cueca dance became an important aspect of Chilean identity during its nation-building years (Espinosa 2009, 2021, 2022; Knudsen 2001; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019), which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 3. Moreover, while it is acknowledged that

cueca, generally, was influenced by Indigenous and Afro-descendant practices, the involvement of these communities in the emergence of the tripartite practice has been erased over time as way to anchor cueca and cueca dance to the burgeoning criollo Chilean nation-state.

Significantly, the Spanish caste system informed the historiography of cueca dance in Chile. This complex hierarchical structure was based on racist and classist ideologies that privileged some individuals and some forms of mixture over others. In the Spanish caste system, there were “three main, or ‘pure’ categories”: Spanish, Indigenous and Black (Wolf 2019, 18). Folklorist and ethnomusicologist Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019), further explains that “[from] these primary categories, more castas emerged based on the concept of ‘mixture.’ The secondary categories were *mestizo* (the mix between Spanish and Indian), *mulato* (the mix between Spanish and Black), and *zambo* (the mix between Black and Indian)” (18; original italics). The idea of mestizaje or mixture and, specifically, the mestizo mixture was mobilized to position cueca dance as Chilean, which I address in more depth in Chapter 3.

Ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2009) demonstrates that when the archeo-historical “origins” of cueca could not be found, folklorists, cueca scholars and avid cueca enthusiasts turned to the “ethnic origins” of the tripartite practice (n.p.). Specifically, a mestiza hypothesis emerged that connected cueca to Spanish, Indigenous and Afro-descendant practices and aesthetics (Espinosa 2009; Stewart 2013). In Chapter 3, I demonstrate that later on the same hypothesis served to erase any kind of Indigenous and Afro-descendant influences as well as to disidentify with European and Spanish practices. These erasures and distancing were important for the burgeoning criollo Chilean Republic led by criollo agrarian elites; and allowed cueca to become tightly connected with Chile and an emerging criollo Chilean identity. In other words, the mestiza theory was mobilized for constructing and forwarding a tripartite practice that

was Chilean and not from somewhere else or from other peoples. I elaborate on this historiography in Chapter 3.

Despite cueca dance being considered by Chileans within and outside of Chile the de facto national dance, in 1979, the dance form became the National Dance de jure (see Appendix A: Decree 23). Decree 23, put forth by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte during the dictatorship (1973-1990), took an already national symbol and legally bound it to Chile and as Chilean (Bolívar 2010; Espinosa 2017; Sotoconil 2009). Decree 23 specifically institutionalized la cueca campesina-huasa<sup>15</sup> and positioned this cueca dance above other cueca dances because Pinochet wanted to use the rural folk culture to unite the country under one national identity—an agrarian elite identity from the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile (Bolívar 2010; Espinosa 2017; Sotoconil 2009). As I discuss further in Chapter 3, this was a political manoeuvre that had its precursors in the early years of the Republic because it further erased Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Spanish influences as well as numerous other cueca dances.

The nationalization of la cueca campesina-huasa profoundly affected the dance form. The decree mandated that cueca dance be taught at school and that there be cueca dance competitions (see Appendix A: Decree 23). It is not mentioned explicitly which cueca dance is being nationalized, but the implicit assumption is that it is la cueca campesina-huasa because Pinochet favoured a folklore from the countryside, as I elaborate in Chapter 3. The nationalization of cueca dance set in motion la cueca campesina-huasa's codification. I noticed in my research that this codification fractured la cueca campesina-huasa into two variations: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa; and 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa. Although both cueca dances stem

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<sup>15</sup> The term “huasa” is the adjectival form of the noun “huaso”, the term for the Chilean rural horseman and an important Chilean character whom I will discuss below. Because “cueca” is a feminine noun, this adjective takes the feminine ending based on Spanish conventions. Therefore, I have chosen to keep the term “huasa” when speaking about this cueca in English.

from the same history and enact the same story—that of a rooster chasing and catching a hen—the choreographies differ. As I illustrate in Chapter 4, the competitive cueca campesina-huasa follows a rigid structure and dancers embody stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity through their movement. The social cueca campesina-huasa, on the other hand, is more fluid with the structure and the dancers’ movement vocabularies overlap. Of the two variations, it was the competitive cueca campesina-huasa that became framed as “the” cueca dance by an official history, even though there are more than one hundred cueca dances in Chile (Margot Loyola qtd in Knudsen 2001, 68).

These histories and contexts informed the constellation of cueca dance versions and variations I investigated for my research. Here, I use the term “version” to talk about cueca dances that are different from each other because they emerge from specific historical moments and/or communities; “variation” refers to cueca dances that I have grouped together based on family resemblances in terms of movement and the ideologies they forward (please see Table 1.1 below). The constellation of cueca dances I examine include: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, a cueca dance that emerged after cueca dance’s nationalization in 1979 by the Pinochet dictatorship and that became codified through competition; 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa, a social dance that developed in the countryside and is connected to but differs significantly from the competitive cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava, an urban social dance;<sup>16</sup> 4) la cueca sola, a protest performance that emerged in 1978 as a way to condemn

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<sup>16</sup> I hyphenate certain cueca dances to link up variations that are connected by similar histories and associations. Hyphenating certain cueca dance versions allowed me to bring together cueca dances that have become synonymous with each other without choosing one name over the other. I take this strategy from folklorist and ethnomusicologist Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019) who, in *Styling Blackness in Chile*, uses the hyphen to link music and dance when speaking about tumbe, an Afro-descendent music-dance style. Wolf (2019) explains that “[in] English, unlike other languages, no single word reflects the interdependence of these two expressive forms”; therefore, the author “[uses] the hyphenated term ‘music-dance’ to reflect this quality” (13n2). Similarly, I am using the hyphen here to think about the entanglement of particular cueca dance variations. For example, the social cueca campesina-huasa is a composite of the rural cueca and the huasa cueca because both cueca dance forms share a history, a story and the

the military junta; and 5) a queer(ed) cueca dance that cited la cueca sola and was also a protest performance by the queer collective Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis in 1989.

| Versions   | la cueca<br>campesina-huasa              |                                     | la cueca<br>chora-brava | la cueca sola                           |
|------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Variations | the competitive cueca<br>campesina-huasa | the social cueca<br>campesina-huasa |                         | Las Yeguas'<br>queer(ed) cueca<br>dance |

Table 1.1: Cueca dance versions and variations

I delimited my research to this constellation of cueca dances because these versions and variations have been affected or touched by the dictatorship and are connected with each other. As I mentioned above, la cueca campesina-huasa was nationalized during the dictatorship and split this version into two variations: 1) a competitive variation that is codified and contains a much more rigid choreographic structure, as I outline in Chapter 4; and 2) a social variation that is much more fluid with the choreographic structure, which I also describe in Chapter 4. Even though these two cueca dances differ in form, they nonetheless share a history and the story of the rooster and the hen.

La cueca chora-brava is an urban cueca dance and serves as a reminder that there are other cueca dances across Chile. I decided to focus on la cueca chora-brava because during the dictatorship urban cuecas were invisibilized. The Pinochet dictatorship wanted to forward a

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character of el huaso—a rural Chilean horseman who is akin to the American cowboy and the Argentinian gaucho—all of which are connected to the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile. Similarly, la cueca chora-brava links up the cheeky cueca and the fierce cueca, which are urban cuecas that emerge from and speak to the experiences of the urban, working-class, poor communities in Chile and share el roto—an urban, working-class man who is sometimes also perceived to be uneducated and rude.

folklore of the countryside and, therefore, closed many urban spaces where urban cuecas were played, sung and danced (Espinosa 2017). Nevertheless, during the mid 1990s and early 2000s, post-dictatorship, urban cuecas such as la cueca chora-brava began to remerge and to disrupt the idea of a singular cueca and folklore from countryside (Espinosa 2016; Sotoconil 2009).

La cueca sola is a protest performance that was created during the dictatorship to protest the military junta's human rights violations (Olivares and Gomoll 2016). On March 8, 1978, a collective of women danced la cueca sola at the Caupolicán Theatre in Santiago (Olivares and Gomoll 2016). These women denounced the dictatorship by dancing alone and, thereby, making present their absent partners and by extension the fracturing of the (socialist) family unit that occurred during the dictatorship (Olivares and Gomoll 2016; Sotoconil 2009). This cueca dance continues to be performed to this day in various locations and for different occasions, including commemoration of the dictatorship's human rights violations.

A queer(ed) cueca dance, which cites la cueca sola, was performed by the queer collective Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis while Chile was still under the Pinochet dictatorship. On October 12, 1989, Pedro Mardones Lemebel and Francisco Casas Silva staged an intervention, *La Conquista de América (The Conquest of America)*, at the Chilean Commission on Human Rights in Santiago during which they performed a queer(ed) cueca dance. This protest cueca dance, “[drew] a parallel between the colonial process of ‘The Conquest’ and the support that North American imperialism had provided to Latin American military governments” (“1989 / The Conquest of America” 2018). Even though this protest performance was only done once, I include it in this dissertation because it illustrates the various ways that cueca dance has been and can be taken up by individuals.

I situate my own cueca dance practice and research process within the genealogy of la cueca sola, of which Las Yeguas' queer performance is a part. I align myself with these cueca dances because they interrogate and subvert official narratives, orientate cueca dance elements to tell otherwise stories and bring to light histories of violence. As I elaborate in the chapters that follow, part of cultivating a memory of cueca dance involved reflecting on and questioning the harmful hi/stories that are perpetuated through cueca dance as well as the heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies the dance form forwards, inadvertently or not. My cueca dance practice notices these hi/stories of violence without replicating them. I engage with cueca dance to document them, to call them into question, and to identify otherwise ways of relating.

These five cueca dance versions and variations illustrate that cueca dance is not a singularity. They show that not all cueca dance forms are doing the same thing. In fact, cueca dances can be performed for entertainment, celebration, competition, devotion, patriotism, dominance, protest, denunciation, remembrance and more. This makes cueca dance, generally, an interesting case study for a research project on dance and memory because these diverse and at times divergent cueca dances re-member different aspects of Chilean society and history.

### 1.7 Positionality: I Am My Movement, I Am My Memory

“So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language.”

– Gloria Anzaldúa (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 1987, 59)

In this section, I elaborate further on my positionality, which I presented in the Prologue through a collection of dance memories. Specifically, I focus on my attitude towards dance, as someone who has purposefully sought out dance practices to learn and embody, drawing on some of my

movement experiences. I also offer insights into the workings of my memory, recognizing that not everybody remembers in the same way.

The epigraph above resonates with me even if I cannot completely relate to Chicana feminist and cultural theory scholar Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) sentiment. This is because I do not identify with my language in the same way that Anzaldúa (1987) does. Language did not become a "twin skin" to my ethnic identity. The ways that I was taught Spanish and English were exact and rigid. Therefore, where Anzaldúa (1987) found a space of negotiation and play, the borderlands, I found structure and one that I did not fit into. What resonates with me, however, is the close connection to a practice that helps me articulate my experience in the world. For me, that practice is dancing considered as broadly as possible here and, as such, I am my movement.

I love dance and I love learning different dance forms, as the Prologue makes apparent. However, as a queer, racialized, disabled, introverted, sensitive person learning certain dance forms has not always served me. My experiences with the various dance forms I have encountered have taught me that different dance practices evoke different ways of moving and ways of relating. Oftentimes, dance forms require that bodies move in specific ways. The case of gender offers a clear example because many dance forms impose gendered movements on bodies so that women-presenting people dance like "women" and men-presenting people dance like "men", whatever that means.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, these ways of moving are inversely related because masculinity and femininity are perceived to be oppositional. Aside from being made to perform masculinity and present like a man on stage, I have also been disciplined to perform extroversion and ability, ways of being in the world that resonate less and less with me as I get older.

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<sup>17</sup> The edited volume *When Men Dance* by Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay (2009) addresses double-standards in gender construction within dance and stereotypes that follow men who dance. *The Male Dancer* by Ramsay Burt also discusses the construction of a masculine identity within dance.

While I have stepped away from some of the dance and choreographic practices I have learned, I have chosen not to throw away or forget any of them. This is in part because I am “polydisciplinamorous”, to use history of consciousness scholar and artist Natalie Loveless’s (2020) neologism, and because I want to “add to”, as philosopher and social theorist Brian Massumi (2002) encourages. After all, these experiences have shaped me into the person that I am today.

By recognizing that I am my movement, I am able to question how I want to move in the world and learn to move differently. The identifications that I mentioned above have been particularly helpful fostering otherwise ways of moving because of how they resonate with or deviate from the diverse and divergent ways of moving that I carry in my body. For example, my queerness has highlighted for me where things do not line up, where things are not as straight forward as they appear. I engage with my queerness to query and to go athwart heteronormativity. By attending with queerness, I can critically engage with dance and the (dominant) stories that dances carry and re-member. I use a similar approach when I engage my disability. When I sense with my disability, I become aware of how people are made to perform “ideal bodies” and/or “ideality” through choreographies. This helps me reflect on and question tendencies to perform ability, a practice that many dance forms propagate—consciously or not—by valuing and glorifying technique and aesthetics over the relational care for and value of diverse bodies. These perspectives, alongside the practices that my other identifications encourage, are a part of the intersectional lens that I bring to this work.

I also bring ways of remembering that are unique to me, which is not something that is usually discussed but that is important to mention for an investigation that involves memory. Here, I am specifically speaking about how my senses conjure memories. Most often, when I am

remembering, images and/or scenarios pop up in my consciousness. These images and/or scenarios are usually projected and unfold on a screen-like surface around the space of my third eye. As can be gathered, vision and envisioning play a prominent role in my rememberings. However, accompanying these images and scenes there are also feelings and sensations. These feelings and sensations play a significant role because they offer me more insight into the memory and into what I am remembering than if it was just observing the image or scene. These feelings and sensations help me re-member. Additionally, these images and scenarios are synesthetic since they often include colour, mood, texture and gravity. I acknowledge that I do not often sense smells or hear sounds in these memories; and that the strongest sense, aside from vision, is a felt-sense—something that is ineffable and that I must follow in order to articulate into words.

A different process occurs when my memory conjures information during a conversation or discussion. This kind of remembering feels more like sensing down an unclear path that emerges as I walk or pulling on a thread, as Stó:lō rememberer and writer Lee Maracle (2015) describes. In these instances, images and scenarios do not have time to form; as such, I am reliant on sensing down the path that I am walking. For example, I have to release myself and open up to let the words that need to come out emerge. I do not see the word, I sense the word or my senses whisper the word to me, if I think about it poetically. Wording, in these situations, is a sensing practice.

For me, improvisation and choreography are also sensing practices that involve memory. Similar to wording, improvising with movement involves sensing how my body wants to move and actioning it. While there is space for thinking and choices, the space between impulse and imagination and action is quite short, and I try to keep it that way to practice sensing movement.

Improvisation, then, is a re-membering process for me because I am feeling and piecing movements together in the moment. Choreography is slightly different because sequences and sections are usually practiced or rehearsed and, therefore, create a specific muscle, embodied and sense memory for the performance. During the performance of a choreography, then, I am simultaneously remembering and re-membering while moving, recalling the movements from rehearsal to piece them together anew and re-create the choreography in that moment.

My ways of moving and my ways of remembering are the practices that I am bringing into this research on dance as a mnemonic practice. I am able to think through how dance is a mnemonic practice because I have learned numerous forms that have not only shaped my body in different ways but also informed my ways of moving, ways of relating and memory. Because I have this embodied, sensorial knowledge of diverse and divergent dance forms I can sense how cueca might direct me to move and relate in particular ways. I am well positioned, then, to engage in a creative, critical, reflective process through cueca. Through an intersectional perspective that includes race, class, gender, memory and more, I am able to tune in to how some cuecas propagate certain ways of moving and ways of relating that no longer resonate with me because they replicate the violence or, at least, the ways of being that cis-heteropatriarchy, racism, classism, Catholicism and other forms of oppression impose on communities to marginalize some in favour of others. Attending to these structures became significant for finding ways to tell different stories with cueca dance, the topic of Chapter 6.

### 1.8 Translation as “Adding to”

In this section, I discuss my strategy for engaging translation. Because many of the cueca (dance) literature was in Spanish, I had to interpret many ideas, concepts, perspectives, sensations and

feelings into English. As such, I privilege Spanish in this dissertation, the language of the documents; and I use the “+” sign to connect it to the English interpretation.

This research-creation dissertation is dependent on the translation of Spanish sources, which, for me, has been a tricky process. In “Intervention/Resurrection”, Lissette Olivares and Lucian Gomoll (2016) remark on how the translation of ideas is always incomplete and must occur in a holistic manner such as by not isolating words or by interpreting whole sentences. Thinking with Walter Benjamin, Olivares and Gomoll (2016) state, “Benjamin insists that ‘the transfer can never be total, but what reaches this region [of conceptual fidelity to an original] is that element in a translation which goes beyond transmittal of subject matter.’ In literary translation, the poetics particular to each language makes it impossible to translate sentences by interpreting each word in isolation; we must also translate meanings from ‘between the lines’ ” (158). Of particular interest here is the idea of “translating meanings from ‘between the lines’ ”. What Benjamin is getting at here, and Lissette and Gomoll (2016) by extension, is that one-to-one translation fails to offer the fullest meaning of what is meant to be transmitted. Instead, a translator has to engage interpretation and find or sense the idioms that best communicate the meaning or to engage “meaning-to-meaning” translation.

What I found in my process of translation was that sometimes the specificity of what was being recounted in Castellano—what Spanish is called in Chile—had no direct translation to English. Instead, I had to find idioms that could better convey the message. At other times, singular words in Castellano had multiple meanings, which also meant that they did not have a direct translation in English. An example is the word “compañero”, which can mean companion (friend, schoolmate), comrade (a political term) and partner (associate, part of a pair or significant other). In these instances, I chose what best served the intention of the original writer.

Of note, I have tried to translate everything myself, but I could not have done it without the help of Google's translate function, spanishdict.com and, at times, my mother who confirmed or corrected my interpretations. Because all the translations are mine, any errors are mine alone.

In this dissertation I privilege Castellano—the language of the many authors who work on cueca and whose work I draw upon—and I connect the quotes in Castellano to English interpretations with a “+” (plus sign). I really struggled with how best to involve translation and interpretation. I played around with other symbols such as “/” (forward slash), “|” (upright slash), “—” (en dash) and “—” (em dash). The slashes did not work out because they signified “or” too much. They indexed a separation that felt incorrect or inaccurate because the translations were not in an “either/or” relationship. For me, it was not “one *or* the other”; the interpretations were “this *and* that”. For this reason, the en and em dashes felt like adequate substitutes since they seem to be in the same family as the hyphen, which denotes a linking up and which I have used in that way throughout the dissertation. However, the dashes did not really work either. For one, when the dashes were placed in between the translations with a space on either side, they looked more like subtraction signs than links, which undermined their purpose. Secondly, the dashes seemed to denote a (blank) space akin to a no-person's land, which also did not feel right. As such, I settled on the “+” since it conveys the idea of “adding to” or augmentation, which Brian Massumi (2002) advocates for as a strategy against “adding up”.

The plus sign came to signify more and more how I came to experience translation and interpretation. The process was not about separation, reduction, subtraction, negation or linking up. Instead, it was about the acknowledgment that engaging two or more languages requires more work, more time, more mental capacity, more information, more sensing. The “+” reminds that there is always more in between translations.

The only times that I do not use the “+” is when I engage with words, names and terms in Castellano over and over again. In these instances, I have chosen to add the English interpretation only the first time. This is the case, for example, when I speak about a particular Chilean character such as el huaso + the rural (Chilean) horseman; cueca steps such as zapateo + stomping; and cueca names such as la cueca chora-brava + the cheeky-fierce cueca. Because of this “adding to”, some paragraphs and sections are lengthier than normal—they are doubled due to the translation.

In this dissertation, I have also chosen to use gender terms when referring to dancers. While the convention is to use “female” and “male” as adjectives when referencing the gender of a person such as “the male dancer”, these terms are too closely connected to biological sex and reduces people to reproductive abilities, which can be dehumanizing. Instead, I have opted to use the gender terms “woman” and “man”; and I recognize that reading “man dancer” or “woman partner” is awkward. At times, I alternate between these gender terms and “woman-presenting” or “man-presenting”. These hyphenated terms are meant to acknowledge that the gendering of the dancer is my interpretation. I specifically use this group of gender terms when referring to cueca dancers because it is a heteronormative partner dance in which dancers frequently embody men and women characters.

## 1.9 Chapter Breakdown

In this section, I offer a breakdown of the rest of the dissertation. The following chapter, “Theoretical Framework”, provides an overview of the scholars that I am thinking with to illustrate how dance is a mnemonic practice. In this chapter, I bring together scholars from dance studies, Indigenous Studies, performance studies, queer phenomenology, sensory anthropology

and intersections thereof to create the theoretical framework. This chapter serves to define terms that I use throughout the dissertation and offers a language for talking about dance as a mnemonic practice.

In Chapter 3, “Contextualizing Cueca Dance: A History, Many Stories”, I provide a history of cueca (dance) as well as recount some stories related to different cueca dances, which reinforce or intervene in this history. I illustrate how heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies are embedded in the history of cueca (dance) and cueca dance stories, which affect the ways of relating that are enacted through cueca dances. I first trace cueca (dance) through four periods in Chile’s history: 1) the Era of Independence (1810-1818) and the subsequent Republican Era (1818-1891); 2) early-to-mid-twentieth century (1920s-1960s); and 3) the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1990). I show how this history privileges *la cueca campesina-huasa*, which is forwarded as “the” cueca dance and which General Augusto Pinochet nationalized in 1979 through a legal decree. Moreover, I show that even though cueca (dance) is recognized as a mestiza art form—inspired by Indigenous, Afro-descendent and Spanish practices—over time the tripartite practice and specifically the dance form have become associated with a *criollo*, agrarian identity of the countryside in the Central Zone of Chile. This particular association stems from cueca dance’s connection to a national character, *el huaso* + the rural horseman from this region of Chile. Official and unofficial national characters and stories become pertinent for either replicating or disrupting a legitimated history of the dance form.

In this chapter, I focus on four important stories: 1) the story of the rooster and the hen; 2) the story of *el huaso* and *la china* + a rural peasant girl/woman who is the maid/servant of the landowner’s wife; 3) the story of *el roto* + the urban, mestizo, working-class man and *la dama* + an unnamed urban, mestiza, working-class woman; and 4) the story of *la viuda* + the widow and

el compañero detenido-desaparecido + the detained-disappeared (man) partner. These stories are related to the cueca dances I examine in the chapter that follows. I highlight how heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies are embedded in these stories and inform ways of relating. I end the chapter by discussing a cueca dance performance by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse, a queer collective that call into question these ideologies. This history and these stories, and the ideologies they propagate or subvert, are an important part of the memory of cueca dance I cultivated during my year of research.

In the next chapter, “Performing Cueca Dance: Elements and Choreographies”, I illustrate how cueca dance stories (and the ideologies embedded in them) become mnemonics or memory aids for cueca dances and vice versa. Dancers often replicate heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies through their movement and enact the ways of relating found in cueca dance stories. This is particularly seen in the way that dancers embrace and embody gender conventions, which intersect with race, class and sexuality. Despite this, I also show that cueca dance, generally, is a flexible form.

Engaging with “how to” dance cueca videos on YouTube, I first describe a codified cueca choreography, which emerged following cueca dance’s nationalization, and outline the constituent parts that make up cueca dance or what I call “cueca dance elements”. To show how cueca dance elements serve as building blocks for cueca choreographies I examine cueca dance performances that I also encountered on YouTube, or read about, focussing specifically on five cueca dances: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa; 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava; 4) la cueca sola; 5) a queer(ed) cueca dance—a one-time performance by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis for which there was no recording. Analyzing these cueca dances reveals how flexible the dance form is: not only do dancers re-member cueca dance(s) in a

variety of ways, they also give their own interpretation to cueca dance elements thereby demonstrating that each element can be performed in a range of ways. However, this range is dependent on ideas of gender, race, class and sexuality. As such, not every dancer or dance exhibits the same range of movements. Nevertheless, this chapter highlights an additional dimension of the memory of cueca dance that I cultivated during my year of research. Moreover, these cueca dance performances offered inspiration for choreographing with cueca dance elements, the topic of Chapter 6.

In Chapter 5, “Cultivating a Memory of Cueca Dance: A Multi-Modal Research-Creation Process”, I describe in detail how I cultivated a memory of cueca dance over the course of a year. I first discuss how I decided to move away from mastering cueca dance. This decision was informed by not wanting to re-colonize my body with another dance form. Moreover, moving away from mastery opened up otherwise ways of encountering cueca dance, such as through a scaffolded multi-modal research process. My daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing, which I have been engaging since 2017, served as the model for this multi-modal approach. As such, I elaborate on this daily practice to illustrate how I work with these three media and how I have fostered an intuitive dancing method to move with and away from inclinations. This intuitive dance method was pertinent for encountering cueca dance over a year.

My multi-modal research-creation process was comprised of four phases. During the first phase, I played with pañuelos and vocalized rhythms. These sensorial engagements created the foundation through which to encounter media in subsequent phases such as YouTube videos during phase two, cueca music during phase three and cueca (dance) literature during phase four. Each phase brought in a different modality through which to encounter cueca dance and was maintained until the end of the year. The dance portion of my daily practice became the space

during which I processed my encounters and played with cueca dance. During this portion of my daily practice, I would attend to movements, history, stories and other aspects related to cueca dance that would stick to my memory and that I wanted to embody or not. This meticulous and iterative engagement with cueca dance and memory allowed me to cultivate an expansive and nuanced memory of the dance form. Put differently, I not only cultivated a memory of how to dance cueca but also how cueca movements are intertwined with stories, histories and ideologies. It is these mnemonic threads that I use to re-member cueca dance through a choreographic process, which I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 6, “Re-membering Cueca Dance: Teaching and Choreographing with Elements”, delves into a different aspect of my research, imparting cueca dance elements to students and dancers in order to activate my memory of cueca dance. In this chapter, I discuss how I wanted to reveal to myself the memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated over the course of a year. To do so, I facilitated a cueca dance workshop as well as choreographed with cueca dance elements. The chapter mainly focusses *Copucha + Gup Shup*, a piece co-choreographed with PhD Candidate, colleague and friend Arpita Bajpeyi and in collaboration with the dancers from the York Dance Ensemble. The process of choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* illustrates how I entered into the process with mnemonic threads in hand—specifically, the desire to choreograph from sensorial encounters—that ultimately did not serve the timeline of the choreography. This forced me to pivot and re-member cueca dance with different elements. I concentrate on three sections of *Copucha + Gup Shup*—“Community”, “Anticueca” and “Roosters”—to show how my engagement with cueca dance elements transformed over time. At first, as I demonstrate, I was re-membering cueca dance through re-arrangements of the elements. By the end, however, I was re-membering cueca dance by directing my attention to otherwise stories. This process

revealed to me the expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance that I cultivated; and, it allowed me to work with memory as a directive force.

The Conclusion provides a summary of the dissertation with a focus on my critical memory practice. I highlight the importance of attending to memory in dance practices, particularly how cultivating an expansive memory serves to maintain and move a dance form. A critical memory practice in dance is necessary to remember the past—the histories and stories of dance forms, and the ideologies embedded in them—and the future, as Lee Maracle (2015), would say. Directing memory to a future goal allows for the possibility for otherwise ways of moving. I end the Conclusion with my intended methodological contributions as well as suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 2 | Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework that I am engaging with to think about how dance is a mnemonic practice: a practice that commits to memory and re-members ways of relating through ways of moving. I use the word “mnemonic” here to refer to memory in its adjectival form, not as a “memory aid” which is the general understanding of “mnemonic” or “mnemonics”. As I mentioned in the Introduction, I am specifically focussing on memory as a sense. I also use the phrase “ways of moving” to speak about the postures, gestures, steps, movement phrases and trajectories that are part of the repertoire of specific dance forms; and “ways of relating” are the relationships that are performed and that unfold through ways of moving. The phrase “commit(ing) to memory” refers to a process whereby memory is simultaneously cultivated, activated and shaped by a commitment to remember. I argue that iteration or repetition of a process/practice plays an important role in the cultivation and shaping of memory since continual exposure affects the emergence of a particular memory. Finally, I define “re-membling” as piecing together anew, another iterative process that also cultivates, activates and shapes memory.

Because I am working at the intersections of dance studies and memory studies, I draw from these fields as well as Indigenous Studies, performance studies, queer phenomenology, sensory anthropology and intersections thereof to create the theoretical framework below. I use this theoretical framework to illustrate and argue that dance forms cultivate and shape memory, which I elaborate in more detail below. This is not a unidirectional relationship since memory also informs dance practices. For example, dance forms encourage dancers to commit to memory

and re-member ways of moving and ways of relating. Moreover, what is committed to memory and re-membered will affect the memory that a dancer cultivates and shapes. Memory, then, plays a significant role in how dance forms maintain themselves as well as theorize the world through bodies in motion.

Focussing on how dance affects memory requires a critical memory practice that attends to those shifts and shapings. Otherwise, there is the potential to propagate ways of moving and ways of relating that are harmful and violent. One way that harm and violence can be propagated is through the stories we tell through dance because stories present ways of relating. This is significant because, as I will demonstrate in this dissertation, the ways of relating imparted and forwarded through dance forms, such as cueca dance (the subject of this dissertation), develop from within a particular historical and cultural context, which mediates memory. As such, stories contribute to the formation of a dance form and the cultivation and shaping of memory; and the specific memory that is cultivated will have effects on identity and ways of relating.

The three main sections that follow often cross disciplinary boundaries to demonstrate how dance is a mnemonic practice. In the first section, “Cultivating Memory: Emergence, Context and Relationality”, I elaborate how I am using the terms “memory” and “re-membering” (or “piecing together anew”) in this dissertation. The argument I begin with is that memory and re-membering are sensorial mnemonic processes that are informed by contexts and webs of relations. I begin the section by engaging with anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis’s (1994) argument that memory is a meta-sense that emerges within a specific context and webs of relations; and put Seremetakis (1994) in conversation with Stó:lō rememberer, writer and orator Lee Maracle (2015, 2017), who supports and adds to Seremetakis’s (1994) claims. Next, I turn to re-membering and draw from Maracle (2015, 2017) and anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo (1997)

to offer examples of how re-membering is a sensorial activity that also emerges within specific contexts and webs of relations. These understandings of memory and re-membering are significant for the argument that I am making in this dissertation because they begin to illustrate how dance, as a cultural practice, affects the cultivation of memory as a sense.

In the next section, “Shaping and Transferring Memory: ‘Inscription’, ‘Orientation’ and ‘Acts of Transfer’ ”, I focus on how dance is an “act of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003) because dance forms impart and commit to memory (historically and culturally mediated) ways of relating. What I highlight is the significance of reiteration in the transference and embodiment of memory. For this reason, I begin this section with a discussion on the physical and phenomenological effects of reiteration on bodies by engaging with anthropologist and dance scholar Sally Ann Ness’s (2008) idea of the “inscription of gesture” as well as with feminist, queer and post-colonial scholar Sara Ahmed’s (2006) discussion on “orientations”. Both scholars point to how the reiteration of movement shapes bodies. Then, I turn to social anthropologist Paul Connerton (1989) and comparative literature and performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) who argue that bodily practices such as dance are “acts of transfer” because they impart ways of knowing from one generation, community and/or individual to another. These authors illustrate that transference only occurs once recipients have committed to memory and embodied the bodily practices that are being imparted, a process that cannot be accomplished without reiteration.

In the final section, “ ‘Directing’ Memory: Dance as Storytelling” I begin with dance scholars, Joann Kealiinohomoku (2001), Cynthia Novack (1990) and Filip Petkovski (2023), who argue that dance forms emerge from specific contexts as well as participate in the creation of the contexts from which they emerged. These dance scholars highlight that dance forms are

informed by and propagate the collective memories and onto-epistemologies—the entanglement and co-constitution of ways of being with ways of knowing—of their contexts. Next, I turn to Indigenous Studies scholars, such as Lee Maracle (2015, 2017), Daniel Heath Justice (2018) and Q’um Q’um Xiiem (a.k.a. Jo-ann Archibald 2008), to engage with theories on stories and storytelling. These authors emphasize the important role of stories in guiding actions and fostering relationships. Even though in Indigenous philosophy “stories” are broadly conceived as any “literature” (Justice 2018), medium or meaning-making paradigm that imparts knowledges about the world and how to engage with the world such as ideologies, histories, stories, practices, art forms and more, with which I agree, in this dissertation I make a distinction between these diverse forms of “stories” for the sake of clarity. Nonetheless, committing stories to memory and re-membering those stories through dance, then, will have an impact on how memory is directed and, therefore, its cultivation and shaping.

## 2.2 Cultivating Memory: Emergence, Context and Relationality

In this section, I define how I am using the terms “memory” and “re-membering” in this dissertation. Specifically, I forward that memory is a sense and re-membering is a sensing practice, both of which are emergent and always entangled with the senses. I also maintain that memory and re-membering are contextual and relational; that is, both are informed by contexts and webs of relations. By focusing on the sensorial, contextual and relational dimensions of memory and re-membering, I draw attention to how committing to memory and re-membering are practices that extend beyond the individual because they serve the futurity of the communities to which those individuals belong.

First, I engage with anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis's (1994) argument that memory is a meta-sense that emerges within a specific context and webs of relations. I put Seremetakis (1994) in conversation with Lee Maracle (2015, 2017), who support Seremetakis's (1994) claims. Importantly, instead of creating a new term, such as "mnemo-aesthetic", to convey that memory is a sense, I continue with the term "memory" but with the understanding that "sense" is already folded into this concept, as Seremetakis (1994) forwards and Maracle (2015, 2017) illustrates. This discussion offers a foundation for thinking about re-membering as a sensorial activity, which is what I turn to next. Specifically, I draw from Maracle (2015, 2017) and anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo (1997) to offer examples of how re-membering is a sensing practice. Furthermore, I highlight how re-membering, like memory, is contextual and relational because it is shaped by the communities to which individuals belong and the webs of relations that are fostered in those contexts (Maracle 2015, 2017; Pandolfo 1997).

### 2.2.1 The Memory Sense

In this sub-section, I discuss how memory is a sense, elaborating on what I mentioned in the Introduction. Thinking with C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Lee Maracle (2015, 2017), I maintain that memory is a meta-sense that traverses the senses and is internal to each sense. Considering memory as a sense requires acknowledging its emergence. Following the aforementioned authors, I forward that memory as a sense is cultivated and shaped by context and webs of relations. In other words, memory is not a passive or solely cognitive faculty, it is embodied and active as well as activated by participating in relationships. Extending from these authors, in this dissertation I consider the role of and impact that dance has on memory because, as I argue, dance forms cultivate a memory in dance practitioners.

In “The Memory of the Senses, Part I” and “The Memory of the Senses, Part II” (henceforth “The Memory of the Senses”), Seremetakis (1994) argues that memory is a sense that is entangled with the senses and that, like the senses, it is cultivated within a particular context and web of relations. Specifically, Seremetakis (1994) explains that, because memory is intertwined with the other senses, the senses have a memory and memory is a meta-sense in and of itself. As the author elaborates, “Memory as a distinct meta-sense encompasses and traverses all the other senses. Yet memory is internal to each sense, and the senses are as divisible and indivisible from each other as each memory is separable and intertwined with others” (Seremetakis 1994, 9). What Seremetakis (1994) asserts is that the senses’ in/divisibility is dependent on memory and the in/separability of memories. Furthermore, what this suggests is that memory, as a meta-sense, is fostered through always already synesthetic encounters that draw simultaneously on memory and the memory of the senses. What Seremetakis (1994) highlights is that memory and the senses co-constitute each other. Memory as a sense has significance for dance forms and the movement vocabularies they impart.

Memory is cultivated within a particular context and web of relations. In other words, because Seremetakis (1994) begins with a relationship between memory and the senses that is different than what is forwarded by Euro-Western (neuro)scientific and medical thought, the author is able to claim that memory is contextual and relational. As Seremetakis (1994) fleshes out,

Mnemonic processes are intertwined with the sensory order in such a manner as to render each perception a re-perception. Re-perception is the creation of meaning through the interplay, witnessing, and cross-metaphorization of co-implicated sensory spheres. Memory cannot be confined to a purely mentalist or subjective sphere. *It is a culturally mediated material practice that is activated by embodied acts and semantically dense objects.* This material approach to memory places the senses in time and speaks to memory as both meta-sensory capacity and as sense organ in-it-self. (9; emphasis mine)

Despite the ways that (neuro)science and medicine think up memory and the senses as separate and as mental activities, what Seremetakis (1994) highlights is how memory is synesthetic because it is informed by “co-implicated sensory spheres” (9). As such, context and practice play a significant role in the cultivation of memory.

Offering examples from Greece (where the author grew up and conducted research), Seremetakis (1994) recounts, “ ‘Listen to see’ is a colloquial Greek phrase to demand attention in conversation; or, ‘I can(not) hear it’ in reference to tasting a food flavor. The memory of one sense is stored in another: that of tactility in sound, of hearing in taste, of sight in sound” (28). The author reveals that in this context the senses are not called up separately since “the memory of one sense is stored in another” (28). In Greece, then, sensing and memory are always already synesthetic “embodied acts”—or “re-perceptions” that are informed by “co-implicated sensory spheres”—that help people relate with “semantically dense objects” (9). Additionally, by asserting that memory “is a culturally mediated material practice” (9), Seremetakis (1994) reminds that the ways that bodies relate with one another (henceforth “ways of relating” for short) through embodied acts, such as dance, will have an effect on memory as a “sense organ” (9).

Echoing Seremetakis (1994), Maracle (2015) also emphasizes the significance of context and relationality in the cultivation of memory. In *Memory Serves*, Maracle (2015) explicitly addresses how memory serves the co-creation of peoples and land, in which the author includes plants, animals, minerals, atmospherics and cosmos. Speaking about how memory is fostered, Maracle (2015) states, “Memory serves. It is directed by condition, culture, and objective. It is conjured by systemic practices. It is shaped by results. By the time humans are seven years old, the commitment to remember is shaped, and they remember from the point of view of their

social milieu” (1). The importance of a social milieu in the fostering of memory cannot be emphasized enough. As Maracle (2015) explains, “In a society governed first and foremost by spirit to spirit relationships to all beings, memory serves much differently than in a society in which property possession determines importance” (2). Therefore, the kinds of relationships that a society is governed by will have an impact on the role of memory. Similarly to Seremetakis (1994), Maracle (2015) reveals that memory is a relational practice that is “directed”, “conjured” and “shaped” by a “social milieu” to foster relationships and guide a society (Maracle 2015, 1).

The effects of a social milieu on memory are also addressed by Maracle (2017) in *My Conversations with Canadians*. In this book, the author stresses that remembering is a sensibility that needs to be fostered and that has gone unsupported in the Canadian educational system. Maracle (2017) explicitly comments that “the education of children is biased toward reading and writing rather than remembering” (111). Furthermore, Maracle (2017) asserts,

While the written word is no more reliable than the remembered word, writing is privileged as ‘source documents,’ and memory is demeaned as unreliable because the European education system did not invent ways to cultivate reliable rememberers and so does not have a component in its education system that would teach children to become rememberers; it is not recognized as a way of knowing—they have no way to study and cannot imagine educative processes that would lead to systematic skill-building in remembering. (111)

What Maracle (2017) highlights is that the practices that a society privileges will have effects on that society’s pedagogy. In a society that understands the world in terms of hierarchy some practices will be favoured over others, which will dictate how children are educated and in what. Maracle (2017), thus, illustrates is how a society’s onto-epistemologies—the co-constitution of ways of being with ways of knowing—will have an impact on the webs of relations that it fosters and, therefore, the sensibilities that emerge from those webs of relations.

What Seremetakis (1994) and Maracle (2015, 2017) illustrate is that memory is a sense that is entangled with the senses and that emerges within specific contexts and webs of relations. This has implications for dance because memory cannot be detached from dance contexts and the ways that dance forms foster “rememberers” (individuals committed to remembering), to think with Maracle (2017). Because memory is a relational practice, it is important to critically consider the ways of relating and the webs of relations that dance forms forward and maintain because they will affect the cultivation and shaping of memory. In the next sub-section, I continue the discussion of memory as a (meta-)sense to think about and demonstrate how re-membering or piecing together anew is a sensorial activity that also supports the cultivation and shaping of memory.

### 2.2.2 Re-membering as Sensing

In this sub-section, I delve into how re-membering or piecing together anew is a sensorial activity, a sensing, to further illustrate how memory is a sense. I will use the short-form “re-membering” henceforth when I speak about this specific mnemonic process. I offer examples from Lee Maracle (2015) and anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo (1997) to illustrate how re-membering is sensorial and how this sensorial practice is also contextual and relational. I argue that the ways of relating forwarded by dance practices are committed to memory by dancers and will thus affect how and what they re-member.

Although Maracle (2015) does not explicitly discuss re-membering as a sensorial activity, the way that the author speaks about this process is quite sensory. In the first oratory of *Memory Serves*, which is also titled “Memory Serves”, Maracle (2015) demonstrates well how re-

membering is a re-creation that involves memory and the senses.<sup>1</sup> Recounting an experience at an International Feminist Book Fair, at which the author was invited to speak, Maracle (2015) relates,

I have to think about the word read. There is no equivalent in our language, but in English we use it to talk about the weather – read the weather, the ocean – read the sea, and read the people in the room. *It is part of how we re-member what to say.* Si wi:l – spirit power, to read phenomena in their silent movement. *Once we have read the room, we pull the best threads from our oratorical past forward to feed the room.* The faces begin talking, I can see their hunger. It is evident in everyone, they are hungry to see us, to hear us, to imagine a relationship with us and, at the same time, they already know something about themselves but they are not sure what it is. (17; emphasis mine)

In this context, “reading” is akin to sensing because it allows Maracle (2015) to draw from memory, to “pull best threads from [the author’s] oratorical past forward” (17), and re-weave or re-member an oratory. Because “reading” is “part of how we re-member what to say” (17), as Maracle (2015) divulges, what this demonstrates is that re-membering is a sensorial activity.

Re-membering as a sensorial activity is also illustrated by Pandolfo (1997) in *Impasse of the Angels*. In this ethnography about Moroccan life and memory in the Maghribî postcolonial present, Pandolfo (1997) touches on Moroccan society’s poetic tradition and how re-membering is evoked by these poets to create new poems from fragments. Pandolfo (1997) informs that the Moroccan poets make themselves into spoken-word artists through a very specific process: the poets must memorize a thousand poems, forget them and then re-member them in an affective moment (285-286). As Pandolfo (1997) relates, the poet’s poems “are composed from a repertoire of materials, memorized and forgotten, that come together and rise [...] under the pressure of intense emotion” (285). What Pandolfo (1997) illustrates is that the active process of

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<sup>1</sup> In *Memory Serves*, Lee Maracle (2015) makes re-membering synonymous with “reconstruction” (2) and “re-creation” (3). In dance, reconstruction is the scholarly and artistic process of reviving (historical) dances and choreographies using archival research in order to present them before a contemporary audience. Although this is an act of re-membering, which would require sensing, I want to keep these words separate for the purpose of this dissertation. Specifically because this dissertation does not involve reconstructing cueca dance.

forgetting *fragments* the memorized poems so that the poet can sense with memory during a performance and create a new poem. What is important in this practice and tradition is not remembering the poems that were memorized and forgotten but, rather, letting memory and forgetting do their work to enable a re-membering, a piecing together anew differently: the poet moves pieces of memorized-but-forgotten poems into the moment to re-member a new poem from those *fragments*.

From these examples, it is apparent that re-membering is akin to re-creating: the process is not about exact replication or re-membering something the exact same way every time. Pandolfo's (1997) description of the Moroccan poets' process illustrates well re-membering as re-creating, as does Maracle's (2015, 2017) work with oratory and stories. In *My Conversations with Canadians*, a collection of essays on recurring questions that the author has been asked by Canadians/settlers at numerous events throughout the years, Maracle (2017) relates how working with story is a creative practice. Maracle (2017) re-works a story by "[telling] it back *different but the same*" to contemporize it and the teachings for the moment (40; emphasis mine). "Different but the same" highlights how re-membering is a creative practice for which there is a reference but that need not create copies. This highlights the importance of a critical memory practice in dance because bodily practices have a cultural or contextual referent that is re-membered during performance.

Similar to memory as sense, re-membering as a sensorial practice is also contextual and relational. Maracle's (2015) passage detailed at the beginning of this sub-section in particular reveals that the audience and the moment inform how the author's oratory emerges because re-membering the oratory considers and is guided by those to whom the oratory is being delivered. By "reading the room" (17), Maracle (2015) makes sure to "pull the best threads forward" for

*that* audience so as to weave them into the oratory. As such, “reading the room” to “feed the room” (17) is an act of relationality, reciprocity and inclusion. Re-membering as a sensorial activity, then, not only pieces together anew but also helps weave relationships, as Maracle (2015) demonstrates.

The relational ethics of re-membering as a sensing practice are clearly outlined when Maracle (2015) describes how memory is pertinent for (Indigenous) futurity, for a continued relational existence (2), as I explained in the previous section. Maracle (2015) informs, “To re-member is, first, directional. Indigenous people commit to memory those events and the aspects of those events that suit the direction we are moving in or the direction we want to move in if a shift is occurring. [...] We may wish to achieve a new direction, secure an old direction, or mark the path travelled so that others may find the path easier to follow. Our memories serve the foregoing” (2). Moreover, what Maracle (2015) highlights is that what an individual and/or community commits to memory impacts what that individual and/or community re-members. Committing to memory is not (mental) memorization for individual gains, it is a commitment to remember: a purposeful taking in of knowledge into memory so that it can be re-membered at a future time to serve the community’s direction.

Re-membering is a sensorial, contextual and relational activity of piecing together anew in a moment (Maracle 2015, 2017; Pandolfo 1997). This follows from the idea that memory is a sense that is also informed by contexts and webs of relations (Maracle 2015, 2017; Seremetakis 1994). By emphasizing the sensorial, contextual and relational dimensions of memory and re-membering—dimensions that are always interconnected—these scholars help draw attention to the complexity and importance of mnemonic processes in dance because of the myriad ways that they can be fostered and the responsibilities they bear.

It matters how and to what memory is “directed” (Maracle 2015) because it matters how re-membering occurs as well as what is re-membered. When dance practitioners commit movement to memory, they are crafting themselves into carriers of that knowledge for their dance community. Moreover, the memory that dance forms cultivate risks propagating particular ways of relating that, at best, no longer serve dance practitioners, to think with Maracle (2015), and, at worst, that are harmful and violent. Therefore, attending to dance as a mnemonic practice calls us to remember that dance is doing something. Being attentive to what dance is doing, to our bodies and memory, requires a critical memory practice that pays attention to the ideologies, histories and stories that are imparted through dance. In the next section, I discuss how the embodiment and replication of movements shape bodies and has the potential to direct memory along a particular path.

### 2.3 Shaping and Transferring Memory: “Inscription”, “Orientation” and “Acts of Transfer”

In this section, I focus on dance as an “act of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003) because dance forms impart and commit to memory (historically and culturally mediated) ways of relating. Extending from Maracle (2015), I use the phrase “commit(s) to memory” to speak about a process and practice whereby memory is simultaneously activated and informed, either consciously or not, through the reiteration of movement. In the sub-sections that follow, I think specifically about the role that reiteration plays in shaping memory and therefore, how committing to memory is more akin to the embodiment of a collective memory and less like intentional rote memorization.

First, I discuss the physical and phenomenological effects of reiteration on bodies by engaging with anthropologist and dance scholar Sally Ann Ness’s (2008) idea of the “inscription

of gesture”: How the reiteration of movement in dance traditions shapes the physicality of bodies. I put Ness (2008) in conversation with feminist, queer and post-colonial scholar Sara Ahmed (2006) who argues that the phenomenon of “orientations” manifests in bodies because bodies (are made to) reiterate particular movement histories. Both scholars illustrate well how the reiteration of movements shapes bodies and being; however, neither scholar addresses the relationship between reiteration and memory: how iteration, such as the iteration of movement (histories), is a process that helps cultivate and shape memory.

As such, I turn to social anthropologist and memory studies scholar Paul Connerton (1989) who connects bodily practices with what he calls “acts of transfer” (40) and “mnemonic systems”, systems devised to assist with memory (102). Connerton (1989) argues that it is through bodily practices such as dance that societies remember because they bring the past into the present. Bringing in performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) extends Connerton’s (1989) discussion of “acts of transfer” (40) to consider how bodily practices such as dance impart knowledge from one generation, community and/or individual to another. Significantly, Connerton (1989) and Taylor (2003) together highlight how the iteration of bodily practices plays a role in the transference of collective memory from one group and/or individual to another: by continuously enacting practices those practices are committed to memory. This is significant because these authors illustrate that bodily practices cultivate and shape memory.

### 2.3.1 “Inscription” and “Orientations”: Shaping Bodies through the Reiteration of Movement

In this sub-section, I discuss how bodies are shaped through the reiteration of movement. I engage with the concepts “inscription” (Ness 2008) and “orientations” (Ahmed 2006) to discuss the physical and phenomenological shapings of bodies. These concepts offer insights into ways

that bodies become aligned with movement histories and the potential effects of these alignments on consciousness and ways of knowing of which memory is a part.

In “The Inscription of Gesture”, Sally Ann Ness (2008) reflects on and reveals the physical effects that dance—“understood here as broadly as possible” (1)—has on dancers’ bodies. Ness (2008) uses Charles Peirce’s semeiotic approach to “[‘lean’] on the phrase ‘gesture as inscription’ in the direction of its literal sense” (2). By “leaning” on this phrase, the author subverts the assumption that dance is ephemeral. Instead, Ness (2008) argues that gestures of dance traditions have material effects on the body because they migrate inward into the body through reiteration. Ness (2008) relates that the inscription of gesture has “permanent consequences for each individual body” because the body is *informed* or inscribed by this “ongoing, perpetually unfinished process” (23).<sup>2</sup>

Alongside the physical consequences, Ness (2008) also speculates that the reiterative process of the inscription of gesture has the potential to affect our ways of knowing and ways of relating. As Ness (2008) considers, gesture as inscription “calls us to reimagine in a radical way what our gestures are doing in and to ourselves, how they are influencing our conduct both within and beyond the realm of dance, what forms of intelligence they are bringing to our consciousness or molding our consciousness into” (25-26). What Ness (2008) interrogates here, is the separation of body and “mind” or the mental faculties since the inscription of gesture has the potential to affect more than a body’s physicality. In particular, by thinking about the

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<sup>2</sup> Similarly, art critic and art theorist Rosalind Krauss (1977a; 1977b) ascribes to movement an inward orientation that has an indexical effect in and on the body. In “Notes on the Index”, Krauss (1977b) explains, “Within the convention of dance, signs are produced by movement. [...] But once movement is understood as something the body does not produce and is, instead, a circumstance that is registered on it (or, invisibly, within it), there is a fundamental alteration in the nature of the sign. Movement ceases to function symbolically and takes on the character of an index” (59). By index, Krauss (1977a) refers to “the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify” (70). The marks that movement leaves in bodies, or the “inscriptions” to think with Ness (2008), index the dance practice(s) to which they refer.

potential of gestures to *inform* or “mold our consciousness” (26), Ness (2008) is not only asserting that gestures and intelligence are intertwined, the author is also proposing that ways of moving are ways of knowing. Ness (2008) calls attention to how gesture as inscription can “influence our conduct” or ways of relating beyond dance (25). The things we do to and with our body through an iterative process, then, can have physical, cognitive and relational effects. It is this co-constitution between the shaping of bodies and the moulding of consciousness that I am interested in in this dissertation. Although Ness (2008) does not discuss memory, the “inscription of gesture” suggests a way for thinking about how memory is cultivated in a (dancer’s) body through movement and, therefore, how dance is a mnemonic practice.

Ness (2008) even suggests that gesture as inscription is a world-making practice. In the section that follows, I discuss how dance as a pedagogical tool imparts to audiences ways of relating through movement that guide those audiences to interact in and with the world in specific ways. In this case, the inscription of gesture points to a pedagogy that shapes dancers’ physicality and cognition as well as how to relate in and with the world. Additionally, Ness (2008) indicates, “Gesture as inscription challenges us to consider how a gesture can migrate much more deeply into our understanding of ourselves and, more broadly, into the worlds in which we live than we might at first glance, or in our common sense, expect” (26). This inward and outward migration of gesture highlights, once again, how dance forms are not separate from “the worlds in which we live” (26). The iterative process of inscription, at once, allows dancers to become articulate at the dance forms in which they train and guides them in articulating the worlds in which they live.

Sara Ahmed (2006) adds to Ness’s (2008) argument by thinking more broadly about how the reiteration of particular ways of moving informs bodies and creates worlds. In *Queer*

*Phenomenology*, Ahmed (2006) puts “queer studies in closer dialogue with phenomenology” (1) because the latter “can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and *the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds*” (2; emphasis mine). Through a queer phenomenology, Ahmed (2006) engages a critical analysis of orientations to argue that the ways that bodies orientate themselves to “objects” and “others” as well as tend towards certain bodies over others is a consequence of “repeated and habitual actions” (2). The concept of “orientations” serves as a departure point for discussing and deconstructing how reiterated ways of moving shape bodies and worlds.

Ahmed (2006) argues that orientations are emergent because bodies are not born orientated, they become orientated. Ahmed (2006) states “that bodies are shaped by what they tend toward, and that the repetition of that ‘tending toward’ produces certain tendencies” (129). The author describes the process in the following manner: “the repetition of the tending *toward* is what identity ‘coheres’ *around* (= tendencies). We do not, then, inherit our tendencies; instead, we *acquire* our tendencies from what we inherit” (Ahmed 2006, 129; original italics). Ahmed (2006) highlights that tendencies are not inherent/inherited, they are acquired through a process of reiteration—“the repetition of the tending toward” (129). This reiterative process orientates bodies.

Significantly, “tending toward” does not emerge out of nowhere. A “tending toward” is connected to a history of “tendings toward” and it is this history that is inherited. Engaging with various philosophers, Ahmed (2006) reveals the bodily effects of (movement) histories, particularly in the ways that bodies are (made to become) orientated:

Phenomenology helps us to explore how bodies are shaped by histories, which they perform in their comportment, their posture, and their gestures. Both [Edmund] Husserl

and [Maurice] Merleau-Ponty, after all, described bodily horizons as ‘sedimented histories.’ This model of history as bodily sedimentation has been taken up by social theorists; for Pierre Bourdieu, for example, such histories are described as the *habitus*, as ‘systems of durable, transposable, dispositions’ which integrate past experiences through the very ‘*matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions*’ that are necessary to accomplish ‘infinitely diversified tasks.’ For Judith Butler, it is precisely how phenomenology exposes the ‘sedimentation’ of history in the repetition of bodily action, that makes it a useful resource for feminism. What bodies ‘tend to do’ are effects of histories rather than being originary. (56; original italics)

Bodily actions or “what bodies ‘tend to do’ ”, then, emerge from a particular context and are, therefore, historically situated. Bodies inherit these (sedimented) histories; and tendencies emerge from the latter impressing into the former.

The ways bodies tend to move and relate in the world are the effects of historically-informed actions that are promoted, propagated and passed on by previous generations. In this sense, the dance scholars I discuss below address a similar issue to Ahmed (2006): Because dance forms emerge from a specific contexts (Kealiinohomoku 2001; Novack 1990; Petkovski 2023), the reiteration of those forms’ gestures “inscribes” (Ness 2008) dancers not only with those forms’ ways of moving and ways of relating, but also with those forms’ “sedimented histories” (Ahmed 2006). Within and beyond dance, then, the migration of gesture is also a migration of history, to think with Ahmed (2006) and Ness (2008). Through “the repetition of bodily action” (Ahmed 2006, 56), bodies take up and carry the history of those actions or those movement histories and become orientated by them. Without an awareness of these movement histories, orientations run the risk of becoming normalized and naturalized or sedimented.

It is important to pay attention to the sedimented histories of actions because orientations have a shaping effect: To become orientated by movement histories means that bodies are simultaneously directed and shaped by those histories. Ahmed (2006) explains, “Bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and with force. Through repeating some gestures and

not others, or through being orientated in some directions and not others, bodies become contorted: they get twisted into shapes that enable some action *only insofar as they restrict the capacity for other kinds of action*” (91; original italics). The shaping effects of orientations is made clear by the risk that Ahmed (2006) highlights: “what [bodies] ‘do do’ opens up and expands some capacities, as an ‘expansion’ in certain directions that in turn might restrict what [they] can do in others” (60). Even though bodies are capable of diverse ways of moving, movement histories discourage deviance and divergence by prescribing orientations that constrain bodies’ movement cap/abilities or the ways in which bodies can move and relate. Therefore, the potential for bodies to move and relate otherwise is affected by how bodies are shaped by the orientations—which is to say, the iteration of movement histories—they (are made to) follow.

Another way to think about memory as “a culturally mediated material practice” (Seremetakis 1994, 9) is through the lens of “tendency” (Ahmed 2006). For example, it could be proposed that the “tendency” in current dominant Euro-Western (neuro)scientific and medical cultural practices is to discipline individuals to think of memory as a mental activity that is separate from the senses and sensing. In other words, individuals are made to “tend toward” (Ahmed 2006) practices that disembodiment memory, remove it from the senses and partition sensory spheres. For example, that people experiment with other ways of sensing in the West and that synesthesia is considered a “crossing of wires” in neurological imaginaries confirms that the separation of the senses is what is strived for and considered “normal” in Euro-Western popular imagination. Because of a “sedimented history” (Ahmed 2006), something that has been normalized and appears naturalized, this dominant culture forgets that separation is a practice

and perspective that is taught. Therefore, it fosters the senses in a particular direction (towards separation and isolation), which restricts what they can do (Ahmed 2006).

Both Ness (2008) and Ahmed (2006) reveal that the reiteration of ways of moving has consequences that extend beyond a body's physicality. Ness (2008) approaches the subject from a Peircean semeiotic<sup>3</sup> approach to argue that dance traditions inscribe themselves into bodies to physically shape those bodies, which will influence how those bodies move, think, relate and remember. Ahmed (2006) extends this argument through a phenomenological perspective, arguing that bodies are shaped and directed by orientations or tendencies that emerge from movement histories. It could be proposed, then, that embodying and enacting stories through dance will have material effects on dancers because practicing dance traditions and reiterating those traditions' movement histories will shape dancers' bodies, being and becoming.

### 2.3.2 “Acts of Transfer”: Transferring Memory through the Reiteration of Movement

In this sub-section, I focus on “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003), bodily practices such as dance, and the transference of memory. Although neither Sally Ann Ness (2008) nor Sara Ahmed (2006) address the relationship between reiteration and memory, they allude to it by reminding that the reiteration of movements will have material effects beyond the physicality of the body. For example, both authors consider how the reiteration of movement has the potential to impart ways of knowing, of which memory is a part. I turn to Paul Connerton (1989) and Diana Taylor (2003) to elaborate on this relationship through the concept of “acts of transfer”.

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<sup>3</sup> I use the nonstandard spelling of the term “semeiotic” following Sally Ann Ness (2008) who states that this term “makes specific reference to Peirce’s theory of signs” (26n3).

In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton (1989) is concerned with the existence and propagation of social memory. Connerton (1989) concentrates on “acts of transfer of crucial importance, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices” (40), to demonstrate how societies transmit their past to future generations—here society is conceptualized broadly “to include both small face-to-face societies (such as villages and clubs) and territorially extensive societies (such as nation-states and world religions)” (1). Connerton’s (1989) investigation reveals that because commemorative ceremonies are performances that are “highly representational” (71), they cannot account completely for social memory. By turning to bodily practices such as postures, gestures and movements from comportment, behaviours and practices, Connerton (1989) illustrates that “bodily social memory” (71) is imparted through these acts of transfer. What the author highlights is that social memory is interconnected with embodied memory and, more importantly, dependent on embodied memory for its existence and transference.

Connerton (1989) further addresses how acts of transfer such as bodily practices have been absented from discussions on collective memory because of their “ethereal” character. This is partly due to the weight that texts and written records have in Western societies, which direct and inform how acts of transfer are conceived. Thinking about the “linguistic turn”, Connerton (1989) states, “When the defining feature of the human species was seen as language, the body was ‘readable’ as a text or code, but the body is regarded as the arbitrary bearer of meanings; bodily practices are acknowledged, but in an etherealised form” (101).<sup>4</sup> Within this framework,

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<sup>4</sup> Connerton (1989) explains that by making society “in the image and the likeness of language”, “[the] body, reduced to the status of a sign, signifies by virtue of being a highly adaptable vehicle for the expression of mental categories” (95). Reducing the body and what the body can do to a “vehicle for the expression of mental categories” transforms bodily activity into concept. This perspective, therefore, “[views] understanding as a process in which a sense-datum is subsumed under an idea” (Connerton 1989, 95). Bodily practices and processes such as sensing become dis-embodied, relegated to the realm of the mind or a mental activity.

acts of transfer are easy to ignore because they are assumed to have no material effects. As I discussed in the previous section, both Sally Ann Ness (2008) and Sara Ahmed (2006) illustrate that bodily practices have material effects since the reiteration of movement shapes bodies by “inscribing” gestures into bodies (Ness 2008) as well as by “orientating” bodies to cultivate tendencies (Ahmed 2006). Along a similar vein, Connerton (1989) illustrates that bodily practices have material effects because they allow individuals to take in, carry and transmit social memory. Although Connerton (1989) does not address how the iteration of bodily practices effectuates memory, connecting what the author is saying to what Seremetakis (1994) and Maracle (2015) argue, that memory is a “culturally mediated material practice” (Seremetakis 1994, 9), it can be gathered that the reiteration of bodily practices not only transmit social memory but also cultivate and shape memory in an individual. Dance forms, as iterative cultural practices, have material effects on memory.

Similarly to Connerton (1989), Taylor (2003) highlights and provides evidence for how the ephemeral is overlooked in Euro-Western thought. In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Taylor (2003) discusses how the archive is privileged over the repertoire because the prior is composed of tangible written or recorded materials, which are considered legitimate forms of knowledge in Euro-Western societies, and, thus, prioritized over the ephemeral. Taylor (2003) informs, “Nonverbal practices—such as dance, ritual, and cooking, to name a few—that long served to preserve a sense of communal identity and memory, were not considered valid forms of knowledge” (18). Taylor (2003) disrupts the dismissal of embodied practices as epistemes by reminding that “[embodied] and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge” (21)—this is also recognized by Ness (2008) and Ahmed (2006). Taylor (2003) argues that neither the archive nor the repertoire is better than the other when it comes to transferring

knowledges since the archives cannot contain embodied experiences and embodied practices are not always archivable—both are necessary for transmission.

An intervention that Taylor (2003) makes in understandings of “performance” is breaking this activity out of frames that position it solely as an object of analysis and as a methodological lens (3). Rather than binding these acts up as solely cultural or collective expressions—in short, as objects of inquiry—the author invites a consideration of how performances activate sharing and embodied transference. By arguing that performance “functions as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis” (xvi), Taylor (2003) shifts the conversation to how embodied, non-verbal actions enable learning and the transmission of practices. Taylor (2003) asserts that performances “function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called ‘twice-behaved behaviour’ ” (2-3). What Taylor (2003) acknowledges here is that performances such as dance are relational acts of transfer.

Both Connerton (1989) and Taylor (2003) recognize the important relationship between memory and iteration in acts of transfer; that, through iteration, acts of transfer cultivate and shape memory. Connerton (1989) forwards that acts of transfer simultaneously allow social memory to be sustained by embodied memory and embodied memory to be informed by social memory. The reiteration of acts of transfer permits individuals to learn the “mnemonic systems” (Connerton 1989, 102) of the societies to which they belong. Through performance an individual can, in turn, transmit their embodied memory to another person, community and/or generation. Connerton (1989), therefore, argues “for the importance of performances, and in particular *habitual performances*, in conveying and sustaining memory” (104; emphasis mine) since a social memory requires a “bodily social memory” (71)—a “memory [that] is sedimented, or

amassed, in the body” (72) through repetition—to remember, perform and transmit the mnemonic systems of a society. This illustrates that the relationship between memory and reiteration is a significant aspect of acts of transfer because the reiteration of bodily practices plays an important role in “conveying and sustaining memory” (104). In other words, iterative bodily practices, such as dance, cultivate and shape memory.

Taylor (2003) further illustrates that acts of transfer are mnemonic practices that “sustain memory” (Connerton 1989, 104) through reiteration. Taylor (2003) reminds that the repertoire is “a nonarchival system of transfer” (xvii) because it is dependent on a live “embodied memory”, which “exceeds the archive’s ability to capture it” (20). In contradistinction from the archive, Taylor (2003) indicates that the repertoire “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (20). Through reiteration, “embodied and performed acts” (Taylor 2003, 21) such as dance impart ways of relating from one person, community and/or generation to another. It is the aspect of reiteration, the yet-again, which involves memory, that makes performances conducive for the transmission of the mnemonic systems of dance traditions (Ness 2008) and/or movement histories (Ahmed 2006).

In their respective studies, both Connerton (1989) and Taylor (2003) demonstrate that even though acts of transfer appear to have an “etherealised form” they nonetheless stick to bodily memory. Therefore, performances—from choreographed dances to daily chores—have material effects on societies because, through reiteration, these acts of transfer perform, commit to memory and transmit ways of relating. Although the reiteration of movement practices and movement histories can have physical and phenomenological effects on bodies, as Sally Ann

Ness (2008) and Sara Ahmed (2006) argue, acts of transfer, which are iterative, also cultivate and shape memory.

## 2.4 “Directing” Memory: Dance as Storytelling

In this section, I address how dance forms direct, cultivate and shape memory. At a fundamental level, dance is about relationships: dancers engage ways of moving to relate to time, space and music/sound as well as to other bodies, such as props and/or people, in time and space. These ways of relating, whether abstract or not, carry and transmit stories about the world that are committed to memory and re-membered through pedagogy, practice, performance and choreography. By committing and re-membering certain stories over others, memory is “directed” along a particular path (Maracle 2015), usually towards the propagation of the dance form and its social context. The reiteration and maintenance of a particular path will have an effect on memory.

I begin with dance scholars such as Joann Kealiinohomoku (2001), Cynthia Novack (1990) and Filip Petkovski (2023) who highlight how dance forms are informed by and propagate the onto-epistemologies from within which they emerge. What these authors illustrate is that dance forms simultaneously embody and create culture through pedagogy and performance. I argue that the embodiment and re-creation of culture cannot happen without memory because bodily practices, which are culturally informed, transmit collective memory (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003) and cultivate and shape memory (Seremetakis 1994; Maracle 2015). Then, I engage with theories on stories and storytelling from Indigenous Studies scholars such as Lee Maracle (2015, 2017), Daniel Heath Justice (2018) and Q’um Q’um Xiiem (a.k.a. Jo-ann Archibald 2008). Stories, here, are conceived as broadly as possible as any “literature”

(Justice 2018), medium, and meaning-making paradigm that imparts knowledges about the world and how to engage with the world. As such, these authors emphasize the important role that stories play in guiding our actions and in cultivating relationships with human and non-human beings. The significance of stories is that they “direct” memory and create worlds (Justice 2018; Maracle 2015; Xiiem 2008). Together, these scholars show that the stories that dance forms enact and transmit are connected to ideologies and histories since stories do not emerge out of nowhere, they are situated and partial.

#### 2.4.1 Movement as Culture, Choreography as Ideology

In this sub-section, I demonstrate how a dance form is a pedagogical tool that serves to disseminate ways of relating through performance. Because a dance form emerges within a specific context (Kealiinohomoku 2001), the medium performs ways of relating that are particular to that context. Through the examples of ballet, contact improvisation and Yugoslav “heritage choreography” (Petkovski 2023), I illustrate how the ways of relating that a dance performs is informed by, reiterates and reinforces a society’s onto-epistemologies (Kealiinohomoku 2001), a community’s beliefs and values (Novack 1990) and a nation-state’s ideologies (Petkovski 2023).

Originally published in 1970, “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as Ethnic Dance” was a seminal article by Joann Kealiinohomoku’s (2001). In the article, Kealiinohomoku (2001) argues that ballet is an “ethnic” dance form because it emerges within and is connected to a cultural context. Although the term “ethnic” has been problematized since the publication of this work, the intent of the article is still significant: Kealiinohomoku (2001) demonstrates how the descriptor “ethnic” has been used by dance scholars and anthropologists to mark non-Euro-

Western dance forms by using the term “as a euphemism for such old-fashioned terms as ‘heathen,’ ‘pagan,’ ‘savage,’ or [...] ‘exotic’ ” (41). Put differently, Kealiinohomoku (2001) shows how the term “ethnic” is synonymous with “other”. By arguing that ballet is an “ethnic” dance form, Kealiinohomoku (2001) addresses and critiques the “ethnic”/Euro-Western (read: non-ethnic) dichotomy by illustrating that “ballet is a product of the Western world” (40).<sup>5</sup> The author thus highlights the misconception that the term “ethnic” means non-Euro-Western and exposes the illusion of the “ethnic”/Euro-Western dichotomy.

Additionally, Kealiinohomoku (2001) maintains that using terms such as “ethnic” classifies dances based on a hierarchy that places ballet and other forms considered “high art” at the top (35). However, by reminding that anthropologists define the term “ethnic dance” as “the idea that all forms of dance reflect the cultural traditions within which they developed” (33), Kealiinohomoku (2001) demonstrates that ballet “[reflects] its own heritage” (41) and is therefore, culturally situated. As such, Kealiinohomoku (2001) turns Euro-Western dance scholars’ gaze towards themselves to show them that they dismiss their own Euro-Western dance forms such as ballet as “ethnic” because they equate that term with “other”.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Kealiinohomoku (2001) highlights that dance forms have power because they are actors in the “invention of culture” (Wagner 1975). As I have demonstrated, this “invention” cannot happen without memory because bodily practices, which are culturally informed, transmit collective

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<sup>5</sup> Dance studies scholar Marta Savigliano (1995) also describes this dichotomy as the colonized-exotic-Other/One dichotomy (2).

<sup>6</sup> This strategy is reminiscent of Roy Wagner’s (1975) ethnography, which came out after Kealiinohomoku’s article. In *The Invention of Culture*, Wagner (1975) also (re)turns the gaze towards American society and anthropologists, who the author exposes as “cultures” of invention. The author’s reflexive text is a fieldworker’s guide to “introspection” that situates the fieldworker as both a person and a participant in the invention of culture. Wagner (1975) acknowledges that “cultures” “exist through the fact of their being invented, and through the effectiveness of this invention” (10) noting the “made-up”-ness of the “culture” concept. Significantly, both Kealiinohomoku’s (2001) article and Wagner’s (1975) ethnography signal to the Reflexive Turn in anthropology, which occurred around this time.

memory (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003) and cultivate and shape memory (Seremetakis 1994; Maracle 2015).

While I understand that Kealiinohomoku's (2001) idea that dance "reflects" culture is meant to remind how a dance genre "shows back" to observers the cultural context within which it emerges, I feel that the word "reflect" is a more passive conceptualization than what occurs in practice. Dance is actively engaged in the invention and articulation of culture. I would even argue that dance is a refraction of "culture"—not a mirror image but a stylized, sideways imaging. Additionally, the term slips easily into ideas of representation or as a copy of an "original". Dance does not allow this to be true because a dance performance, even when choreographed, is always (re)created in that moment. "Reflection", therefore, does not encompass all that dance can do. It is for these reasons that instead of thinking with "reflection", I think with remembering: dance practitioners commit to memory and re-member the values, beliefs and ideologies of a society through the ways of relating that they are made to enact. These ways of relating are embodied and become rooted in the body as memory to be re-membered at a later time. This offers another way to think about how dance cultivates and shapes memory.

As Kealiinohomoku (2001) outlines, ballet is the product of Western onto-epistemologies since the form carries Euro-Western values, ideologies, world views, geographies, histories, politics, economic pursuits, bodily aesthetics and more (40-41). By showing how ballet enacts the culture within which it emerges, the author is able to indicate the kinds of perspectives and practices within which ballet is embedded but also which ballet embodies. Through training and staged performances, ballet imparts, reiterates and reinforces a hierarchical relational model that is aligned with Euro-Western onto-epistemologies. For example, Kealiinohomoku (2001) points out that ballet engages the "star system", which places individuals along a hierarchy, as well as

enacts stylized Euro-Western customs “such as the mannerisms from the age of chivalry, courting, weddings, christenings, burial, and mourning customs” (40). Moreover, the author discloses the various “roles which appear repeatedly in our ballets such as [...] performers of evil magic, villains and seductresses in black, evil stepparents, royalty and peasants, and especially, beautiful pure young women and their consorts” (Kealiinohomoku 2001, 40). These examples demonstrate that ballet is “orientated” (Ahmed 2006) towards Euro-Western ideologies that, more often than not, support and propagate unequal power relations. Through the example of ballet, Kealiinohomoku (2001) illustrates well how dance emerges from a particular context, which it performs and propagates.

In *Sharing the Dance*, anthropologist, dancer and choreographer Cynthia Novack’s (1990) goes a step further than Kealiinohomoku (2001) by explicitly illustrating and discussing the co-constitution of dance and culture. Novack’s (1990) “ethnographic history” (3) of contact improvisation in 1960s American culture outlines the interconnectedness of body, movement and culture, and therefore, how dance becomes a world-making practice through the body. Novack (1990) demonstrates that contact improvisation is “the embodiment of a political period, the 60s” and therefore, argues that “[culture] is embodied” because through movement “we participate in and reinforce culture, and we also create it” (8). The author’s understanding of movement as culture highlights the dynamic co-creation between individuals and societies through dance and, therefore, that dance forms are world-making practices.

In the world and culture created through contact improvisation, Novack (1990) reveals that this dance form was (at least initially) egalitarian since contact improvisation “embodied the social ideologies of the early ‘70s which rejected traditional gender roles and social hierarchies” (11). As Novack (1990) explains, these egalitarian ways of relating manifest in contact

improvisation through particular techniques such as “inward focus, disorientation and uncontrolled flow in space, and a combination of supporting and dependent movement for each and every dancer regardless of sex” (132). Because contact improvisation is often danced in pairs, these ways of moving were meant to suggest a “sincere and intimate dialogue of two people through the interaction of their bodies, cooperating with the laws of physics and evoking images of comradery, play, nurturing, sport, sex, and love” (Novack 1990, 141). This imagined (ideal) scene encapsulates well the mythos of contact improvisation as well as the ways of relating that the form is/was invested in imparting, reiterating and reinforcing through bodily practices.

By performing particular (invested) relationships via movement, both ballet and contact improvisation serve as a kind of pedagogy. The training of dancers is one aspect of each dance’s pedagogy; however, there is also a pedagogy that is audience-oriented. Both ballet and contact improvisation perform (back) to their audiences the contexts from which each form emerged such as the ideologies embedded in the dance forms and that inform, for example, the hierarchical or egalitarian relationships that dance practitioners are trained to embody and enact. As Lee Maracle (2015) reminds, the relationships that are given importance in a society or community will “direct” memory along a particular path (1-2). In other words, the particular ways of relating learned and performed through a dance genre will reiterate and reinforce that form’s norms, customs and ideologies, cultivating and shaping a memory that aligns with those practices and meaning-making paradigms.

In “Choreography as Ideology”, cultural and performance studies scholar Filip Petkovski (2023) offers an excellent example of how dance can be mobilized to educate audiences.

Discussing, specifically, the case of the Yugoslavia area,<sup>7</sup> Petkovski (2023) illustrates how dance can become a vehicle for the ideological endeavours of nation-states. Petkovski (2023) argues that “in order to embody heritage and transform it into national dance repertoire, the process of choreography making had to become ideological, as it was carefully dictated by national institutions and folklorists” (98). Moreover, “although ideology was the main driving force in staging heritage as choreography, it was also used as a methodology in making [...] heritage choreography” (Petkovski 2023, 99). Petkovski (2023) reveals that, through folklore, “heritage choreography” emerged in the Yugoslavia area as a way to build and root the nation-state in socialist ideologies, which were orientated away from communism (113).

As Petkovski (2023) informs, heritage choreography embraced and promoted “the Yugoslav ideology of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity)” (99; original italics). Petkovski (2023) relates that the chain dances (105) and circular formations (106) found in heritage choreography embody this ideology because they model ways of relating within a “classless” society (98). Therefore, Petkovski (2023) maintains that heritage choreography serves “not only for entertainment but also for educating the nation about its history and roots” (99). By using heritage choreography to disseminate a particular political perspective, dance in the Yugoslavia area becomes a pedagogical tool with which to educate audiences. In this way, the dance form serves to “direct” (Maracle 2015) the memory of dance practitioners and audience members and the collective memory of the nation.

What Kealiinohomoku (2001), Novack (1990) and Petkovski (2023) highlight is the co-constitution of dance and context. Dance forms perform ways of relating that are informed by

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<sup>7</sup> Petkovski (2023) uses the term “ ‘Yugoslavia area’ to refer to the countries that are geographically situated in what was once known as Yugoslavia because, although they are independent states, they share a common history and culture” (99).

and aligned with the ideas and ideals of a community, country and/or culture. Dance therefore serves as a pedagogical tool because it can be used to disseminate and impart beliefs, values, ideologies and onto-epistemologies. Because dance is neither acultural nor apolitical, the ways of relating that dance forms enact can have powerful implications for a society. Ways of relating, among other things, serve to “direct” (Maracle 2015) memory resulting in the cultivation and shaping of memory in ways that are specific to that context. This is what dance as a mnemonic practice attends to and why a critical memory practice is necessary in dance.

#### 2.4.2 Story, Storytelling and Storywork

“We are all story. We are the stories we are told and we are the stories we tell ourselves. [...] Stories are not *part* of your culture. Your culture is story. It is entirely story. Everyone’s is. We are all the stories we are told. Our being is story. Our essence is story. Our vision is shaped by story; our hearing, our morals and ethics are all story. The wiring in our brains is shaped by story. Every thought you think is framed by story.

I am story.

You are story.

The universe is story, and it all comes from the Trickster.”

– Harold R. Johnson (*The Power of Story* 2022, 35; original italics)

In this sub-section, I elaborate further on how dance forms direct, cultivate and shape memory through the connection between dance and storytelling. I argue that the stories that dance forms tell themselves about themselves and present to a public are also involved in the cultivation and shaping of memory because they reiterate and reinforce the cultural structures from within which they emerged. Above, I discussed how dance forms are informed by the contexts within which they emerge and perform. Additionally, dance also theorizes the world through the stories it tells itself about itself; these stories include histories, “just so” stories about training or how

movements should be done, experiential stories and more. In this sub-section then, I delve into the importance of stories and storytelling, thinking specifically with Indigenous scholars.

Although Indigenous scholars consider ideologies, histories, experiences, recollections, practices, myths, legends and more to be “stories” because they all impart knowledges and create worlds, in this dissertation I differentiate between them for the sake of clarity. I turn to Indigenous scholars because it is protocol to think with them since I am situated on their land; because Indigenous Knowledges have a lot to offer to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike; and to consider, following their lead and directives, how non-Indigenous stories serve Indigenous and collective futurity.

In the epigraph above, Cree author and lawyer Harold Johnson (2022) asserts that the world is created through story. Because “[we] are the stories we are told and we are the stories we tell ourselves” (Johnson 2022, 35), stories inform how we imagine ourselves in/and the world, which has consequences for how we relate in and with the world. Johnson (2022) confirms this when the author remarks that “[our] vision is shaped by story; our hearing, our morals and ethics are all story” (35). Stories do the important work of creating worlds and serve as guides.

Lee Maracle (2017) also emphasizes that the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves direct world-making practices because of how they are informed by ways of relating. Addressing how stories guide co-existence (which is particularly challenging for Canadians/settlers), Maracle (2017) explains, “Almost all so-called human progress is connected to our mythologies either directly or indirectly. Where we get ourselves in trouble is when we declare by dint of the bayonet that one set of mythologies is based on science proper and all other mythologies are balderdash. There is something useful in every story” (55-56). What the author draws attention to

is not only a responsibility for the stories we choose to tell (about ourselves and our cultures) but also a responsibility to allow different stories to co-exist. Maracle (2017) points out that there is no need to privilege one story or set of stories over others because “there is something useful in every story” (56).<sup>8</sup> For this reason, Maracle (2017) stresses that “[mythologies] from all over the world should be studied. They should be studied for the hold they have on us” (57).

Moreover, Maracle (2017) urges Canadian settlers to examine their/our stories. The author’s ask is a reminder that those who have settled in what today is known as Canada come from a (cultural) context that is informed by particular practices and ideologies—practices and ideologies that show up in our stories. The stories that dance forms present, then, are also connected to histories and ideologies since stories do not emerge out of nowhere, they are situated and partial.

Indigenous scholars and creatives teach us that stories conjure the past as well as point to the historiography of practices and onto-epistemologies: this is what makes them good guides. Maracle (2017) explains that Indigenous people “look at mythology as the path to truth and knowledge—the key, as it were” (58).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, “[to] dismiss mythology as of no earthly use is ludicrous” because “[mythology] contains truth” (Maracle 2017, 58). For this reason, Maracle (2015) recognizes the power of stories to “plant seeds of memory” (38). Stories inform a current

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<sup>8</sup> Yet history shows that not every story is given equal legitimacy. Christianity and Science, for example, stake their claims to truth and knowledge (Maracle 2017) by distinguishing and distancing themselves from “pagan” and “unsubstantiated” stories. The paradox lies in the fact that these knowledge systems not only inform each other, they also emerged in response to and where shaped by “pagan” and “unsubstantiated” stories. For example, historian Frances Yates (1964; 1966), in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* and *The Art of Memory*, demonstrates how mysticism and its methods informed scientific thinking both through disidentification (Descartes’s cogito) and stripped-down mimicry (Leibniz’s infinite calculus). In other words, the Enlightenment was a response and, at times, a countermovement to the mystic/occult pursuit for divine light or illumination; but the latter also inspired methods for acquiring “truth” and “knowledge”. These kinds of counter-practices and syncretisms are also seen in Christianity (i.e. winter/summer solstice and Christmas).

<sup>9</sup> Viewed in this way, Science and Christianity too are mythological because they are paths to truth and knowledge that inform ways of being in and becoming with the world.

moment and direct a community into the future because they bring a recent and ancestral memory of a community into the present. It is important to understand what non-Indigenous stories are doing and how they might affect Indigenous and collective futurity, particularly because they have implications for relationships with land as many Indigenous scholars speak to (Armstrong 2017; Goeman 2008; Maracle 2015; Justice 2018; Q'um Q'um Xiiem 2008; Watts 2013)

Even more radically, Maracle (2017) asserts, “Fiction is powerful truth” (82). Fiction, here, can be interpreted in a genealogical, transformative sense such as a mythological story that is connected or tethered to an event or story from long ago but that has been transformed to fit a current situation to impart guidance. As Maracle (2017) explains, “Just as I was raised on story, I brought my children up on story. We work with story. We begin with an old tale and, as we progress through the story, we tell it back different but the same, changing it so it becomes a modern new story. *Fiction, created as a continuum of original story*” (40; emphasis mine). Fiction or a story that is “different but the same” carries and imparts knowledges. Maracle’s (2017) assertion that “fiction is powerful truth” (82) emphasizes the importance of stories and their potential. Interpreted within a relational framework, Maracle (2017) is proposing that stories have the potential to foster ways of relating between human and non-human beings that can have creative or destructive consequences.

As queer, Cherokee Indigenous Literatures scholar Daniel Heath Justice (2018) argues in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, there are stories that wound and stories that heal (1-6). Justice (2018) points out that “the ways that we understand that vexed and vexing idea of *literature*, and how assumptions about what is or is not ‘literary’ are used to privilege some voices and ignore others” (xvii; original italics). For Justice (2018), then, “literature” exceeds the

bounds of writing and encompasses “a wide array of other kinds of texts” (22) that “communicate stories and ideas” (23). Storytellers of any medium, including dance, are responsible for the stories that they choose to tell and put out into the world.

Stories are significant for becoming human. As Justice (2018) argues, “Our lives are incarnations of the stories we tell, the stories told about us, and the stories we inherit. They are both the process and the consequence of the transformations into the fulness of our humanity” (34). Humanity, here, is considered as a learning process embedded in kinship relations with non-human beings (41-42, 47). To become human, then, we need stories that open up towards this kind of humanity not ones that position humans as superior. Justice (2018) reminds, that Euro-Western stories “rooted in the Abrahamic traditions” are limiting because in these stories “there is a fiercely maintained boundary between human and non-human, and even in the former category, there is a clear hierarchy: men are more human than women, European colonizers are more human than Indigenous and other colonized peoples, the rich and titled are more human than the poor and oppressed, Christian capitalists are more human than animist traditionalists, and so on” (40). Moving away from these stories present otherwise ways for living and becoming human. As Justice (2018) asserts, “We can’t possibly live otherwise until we first *imagine otherwise*” (156; original italics).

The kinds of engagement with stories that Maracle (2017) and Justice (2018) illustrate is a pedagogy that Stó:lō Indigenous Studies scholar Q’um Q’um Xiiem (a.k.a. Jo-Ann Archibald 2008) has coined as “Indigenous storywork”. In the book *Indigenous Storywork*, Q’um Q’um Xiiem<sup>10</sup> (2008) explains that storywork is a term for “using First Nations stories and storytelling

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<sup>10</sup> I cite Q’um Q’um Xiiem’s full name because together it means “strong clear water”, as mentioned on the author’s website (<https://indigenoustorywork.com/>). Shortening the author’s name to “Xiiem” would follow the “last name” custom, which does not make sense for an Indigenous name.

for education purposes” (ix). Importantly, this practice is supported by and intertwined with seven theoretical storywork principles: “respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy” (Q’um Q’um Xiiem 2008, ix). Q’um Q’um Xiiem (2008) relates that through storywork, “stories can ‘take on their own life’ and ‘become the teacher’ if these principles are used” (ix). This statement articulates well what both Justice (2018) and Maracle (2017) forward about stories and storytelling: the power of stories to become teachers or guides (Q’um Q’um Xiiem 2008, 138). Storywork clearly outlines how storytelling and working with stories is a pedagogical practice because of how stories guide listeners/readers to make meaning in their life.

Indigenous storytelling and storywork shares similarities with non-verbal performance art forms such as dance. Methodologically, Q’um Q’um Xiiem (2008) points out that performance enlivens the story and is part of storywork (147, 149), allowing those witnessing to foster relationships as well as create their own meaning. As Q’um Q’um Xiiem (2008) reveals, “A synergistic action happens between the storyteller and story, but it is the storyteller who ultimately gives breath, or life, to the story. From listening to and reading what storytellers say about making meaning from story, I have learned that the traditional ways favour no or very little direct guidance from the storyteller” (112). Therefore, stories in Indigenous communities are meant to guide and teach listeners, often children, by allowing them to be a part of their development (Maracle 2017; Q’um Q’um Xiiem 2008). For example, Maracle (2017) comments, “No one disciplined me by spanking or scoldings; rather, the old people watching me told me a story and I was expected to figure out my behavioural issues from the story” (40). In a way, this process is similar to non-verbal performances such as dance in which performers try to foster a

relationship with the audience so that individuals can create meaning from what they have witnessed.

I am not trying to extract and supplant what Q'um Q'um Xiiem (2008) shares about storywork onto (a Chilean) dance, especially because storywork and the principles it is guided by emerged from the author's research with Stó:lō and Coast Salish communities and are specifically meant for working with Indigenous stories. What I want to highlight is that the lessons that Q'um Q'um Xiiem (2008) imparts about the power of stories, which Justice (2018) and Maracle (2017) also emphasize, is applicable to dance, generally, and cueca dance, specifically. This is because dance is a storytelling medium that conveys ways of relating and, therefore, it is a world-making practice. Not only do the mythologies that dance performs contain truth, to paraphrase Maracle (2017), the stories that are (made to be) enacted through dance have the potential to take hold by becoming reiterated and reinforced since dance forms can serve as “teachers” or “guides” (Q'um Q'um Xiiem 2008) to audience members.

As Maracle (2015, 2017) and Q'um Q'um Xiiem (2008) assert, the stories that communities, countries and cultures carry and forward direct world-making practices. I find similarities between dance and storytelling because both are media where the audience must make meaning. As outlined above, in Indigenous practices, stories are told to allow the audience or witnesser to create meaning for themselves. The audience member must use their memory and their experiences to make meaning from the story in a way that serves them. Likewise in dance, since the medium is oftentimes a non-verbal and non-discursive performance, audience members must find ways to sense what the dance performance is trying to impart. Making sense of the performance then requires attending to the senses, how one feels about the performance, and one's experiences to make meaning from the performance. As a storytelling medium, dance

needs to be engaged critically and responsibly, which is why a critical memory practice is necessary in dance.

What I have illustrated is that stories are also significant for directing, cultivating and shaping memory. Not only are there collective memories that inform personal memory, there are also dance-specific memories with which cultural memory systems and the memory sense are entangled. Dance forms carry a memory about themselves that is imparted to dance practitioners. This dance-specific memory is transmitted and embodied through dance education as well as through the stories that a dance form tells itself about itself and that it presents to a public. Dance as a mnemonic practice, then, cultivates and shapes a memory. How this memory is cultivated and shaped will affect how it is “directed” (Maracle 2015) to re-member stories, in which I include ideologies, histories, experiences, recollections, practices, performances, myths, legends, social constructs and more.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my theoretical framework for dance as a mnemonic practice: a practice that commits to memory re-members ways of relating through ways of moving. I engaged with particular scholars from dance studies and memory studies as well as Indigenous Studies, performance studies, queer phenomenology, sensory anthropology and intersections thereof to create the theoretical framework. These scholars offered language to talk and think about the cultivation and shaping of memory.

Memory as a sense is central to the idea that dance is a mnemonic practice. As a “culturally mediated material practice” (Seremetakis 1994, 9), memory as a sense emerges from within contexts and webs or relations (Maracle 2015, 2017; Seremetakis 1994). Both C. Nadia

Seremetakis (1994) and Lee Maracle (2015, 2017) demonstrate that the cultivation and shaping of memory is an active process. This active process is encapsulated in the phrase “commit(ing) to memory” and term “re-membering”: the prior refers to a process whereby memory is activated and, therefore, cultivated and shaped by a commitment to remember; the latter can be defined as piecing together anew or re-creating. Additionally, I understand re-membering as a sensorial activity, a creative process that involves sensing (the room, the people, the community) in the moment (Maracle 2015; Pandolfo 1997). Importantly, in Maracle’s (2015) view, re-membering is an ethical practice that accounts for all beings’ futurity.

Attending to (re)iteration demonstrates how memory is actively cultivated and shaped. Although neither Sally Ann Ness (2008) nor Sara Ahmed (2006) discuss memory explicitly in their respective works, both authors argue that the (physical and phenomenological) shaping of bodies occurs through the reiteration of movement. The “inscription of gesture” (Ness 2008) offers a way of thinking about how movements from dance forms migrate into the body and transform the body through repetition. As such, when I evoke the term “inscription” in this dissertation, I am thinking with Ness’s (2008) idea and how a movement is migrating into the body through repetition. Because Ness (2008) does not make a distinction between body and mind, the author speculates that the shaping of the body will also influence consciousness of which memory is a part. Through the concept of “orientations”, Ahmed (2006) illustrates that the reiteration of movement histories effectuates tendencies in bodies. Ahmed (2006) emphasizes that tendencies are not inherited but acquired from the movement histories that bodies inherit. Ahmed (2006) further acknowledges that bodies can attend to queer moments to re-orientate their movement suggesting that bodies are not condemned to reiterate sedimented movement histories. In this dissertation, I use the term “orientation” to illustrate how forces such as

ideologies (Chapter 3) and social constructs (Chapter 4) orientate bodies in particular ways. Through the repetition of movement, then, bodies become orientated in the world or, in other words, are made to tend toward certain bodies and movements over others. The physical and phenomenological body thus emerges through the reiteration of movement; and because the body cannot be detached from memory, the shaping of the body affects how memory is shaped.

I also illustrated that memory is cultivated and shaped through “acts of transfer”, bodily practices that transmit memory (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003). Paul Connerton (1989) and Diana Taylor (2003) both show how the iteration of bodily practices such as dance play a significant role in the transference of memory from one individual, society and/or generation to another. By learning and performing particular practices, those practices are committed to memory, re-membered and passed on. Through reiteration, then, “embodied and performed acts” (Taylor 2003, 21) such as dance must first cultivate and shape memory before it can be imparted. In Chapter 5, I outline how I cultivated a memory of cueca dance through an iterative research process. In Chapter 6, I detail how I used “acts of transfer” as a method. By imparting my memory of cueca dance to students and dancers, I revealed to myself the memory that I had cultivated during my year of research.

In the final section, I discussed how stories “direct” memory and inform the process of re-membering (Maracle 2015). As Indigenous scholars forward, storytelling is a world-making practice that influences how we imagine ourselves in/and the world as well as our engagement with the world (Johnson 2022; Justice 2018; Maracle 2015, 2017; Q’um Q’um Xiiem 2008). Stories—considered here as broadly as possible—carry knowledges that when told re-member the world anew. Dance scholars align with this perspective and demonstrate how dance theorizes and creates the culture from within which it emerges (Kealiinohomoku 2001; Novack 1990;

Petkovski 2023). Stories, therefore, “direct” (Maracle 2015) memory to re-member particular ways of being and becoming. Although the terms “orientation” (Ahmed 2006) and “direction” (Maracle 2015) share similarities since both attend to positions, alignments and movements, I use “orientation” when talking about bodies and “direction” when speaking about memory. As Maracle (2015) maintains, “Future is a remembered thing” (7); therefore, re-membering particular stories “directs” memory towards a specific outcome and, therefore, future.

Dance as a mnemonic practice is meant to illustrate that dance forms not only cultivate and shape memory, they also direct memory through the stories that dance forms tell about themselves and present to publics. Dance as a storytelling medium re-members or re-creates the world. This is the power and danger of dance. The stories that are a part of dance forms—whether as part of their archive or repertoire (Taylor 2003)—extend beyond the medium, as the scholars in this chapter show. These stories, for example, inspire ways of relating that have the potential to become normalized and even naturalized, a sedimented history (Ahmed 2006), as I illustrate in the chapters that follow. Dance forms as storytelling media have a responsibility for the stories they put out into the world because these stories will have consequences.

In the next chapter, I provide a context of cueca dance. The first part of the chapter focuses on an official history of cueca dance in which I trace cueca (dance) through four time periods: 1) the Era of Independence (1810-1818); 2) the subsequent Republican Era (1818-1891); 3) early-to-mid-twentieth century (1920s-1960s); and 4) the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1990). This official history of cueca dance inadvertently or not privileges *la cueca campesina-huasa* + the rural-huasa cueca. As I discuss, in this official history *la cueca campesina-huasa* stands in for all cueca dances, which has the effect of erasing the latter. Therefore, this official history “directs” (Maracle 2015) a (collective) memory of cueca dance towards *la cueca*

campesina-huasa. The second part offers cueca dance stories that align with or intervene in this official history and demonstrate cueca dance's multiplicity. Although not all of these stories are given the same value, they nonetheless remind that cueca dance's context is much more complex than what an official history conveys.

Additionally, I demonstrate that the context of cueca dance "orientates" (Ahmed 2006) bodies towards particular ways of relating. I trace heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism through a history of cueca dance and through the cueca dance stories to argue that these ideologies are embedded in and embodied through the dance form. The cueca dance stories specifically highlight how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism manifest through ways of relating. I argue that these outdated and at times harmful and violent ways of relating are committed to memory and re-membered through cueca dance performances, which I discuss in Chapter 4. The ideologies, history and stories favoured by cueca dance's context, then, cultivates, shapes and "directs" (Maracle 2015) a memory of the dance form that specifically serves the futurity of a particular vision of the Chilean nation-state.

## Chapter 3 | Contextualizing Cueca Dance: A History, Many Stories

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the official history of cueca dance and argue that cueca dance's historiography has been written from the perspective of a criollo agrarian nationalism, which was important for Chile as a nation-building project. As I will elaborate on below, "criollo" is a term from the Spanish caste system that refers to a person of European descent who was born in the Americas. For an individual to be considered "criollo" both parents had to be European. The official history of cueca dance privileges la cueca campesina-huasa as "the" cueca and reduces cueca dance's multiplicity into a singularity: a version from the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile where many agrarian elites owned large estates. To highlight cueca dance's multiplicity, and intervene in this official history, I bring up and recount stories that circulate about diverse and at times divergent cueca dances. These cueca dance stories either reinforce an official history of cueca dance or intervene in it, by reminding that there are other cueca dances in Chile with their own histories and communities.

In this chapter, I also pay attention to the ideologies that are embedded in the official history of cueca dance and in cueca dance stories. I focus on how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism inform this history and these stories. Cueca dance stories specifically reveal how these ideologies manifest through ways of relating between men and women. As I will show, cueca dance stories often consist of a (national) man character who is the protagonist and a woman who is the love interest and the object of his affection.

I engage with the definition of “heteropatriarchy” that is forwarded by Kanaka Maoli feminist scholar Maile Arvin, Unanga Indigenous Studies scholar Eve Tuck and Klamath Tribes ethnic studies scholar Angie Morrill (2013). In “Decolonizing Feminism”, these authors define heteropatriarchy as “the social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent” (13). As the authors state, in this social system men are “both center and leader/boss” and “serve as the model for social arrangements of the state and its institutions” (Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 2013, 13).

For a definition of “settler colonialism”, I turn to Indigenous Studies scholar Daniel Heath Justice (2018) who defines the term in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* as “those peoples and populations not identified as Indigenous, primarily but not exclusively of European heritage, and often representing and furthering the policies, practices, and perspectives of the larger settler state” (14). Justice (2018) further highlights how these “policies, practices, and perspectives” are often harmful to Black bodies and, therefore, anti-Black racism “is deeply enmeshed with anti-Indigeneity within settler colonial race logics” (15). These definitions demonstrate that heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies centre and propagate (white) men’s desires as well as settler colonists’ claims to and occupation of land-as-property at the expense of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, queer and women’s bodies and configurations thereof.

Attending to the official history of cueca dance, the cueca dance stories and the ideologies that course through them were important for cultivating and shaping my memory of cueca dance. The contradictions and counter-stories that emerged as I read about cueca (dance) in secondary source literature provided me with a breadth of information about cueca dance, generally. I noticed that the official history of cueca dance was strongly connected to a

nationalist collective memory of the dance form; whereas the stories were linked to specific communities, which sometimes deviated from this official history. Because I chose to commit to memory the similarities and divergences between the official history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories, I cultivated an expansive and specific memory of cueca dance.

Moreover, my memory of cueca dance was also informed by paying attention to the heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies embedded in an official history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories. These ideologies were subtle but present in an official history of cueca dance, meaning that they informed the perspective from which a history of cueca dance was written but never acknowledged. Similarly, these ideologies were present but unacknowledged in cueca dance stories. The difference, for me, was that cueca dance stories explicitly forwarded ways of relating that were conducive to propagating these ideologies such as by centering men's desires as well as settler colonial entitlement to and occupation of land-as-property, which I discuss in more depth below. In some instances, these ideologies served as a mnemonic or memory aid for how cueca dances should be performed. Tracking how these ideologies were woven through an official history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories affected what I remembered about the dance form and, therefore, my memory of cueca dance.

A history of cueca dance, cueca dance stories and the ideologies they forward are the context from within which cueca dance emerges. In Chapter 2, I discussed how anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku (2001) argues that it is important to pay attention to the contexts from within which dance forms emerge because dance forms are not acultural or outside of culture. Kealiinohomoku (2001) thinks with the term "ethnic", as was the norm in 1970s, at the time of the writing, to remind ballet scholars and enthusiasts that ballet is (also) a cultural form because it presents Euro-Western onto-epistemologies—the co-constitution of ways of being and ways of

knowing—on stage. By using the term “ethnic”, Kealiinohomoku (2001) is not trying to “other” ballet—although the author does comment how the term was used to “other” non-Euro Western dance forms—instead the author is situating ballet in its context. By using ballet as an example, Kealiinohomoku (2001) reminds that dance forms, including ballet, are cultural practices that reflect a cultural context or, as I prefer, refract a cultural milieu in stylized ways: dance forms such as ballet and cueca dance are actors in the creation of culture or, said differently, are world-making practices.

Performance studies scholar Filip Petkovski (2023) further highlights the importance of considering ideologies as part of the cultural milieu from within which dance forms emerge. In the case of the Yugoslavia area, Petkovski (2023) highlights how “heritage choreography” became a vehicle for disseminating socialist ideologies as well as to create distance from communism (98-99, 102, 113). Petkovski (2023) argues that social dances “should not be solely understood as long-established customs rooted in ‘authenticity’ but as an ideology” that references earlier practices but that have been reformulated and re-framed in a present (political) moment (100-101). By considering social dances as an ideology, Petkovski (2023) reminds that social dances (and other dance forms) do not just emerge from within an ideological context, they become and enact those ideologies. As such, it is pertinent to consider the ideological dimension of dance practices.

Heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism are embedded in and even inform a history of cueca dance. The historiography of cueca dance has been constructed from the point of view of the man settler colonist—a perspective of men domination and settler colonial occupation. This historiography replicates what semiotician Walter Mignolo (2005) calls “the idea of ‘Latin’ America”. The formulation and fabulation of “Latin” America is based on a story of “discovery”,

a narrative of colonial expansion “from the European perspective, the perspective of modernity” (xi) that allows some people to claim and name land. In a similar way, the history of cueca dance centres and engages with heteropatriarchal and settler colonial “policies, practices, and perspectives” (Justice 2018, 14) to situate cueca dance as “Chilean”, which simultaneously serves to legitimize “Chile”<sup>1</sup> as Chile.

As I elaborate on below, the official history of cueca dance is specifically from the perspective of agrarian elites who owned latifundios—large agricultural estates aimed at high profits through the use of cheap or slave labour—in the Central Zone of Chile. As such, the history of cueca dance that is forwarded and that dominates collective memory is that of la cueca campesina-huasa, a rural cueca dance. This partial history actively erases the contributions of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities to the tripartite practice, generally, and the dance form, specifically. Moreover, this incomplete history occludes the histories of non-rural cueca dance versions and variations. Again, I use the term “version” to talk about cueca dances that are different from each other because they emerge from specific historical moments and/or communities; and “variation” refers to cueca dances that I have grouped together based on family resemblances in terms of movement and the ideologies they forward (please see Table 3.2 below).

Regrettably, heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies also permeate cueca dance stories—the stories that are associated with particular cueca dance versions and variations—

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Idea of Latin America*, semiotician Walter Mignolo (2005) reminds that “the idea of Latin” America is dependent on a narrative of “discovery” from the point of view of Europe. This perspective erases the diverse histories, stories and memories from communities and localities that were and are still present in what today is known as “Latin” America. The author uses the quotation marks to imply that the “Latin” in Latin America is an invention created from a biased perspective that historically and politically erases the peoples and territories of Abya Yala—the Guna term for this land base. Along a similar vein, Chile can be placed in quotation marks because this made-up nation-state is dependent on a national narrative that emerges from a heteropatriarchal, settler-colonist perspective that uses and forwards “modernity/coloniality”, two processes that cannot be detangled (Mignolo 2005).

since they centre men’s desires as well as settler colonist occupation. As I mentioned in the Introduction, in this dissertation I examine five cueca dances: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa + rural-huasa cueca;<sup>2</sup> 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava + the cheeky-fierce cueca; 4) la cueca sola + the solitary cueca by the women of La Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos Desaparecidos + The Group for Detained and Disappeared Family Members (AFDD); and 5) a queer(ed) cueca dance that cites la cueca sola performed by the queer collective Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse. In this chapter, I also bring two additional cueca dances into the conversation: 1) la cueca a la bandera + the cueca to the flag; and 2) la cueca a la Carmelita + the cueca to the Virgin of Mount Carmel (please see Table 3.2). (Henceforth, I will use the Spanish names when referring to these cueca dances.) I consider these two cueca dances to be variations and extensions of the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. They demonstrate well how settler colonialism plays out through stories about country and Church.

| Versions   | la cueca<br>campesina-huasa              |                                     | la cueca<br>chora-brava | la cueca sola                           |
|------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Variations | the competitive cueca<br>campesina-huasa | the social cueca<br>campesina-huasa |                         | Las Yeguas’<br>queer(ed) cueca<br>dance |
|            | la cueca a<br>la bandera                 | la cueca a<br>la Carmelita          |                         |                                         |

Table 3.2: Cueca dance versions and variations (with two additional cueca dances)

<sup>2</sup> The term “huasa” is the adjectival form of the noun “huaso”, the term for the Chilean rural horseman and an important Chilean character whom I will discuss below. Because “cueca” is a feminine noun, this adjective takes the feminine ending based on Spanish conventions. Therefore, I have chosen to keep the term “huasa” when speaking about this cueca in English. Importantly, “huasa” does not mean “cowgirl” in this instance. As far as I know, “huasa” is not a common term in Chile and definitely not el huaso’s counterpart. As I will discuss below, el huaso’s partner is la china, another rural character.

I use the hyphen to link up particular cueca dances as a way to acknowledge the historical and socio-political interconnectedness of certain cueca dance versions and variations. For example, la cueca campesina-huasa is a composite of the rural cueca and the huasa cueca because both cuecas stem from the countryside and have become synonymous with each other. Similarly, la cueca chora-brava is composed of the cheeky cueca and the fierce cueca, both of which are urban cuecas that emerge from and speak to the experiences of the urban, working-class, poor communities in Chile. Hyphenating certain cueca dance versions allowed me to bring together cueca dances that have become synonymous with each other without choosing one name over the other.

The context that I have briefly discussed “orientates” (Ahmed 2006) a sense memory of cueca dance towards heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies. As I discussed in the chapter on my Theoretical Framework, feminist, queer and post-colonial scholar Sara Ahmed (2006) argues that orientations are emergent and “are effects of histories rather than being originary” (56). The author demonstrates that orientations or tendencies—the ways that bodies tend toward something—emerge through the reiteration of sedimented histories: a history that has been formed and then informs the shaping of bodies. In other words, “bodies are shaped by histories [and, I would add, stories], which they perform in their comportment, their posture, and their gestures” (56). What I illustrate in this dissertation, is that the shaping of bodies by histories and stories is intertwined with the shaping or cultivation of sense memory.

Moreover, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle (2015) asserts that memory is directional: the “events” that are committed to memory will direct memory along a particular path (2). As such, a history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories that take up and

reiterate heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies will cultivate a memory of cueca dance that re-creates these structures and worlds. This is significant because this memory of cueca dance will direct cueca choreographies since the latter have to make sense within these structures and events.

In the first section, “A Brief Overview of Cueca Dance”, I remind that cueca dance is a part of cueca, a tripartite practice that also includes music and song. I also acknowledge that cueca dance is one of many “handkerchief dances” that is found across Latin America. Like other “handkerchief dances” the dancers in a cueca dance move their pañuelos + handkerchiefs while dancing. However, as I reveal, cueca dance has become deeply connected to a criollo Chilean identity and the nation-state has historically claimed cueca dance as its own. Finally, I offer a quick synopsis of how a cueca choreography unfolds, which I will delve into more depth in the next chapter.

In the next section, “The Spanish Caste System and Mestizaje”, I detail and describe the Spanish Caste system: a complex organizational structure based on ideas of racial mixing or mestizaje in the Americas. As I discuss, this system was imposed by Spanish settler colonists and positioned people of Spanish/European descent as superior as well as criollos who were individuals born to Spanish/European parents in the Americas. Furthermore, the system ordered individuals of differing racial and mixed backgrounds along a hierarchy and allowed Spanish people, Europeans and criollos to subordinate and govern over these racialized and mixed individuals.

In “A History of Cueca Dance”, the third section, I trace cueca and cueca dance through four time periods: 1) the Era of Independence (1810-1818) and the subsequent Republican Era (1818-1891); 2) early-to-mid-twentieth century (1920s-1960s); and 3) the Pinochet Dictatorship

(1973-1990). This section illustrates that cueca dance was originally framed as a mestiza form, with Spanish, Indigenous and Afro-descendant influences, but over time that mestiza, Hispanic-Chilean “ethnic” genealogy was used to erase those influences and situate cueca dance as criollo Chilean. This occurred by connecting cueca dance to a criollo agrarian identity emerging from the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile. Even though cueca (dance) scholars refer to cueca dance as a mestiza form, I argue that the dance form slips into a criollo identification through its connection to the countryside as well as through the character of el huaso + the Chilean rural horseman: a character who becomes whitewashed over time through an association with criollismo (Wolf 2019). As I illustrate, this association becomes significant during the Pinochet dictatorship when cueca dance becomes nationalized by the military government through Decree 23 in 1979. Even though cueca dance, generally, becomes nationalized, it is la cueca campesina-huasaa—the rural cueca connected to el huaso—that is specifically forwarded as the Chilean cueca dance. This creates a stereotypical cueca dance as well as occludes other cueca dance versions and variations that exist in Chile, collapsing cueca dance’s multiplicity into a singularity. Importantly, this section shows how a historiography of cueca dance has been influenced by heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism because the dance form is put in service of a criollo (read: white) agrarian man landowner identity and his claim to land-as-property.

In the final section, “Cueca Dance Stories and Characters”, I unpack how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism manifest in cueca dance stories—the stories that animate particular cueca dance versions and variations. I examine four cueca dance stories that are connected to the seven cueca dance versions and variations that I am investigating in this dissertation: 1) the story of the rooster and the hen; 2) the story of el huaso y la china + the rural criollo horseman and the Indigenous rural peasant woman who is the maid or servant of the

landowner's wife; 3) the story of el roto y la dama + the urban, working-class mestizo man and an unnamed urban, working-class mestiza woman; and 4) the story of la viuda y el compañero detenido-desaparecido + the widow and the detained-disappeared (man) partner. I illustrate that heteropatriarchy emerges through the centering of men's stories as well as in the uneven power dynamics between men and women in some of these stories; and I reveal that settler colonialism appears through ideas of conquest, claims to and occupation of land-as-property, the re-territorialization of Chile as a boundaried Catholic, rural, criollo nation-state and of mestizo urban spaces.

### 3.2 A Brief Overview of Cueca Dance

In this section, I provide a brief overview of cueca dance to highlight essential background information about the dance form that I will elaborate on in this chapter and in the following chapter. First, I mention how cueca dance is a part of a tripartite practice, which I generally refer to as "cueca". As I reveal, I mainly focus on cueca dance in this chapter. Next, I situate cueca dance in Latin America by acknowledging that this dance form is a part of a group of dances called "handkerchief dances" and, therefore, is not an exclusively Chilean phenomenon. Yet, as I explain, Chile has claimed cueca dance as its own. Finally, I offer a brief synopsis of how a cueca dance choreography unfolds, which is something that I analyze at length in the following chapter.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, cueca is a tripartite practice that consists of music, song and dance. Throughout, I use the term "cueca" when referring to the tripartite practice and "cueca dance" when discussing the dance aspect specifically. What I have noticed is that folklorists and ethno/musicologists usually slip between cueca dance, cueca music and cueca

song when discussing and analysing cueca generally. Usually, these scholars provide historical and socio-political analyses of cueca dancing by using examples from cueca music and/or song. Sometimes, the claims they make correctly address the issues in cueca dancing; still, by not beginning from a cueca dance perspective, these scholars also miss important considerations with regards to what the dance aspect of this tripartite practice does.

Because cueca dance places bodies front and centre, there is a different set of social and political considerations and implications that emerge and that a dance studies lens allows me to address. For example, bodies carry associations informed by gender, race, class and other social constructs, which convey ideas about how certain bodies should relate to other bodies. Below as well as in the next chapter, I discuss how most cueca dances centre men's desires by making them the protagonists of the stories that circulate about cueca dance as well as the stories that are presented through the dance form. Moreover, some of the characters that dancers embody are racialized and classed and, therefore, are positioned along a social hierarchy informed by the Spanish caste system, which I discuss next. As such, gender, race and class as well as other social constructs are important for making specific claims about cueca dance.

Generally, cueca dance is part of a group of dance forms called "handkerchief dances", which are found all over Latin America. As musicologist Jan Sverre Knudsen (2001) states, "A number of different forms of handkerchief dance are found in Bolivia, Argentina, Peru and Mexico. Some of them are known by other names, such as *zamacueca*, *marinera* or *chilena*" (65). However, cueca dance is deeply connected to a criollo Chilean national identity. Even though many cueca scholars acknowledge that the Chilean cueca dance has its precursors in the Peruvian *zamacueca* (Espinosa 2009; Knudsen 2001; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019), this part of cueca dance's history is oftentimes muted because cueca dance became an important aspect of a

criollo Chilean identity during its nation-building years (Espinosa 2009,2021, 2022; Knudsen 2001; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019), which I discuss in more depth below. Additionally, in 1979, cueca dance became the National Dance of Chile through Decree 23, put forth by General Augusto Pinochet during the dictatorship (1973-1990). The decree effectively positioned la cueca campesina-huasa above other kinds of cueca dances since Pinochet used rural folk culture to unite the country under a national identity of the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile—a political manoeuvre that had its precursors in the early years of the Republic. I will also elaborate on this context in the sections below.

Usually, cueca dance is a playful, heteronormative partner performance that can last anywhere between one-and-a-half to three minutes. The performers play with distance and proximity as they perform circular trajectories around the space, which I will elaborate on in Chapter 5. Playfulness is also evoked through eye contact, handkerchief movements and the ways that the dancers interpret the gestures and postures that are part of the cueca dance vocabulary they are working with.

### 3.3 The Spanish Caste System and Mestizaje

In this section, I discuss the Spanish caste system because it serves as the ideological foundation for the historiography of cueca dance and the stories that are connected to cueca dance.

Heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism are embedded in the Spanish caste system, which was a hierarchical structure of organization that had the least effects on European and European-descended men. This complex organizational system, informed by an obsession with racial mixture or mestizaje, was *the* way that Spanish settler colonists structured societies in the Americas.

The Spanish caste system is an intricate and hierarchical organizational structure informed by racial and religious purity as well as class status. In *Styling Blackness in Chile*, folklorist and ethnomusicologist Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019) explains that “[the] three main, or ‘pure,’ categories in colonial Spanish America were *español*, *indio*, and *negro* (Spanish, Indian, and Black), with *español* at the top of the hierarchy” (18; original italics). Furthermore, “[from] these primary categories, more castas emerged based on the concept of ‘mixture.’ The secondary categories were *mestizo* (the mix between Spanish and Indian), *mulato* (the mix between Spanish and Black), and *zambo* (the mix between Black and Indian)” (Wolf 2019, 18; original italics). From these six categories emerged tertiary and even quaternary classifications depending on which (mixed) individuals mixed with each other.

This nuanced Spanish caste system was based on racist and classist ideologies to privilege some over others, particularly men. In *Mestizaje and Globalization*, political scientist Stefanie Wickstrom and anthropologist Philip Young (2014) reveal, “Spain was obsessed with biological mestizaje. In Latin America, given what took place there as worlds collided during colonization, the obsession endured and relations of power were constructed on understandings of race and identity espoused by powerful people and colonial institutions” (7). Although the terms “mestizo” (masculine) and “mestiza” (feminine) reference the racial identity of a child born to an Indigenous and Spanish couple, “mestizaje” is more broadly defined as “mixing” and has come to refer to “racial and cultural mixing” or miscegenation (Espinosa 2009; Wickstrom and Young 2014; Wolf 2019).<sup>3</sup> Biological mestizaje, then, became an ideology through which to create a hierarchy of identity informed by mixture. This hierarchy privileged Spanish and European settler colonists as well as “criollo” people—children born in the Americas to Spanish

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<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the term “mestizaje” see *Mestizaje and Globalization: Transformations of Identity and Power*, edited by Stefanie Wickstrom and Philip Young (2014).

parents—over those who were mixed (Wirth 2014; Wolf 2019). Therefore, the Spanish caste system assumed the superiority of Europeans and criollos and their right to subordinate and govern over Afro-descendant and Indigenous peoples.

As Wickstrom and Young (2014) allude to, this caste system had antecedents in Catholic Spain that were based on racial and, significantly, religious purity. In “The Revolutionary Encounter”—the first chapter in *Mestizaje and Globalization*—political scientist Rex Wirth (2014) recounts, “In Baroque Spain, ‘blood quantum’ was a religious concept equated with natural propensity to accept Christ. Spanish blood, of course, endowed one with the highest propensity, while Moorish blood made it difficult for one to see the light. Bad blood could be overcome with great effort, but beyond a certain point, the absence of good blood would make conversion nearly impossible” (28). As Wirth reveals, this kind of logic permitted the Spanish to create laws to remove the Muslim Moors from Spain by 1515, “as had been the case of Jews since 1492” (28-29). It is this history that informs mestizaje and a Spanish caste system based on racial and religious purity as well as class status.

### 3.4 A History of Cueca Dance

In this section, I trace cueca (dance) through four time periods: 1) the Era of Independence (1810-1818) and the subsequent Republican Era (1818-1891); 2) early-to-mid-twentieth century (1920s-1960s); and 3) the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1990). I demonstrate how cueca dance became a national symbol in service of the criollo Chilean nation-state because it was important for fostering a burgeoning criollo Chilean national identity in the nineteenth century and for maintaining that national identity in the twentieth century. I reveal that cueca dance was originally framed as a mestiza form, with Spanish, Indigenous and Afro-descendant influences,

but over time that *mestiza*, Hispanic-Chilean “ethnic” genealogy was used to erase those inspirations and situate *cueca* dance as “Chilean”. This “Chilean” *cueca* dance coincided with a *criollo* agrarian identity and connected *cueca* dance to the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile where many agrarian elites owned *latifundios*. This history illustrates how the historiography of *cueca* dance has been influenced by heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism because *cueca* dance is put in service of the *criollo* (read: white) man landowner and his claim to land-as-property.

Although *cueca* (dance) scholars still refer to *cueca* dance as a *mestiza* form, I argue that the dance slips into a *criollo* identification through its connection to the countryside as well as through the character of *el huaso* + the Chilean rural horseman, which aligns with an agrarian, *criollo* *chilenidad* + Chilean-ness. As I discuss below, *el huaso* was originally a socio-economic and racially ambiguous Chilean character; however, over time he becomes whitewashed by becoming associated with *criollismo* (Wolf 2019). During the early part of the twentieth century the term “*criollo*” is understood to mean “home-grown” and therefore is synonymous with “Chilean” (Wolf 2019). Through these semantic manoeuvres, then, *el huaso* transforms into a home-grown *criollo* Chilean. These associations *criollo*-ize *cueca* dance and further situate the form as *criollo* Chilean. This serves to strip the form of any remaining associations with Spain as well as Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

Additionally, the desire for mass-mediated Chilean folk music of the countryside during the early part of the twentieth century (González 2005, 257, 262) strengthened this connection between *cueca* dance and *el huaso*. This mass-mediated rural folk music positions *la cueca campesina-huasa*—the rural *cueca* connected to *el huaso*—as “the” *cueca* in Chilean collective memory. This is the *cueca* dance version that General Augusto Pinochet nationalizes through

Decree 23 in 1979 and, therefore, that his military government claims as Chilean. As I highlight, this legal document splits la cueca campesina-huasa into two: 1) a competitive variation performed during cueca dance competitions; and 2) a social variation that is danced in community. The decree creates the foundation for the emergence of a “stereotypical”, codified cueca dance (Margot Loyola qtd in Knudsen 2001, 68), which effectually eclipses other cueca dance versions and variations that exist in Chile. In other words, even though cueca dance, generally, becomes nationalized, it is la cueca campesina-huasa that is specifically forwarded as the Chilean cueca dance.

What is interesting about these histories is that cueca scholars rarely acknowledge which cueca dance they are discussing. Ethno/musicologists, folklorists and historians refer to “la cueca” in their writing without specifying the cueca dance they are speaking about, which, often, is la cueca campesina-huasa. Inadvertently, this has the effect of collapsing cueca dance’s multiplicity into a singularity. As such, la cueca campesina-huasa is embedded as “the” cueca dance in collective memory and not as “a” cueca dance version. In the section that follows, I illustrate how cueca dance stories further propagate the idea of a singular cueca dance in collective memory; as well as how these stories forefront men’s desires and further propagate settler colonist claims to land-as-property.

#### 3.4.1 Cueca (Dance) “Origins”, Genealogies and Entanglements with Nationalism

In this sub-section, I provide a history of cueca’s uncertain origins, the tripartite practice’s designation as mestiza and how it became deeply connected to a criollo Chilean nationalism during the Era of Independence (1810-1818) and the Republic era (1818-1891).

The “origins” of cueca is a contested subject. It is widely accepted that cueca dance is a Central and South American form, emerging in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru and spreading as far north as Mexico and California in the United States (Olivares and Gomoll 2016; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019). However, historians and folklorists alike have had a challenging time pinpointing the origins of cueca because of the context in which it emerged: a period of nation-building brought about by the desire to separate from European culture and practices in the wake of conquest and colonization in the Americas or Latin America to be more specific (Espinosa 2009, 2021, 2022; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019). This context has resulted in different hypotheses regarding cueca’s genealogy.

In “La chilena mexicana es peruana” + “The Mexican chilena is Peruvian”, ethnomusicologist Alex Stewart (2013) examines cueca’s origin stories beginning with a discussion on the Peruvian zamacueca. Although Stewart’s (2013) focus is mainly on the musical genre, the author does slip between the three aspects of cueca—music, song and dance—during the analysis. The author notes that there are scholars who forward “that the form [zamacueca] originated in Peru and spread through Chile and northwestern Argentina before eventually returning to Peru as the chilena or marinera” (Stewart 2013, 80). Stewart (2013) also remarks that other scholars argue “for an independent parallel development in Chile” of cueca (80). Regardless, there is a connection between the Chilean cueca and the Peruvian zamacueca, which is presumed to be cueca’s predecessor.

Stewart (2013) relates that “zamacueca’s origins have been variously described as mestizo-European, African, and pre-Columbian” (80). As Stewart (2013) shares, these lineages have emerged from theories that, respectively, connect the tripartite practice to: 1) Iberian-derived genres that “[absorbed] virtually no African influence and few indigenous musical

practices” (80); 2) African roots based on “musical features such as polymeter” and “etymologies and dance patterns” (80-81); and 3) “Incan dance and other pre-Conquest cultural forms” (81). The author also reveals that even though the origins of zamacueca have been linked to pre-Hispanic Indigenous practices “most proponents of this theory do not deny later African influences in creating this criollo form” (Stewart 2013, 81). What Stewart (2013) proposes here is a symbiotic birthing of the zamacueca that relies on the influence of diverse communities and practices for the emergence of the form.

Although Chilean scholars often advance the idea that “the Chilean cueca developed independently from the Peruvian zamacueca” (81), Stewart (2013) states that in the Chilean context there are “exact corollaries to Africanist, nativist, and mestizo origin theories, but connected to local populations” (81). In “Orígenes árábigo-andaluces de la cueca o chilena” + “Arabic-Andalucian origins of la cueca or chilena”, musicologist Samuel Claro-Valdés (1993) forwards a fourth theory; the author connects cueca to the Arabic and Andalusian traditions that Spanish colonizers brought to the Americas. These different origin stories are corroborated by ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2009) in “Apología del mestizaje, exaltación de la nacionalidad” + “Justifying mestizaje, elevating nationality”. Espinosa (2009) states that three separate cueca lineages—classified as Indigenous, Africanist and mestizo—became the main Chilean hypotheses that emerged in journalistic, literary and music contexts.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, these three lineages became sedimented little by little by other research done during the nineteenth century. Espinosa (2009) further notes that the theory related to mestizaje had three further variants: 1) Arabic-Andalusian (as proposed by Claro-Valdés); 2) Hispanic-Chilean; and 3)

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<sup>4</sup> As a reminder, “mestizo”, in the Spanish caste system, refers to a person mixed European-Indigenous descent; however, “mestizaje”, in the context of Chile, tends to refer to the racial and cultural mixing between Europeans and Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples. I believe that Espinosa (2009) is referring to the latter here with respect to the mestizo lineage.

Hispanic-Peruvian. The cueca genealogies suggested by Chilean scholars resemble the Peruvian hypotheses for the zamacueca. The only difference and important addition is the Hispanic-Chilean mestiza lineage of cueca.

Espinosa (2009) points out that the inability to excavate and find an archeo-historical origin for cueca forced historians, folklorists and avid cueca scholars to think about the tripartite practice in terms of “ethnicity”. All the hypotheses above demonstrate an orientation towards the “ethnic origins” of cueca. This turn was problematic because it was based on previous popular and academic texts that had been written about cueca’s origins, which were then repurposed as historical fact to plant and root an ethnic origin for cueca (Espinosa 2009).

Espinosa (2009) critiques the “ethnic” theories that have been created and forwarded to locate and anchor cueca in Chile such as the mestiza hypothesis because these stories erase Indigenous and Africanist influences, which, I argue, are extensions of colonial practices such as genocide and settler colonial reterritorialization. Although mestizaje technically refers to the mixture of Spanish and Indigenous peoples, in the context of cueca it also includes cultural mixing with Afro-descendant communities and practices. Alex Stewart (2013), for example, states that “many scholars agree that the cueca, if not an African-derived form, at the very least absorbed important Afro-Peruvian influences” (78). Cueca’s mestiza identification suggests that the tripartite practice has been inspired by Spanish, Indigenous and Africanist aesthetics and practices. Yet, the same designation is simultaneously mobilized to erase the influences of the latter two communities as well as to disidentify with European and Spanish practices. Emphasizing a mestizo narrative for cueca’s “ethnicity” and “origin”, as Espinosa (2009) argues, displaces other potential genealogies from which cueca might have emerged; especially those that include and highlight Africanist and Indigenous involvement.

The mestiza theory was essential for creating a historiography of a tripartite practice that was of Chile and not from somewhere else or from other peoples. Espinosa (2009) reveals that “la (zama)cueca fue convirtiéndose en un elemento representativo de la cultura chilena [...] porque la explicación de su trayectoria ayudó a satisfacer la necesidad de materializar el sentimiento colectivo de lo propio, empujado por la urgente idea de cultivar una cultura local que fuera distinta a la cultura heredada de los conquistadores” + “the (zama)cueca slowly became a representation of Chilean culture [...] because the explanation of its trajectory satisfied the material and collective necessity to have something properly Chilean, which was driven by the urgent need to cultivate a local culture that was distinct from the culture inherited by the conquistadors” (n.p.). The point that Espinosa (2009) makes is that cueca’s ambiguous past, which was made further and deliberately ambiguous through acts of marginalization and erasure, was mobilized to tightly connect cueca with Chile and with a (criollo) “Chilean” national identity. The mestizo theory, specifically the Hispanic-Chilean hypothesis, becomes a malleable “origin story” that uses cueca to support an “original” “Chilean” identity.

The historiography of cueca as an always already Chilean practice contains cueca in a conditional, circular reasoning: if cueca always belonged to Chileans then it represents something that all Chileans have in common, a common heritage, which makes it Chilean. This rationale simultaneously creates and invests in cueca’s “Chilean” heritage and locality while diminishing and/or erasing any European, Indigenous and Afro-descendant connections.

The Era of Independence (1810-1818) was important for this kind of historiography. This period in Chile’s history shifted how Spanish and mestiza/o identities were perceived because of the desire for “powerful people” to free themselves from Spanish rule. During and following this time, mestizaje became mobilized by nation-states in the construction of a non-Spanish or non-

European territory. As political scientist Stefanie Wickstrom and anthropologist Philip Young (2014) recount, “After independence, mestizaje was appropriated by nation-states to legitimize and assimilate chosen expressions of non-European cultures” (7). What this reveals is that mestizaje became a “safe” enough identity to engage for nation-building projects since it distanced the emerging republics from Spanish and/or European culture(s). While mestiza/o has come to stand as its own category, often connected to campesinos + peasant farmers, these identities are also made to approximate whiteness or Indigeneity depending on where and how it is taken up.

During the Era of Independence and the Republican Era (1818-1891), mestizaje served to construct a criollo Chilean national identity that distanced itself from African slaves, local Indigenous people and Spanish conquistadors/colonizers (Espinosa 2009, 2021, 2022; Stewart 2013; Wolf 2019). Significantly, mestizaje functioned as a palimpsest on which to create a criollo Chilean republic that was not European but still white, an identity that has consistently been constituted against a racialized other. At times, this racialized other has been a neighbouring country such as Peru or Bolivia; at other times, it is local Indigenous people such as the Mapuche, one of at least ten recognized Indigenous groups in Chile (Marsilli 2019). As historian Maria Marsilli (2019) explained during a presentation at the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) Conference in 2019, in Chile one is either Chilean or Mapuche, meaning “white” or “non-white”. These kinds of associations, which are informed by the Spanish caste system, allow Chile to forward a national identity that is whitewashed because it erases the presence and involvement of different communities and peoples in its formation.

Espinosa (2009) explains that the process of emphasising cueca's mestizaje was a theoretical-methodological tool that aided in imagining the nation. As I mentioned above, mestizaje became a "safe" enough identity to embrace for Chile to distance itself from Spain. Moreover, Espinosa (2009) relates, the burgeoning criollo Chilean nation-state, in the nineteenth century, used some dances including cueca "para alimentar el imaginario simbólico surgido en el proceso de creación de la *nación*" + "to feed the symbolic imaginary that emerged in the process of the creation of the *nation*" (n.p.; original italics). Thinking with Espinosa, Stewart (2013) reports, "The 1840s were a critical period in the development of the concept of *la nación* in Chile. As Espinosa (2009) observes, the zamacueca chilena was a central performance genre in a coalescing national imaginary that cut across social classes. As evidenced in accounts of travelers, newspapers, postcards, and other media, the cueca quickly became regarded as the Chilean national dance" (82; original italics). This "discursive canon", as Espinosa (2009) calls it, fostered a collective memory of cueca: it became the basis of a criollo Chilean folklore that promoted an imagined and ideal "Chilean" culture. Cueca, as a mestiza practice "that cut across social classes" and that was claimed as "Chilean", was mobilized by settler colonists to foster and fortify a criollo Chilean nation through collective memory.

Although there have been attempts to separate out and distinguish the "origins" of a "Chilean" cueca, I argue that these genealogies are entangled or symbiotic, to think with Stewart (2013). The attempt to secure the origin of cueca firmly with/in Chilean history, territory and culture was a settler colonial strategy for the burgeoning nation-state to distance itself from Spain, other emerging republics (such as Peru and Bolivia) and from Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and their practices. The Spanish caste system was important for this because it offered a hierarchical structure of organizing people and practices.

Therefore, for “Chile” to become Chile—a “modern” colonial construction—an ongoing process of settler colonialism had to occur that involved appropriating and embracing social practices that could be located to the beginnings of the republic such as cueca. “Chile” became Chile, then, by rooting itself into history through a particular, rural folklore to frame itself as modern (Espinosa 2009, 2021, 2022; Sotoconil 2009; Wolf 2019). Furthermore, this foundation helped the criollo Chilean republic designate (mestiza) artforms that could slip between Spanish and “Chilean” articulations to build a national repertoire that aligned with its national identity. Cueca dance, with its Hispanic-Chilean mestiza genealogy, was key to this.

### 3.4.2 Criollo-izing Cueca Dance: Agrarian Elites, the Countryside and El Huaso

In this sub-section, I argue that cueca dance became criollo-ized over time, despite being designated as a mestiza dance form. I demonstrate that la cueca campesina-huasa’s slippage between being mestiza to criolla occurred through this cueca dance’s connection to criollo agrarian elites. Specifically, I highlight how la cueca campesina-huasa’s association with el huaso + the rural horseman of the Central Zone of Chile, who became a personification of agrarian elites’ values, shifted the dance’s identification.

Despite cueca dance’s mestiza genealogy, overtime and through a series of associations, the tripartite practice becomes criollo-ized. I argue and illustrate that cueca dance’s criollo-ization occurs by connecting cueca to agrarian elites, the countryside and el huaso + the rural Chilean horseman. These affiliations further serve to whitewash and “civilize” cueca dance.

In the twentieth century, cueca came to have a strong connection to rural life and place. Specifically, cueca became connected to the Central Zone of Chile, a particular geography of the country that was connected to agrarian elites. In “The Making of a Social History”, musicologist

Juan Pablo González (2005) remarks how cueca music and tonada, another musical form, “[developed] in the fertile central valley of Chile, [...] and] are associated with rural settings, agricultural life, and farms and were imposed as emblems of Chilean identity by the social elite that owned those farms, elitist landowners who ruled Chile’s political, economic, and cultural life until the 1920s” (206). As a result, by the late 1930s, local music in Chile “was reduced almost exclusively to the national dance, *cueca*, and the song form *tonada*” (257; original italics).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in the early twentieth century, cueca becomes deeply connected to an agrarian, criollo Chilean identity emerging from “the fertile central valley of Chile”.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, a nostalgia for rural life, landscape and love contributed to a mass-mediated folklore in Chile in the mid-nineteenth century that connected cueca to the countryside. González (2005) points out that a “Chilean mass-mediated folklore experienced constant growth from the late 1920s to the early 1960s, supported by an increasing number of rural immigrants who remembered in the *tonadas* and *cuecas* the *lost paradise* of their childhood in the countryside, within the impersonal and insecure life of modern cities” (262; original italics). This nostalgia from rural immigrants worked in tandem with the agrarian elites’ efforts to maintain some influence in Chile through cultural heritage. González (2005) explains,

Also important to the creation of a mass-mediated folklore was the attempt of the nation-state and the social elite to impose a musical image of the nation coming from the central valley, a land where the country was founded and owned by the social elite. The growth of the cities and the emergence of a middle class and of organized labour created an environment suitable for the development of a modern urban culture, a mass culture that jeopardized the traditions that the elites wanted to preserve. Thus, by supporting a mass-

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<sup>5</sup> González (2005) seems to separate dance and song into cueca and tonada, respectively; however, I have not found this distinction in other literature. In fact, cueca and tonada seem to be different music and song styles. Folklorist and ethnomusicologist, Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019) explains that tonadas were meant for listening, whereas cuecas could be danced (30). As such, I understand these music genres to be distinct

<sup>6</sup> I am unsure if González (2005) is intentionally using “fertile valley” to evoke an ironic connection to the “Fertile Crescent”. However, “fertile valley” functions in a critical way, here, since what the author suggests is that, historically, this geographic area is associated with the development of a “Chilean” “culture”. This connection, once more, collapses Chile into a singularity and erases from the Chilean imaginary Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and influences as well as practices and communities outside the central valley of the country.

mediated rural music and imposing it as an emblem of identity for the entire nation, social elites were able to maintain their cultural influence on Chilean society. (262)

The city, then, presented both a challenge to the maintenance of traditions that “the elites wanted to preserve” and an opportunity to impose rural life through cueca “as an emblem of identity for the entire nation”.

Political scientist Liisa North (2021) argues in “Las elites agrarias en la sociedad latinoamericana” + “Agrarian elites in Latin America”, landowning elites have held political and economic power in Latin America from colonization onwards due to their latifundios. What I argue, here, is that agrarian elites have also held power over Chile’s cultural heritage imbuing it with their values, beliefs and ideologies. This serves to root the country in a particular people’s history and to propagate the values that the elites deem appropriate—values that are different than “a modern urban culture” that is seen as a threat to tradition, as González (2005) notes (262). Cueca’s associations with the countryside became important for moving the tripartite practice towards a criolla identity.

An important character that, I argue, helped to criollo-ize cueca dance is el huaso + the rural Chilean horseman. In *Styling Blackness in Chile*, folklorist and ethnomusicologist Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019) reveals that initially el huaso was “ambiguously situated in Chile’s socioeconomic structure” because he was neither “an elite landowner nor a peasant labourer” (31). Furthermore, el huaso was originally understood to be of mixed descent, specifically mestizo and, therefore, of Spanish and Indigenous mix. By the first quarter of the twentieth century, however, el huaso became racially unmarked; and, as Wolf (2019) reminds, “the unmarked in society becomes associated with the dominant cultural mainstream, accompanied by assumptions of Whiteness” (31-32).

I understand “whiteness” (and “white”) in the way that Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim TallBear (2023) defines the term in the podcast “Medicine for the Resistance” with patty krawec: as a category that emerges from the savage versus civilized dichotomy, in which “white/ness” stands in for “civilized, evolved and rational” (13:05-13:50, 14:41-14:50). By extending “white/ness” beyond skin colour, TallBear (2023) highlights how practices can become colonizing. Offering the examples of little “s” science and big “S” Science, TallBear (2023) reminds that the scientific method or experimentation is not solely a Western practice; and that the difference between the scientific method and Western Science is that the prior embraces curiosity and openness, whereas the latter is a colonial and oppressive force that is “capitalistic, imperialistic and militaristic” (37:37-38:12). Because white practices are assumed to be “civilized, evolved and rational” they have a colonizing effect that ensures their dominance by oppressing and/or erasing non-dominant practices, which are, in turn, conceived as “savage” or uncivilized, unevolved and irrational.

Whiteness in Chile manifests through the term “criollo”. Wolf (2019) illuminates that by the twentieth century “the term ‘criollo’ was largely understood as ‘home-grown’ and had become synonymous with Chilean in local usage” (31). As I mentioned above, in the Spanish caste system, criolla/o refers to a person born in the Americas to Spanish or European parents. Wolf (2019) points out that “[these] criollo expressions were often the first shared ways of identifying nationally” (8). El huaso, then, becomes framed as Chilean through strategies that simultaneously recognize and erase his mestizaje.<sup>7</sup> By criollo-izing el huaso, the character

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<sup>7</sup> These tactics around the mestiza/o identities, which simultaneously recognize the mixture of Spanish and Indigenous (and sometimes Afro-descendent peoples) and negate them are historically common in Chile. Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019) informs, “Sociologist Patricia Richards makes the case that, while Chilean elites incorporated imagery of past noble Araucanians into the national imaginings of mestizaje, the contemporary Mapuche have always been excluded” (24).

becomes understood as “home grown”, which is to say Chilean. Through this whitewashing, el huaso is mobilized as a national character in service of a criollo (read: white) Chilean nationalism (Wolf 2019, 31, 132).

Adding to el huaso’s aura is the fact that this character is geographically connected to a particular time and place: a simpler way of life in the countryside of the central valley of Chile. El huaso appears to celebrate the rural person, however, the character mainly serves to personify and present agrarian elites’ nostalgia (Espinosa 2017; González 2005). El huaso and his cueca, la cueca campesina-huasa, then, serve to reminisce about the simple(r) life of the countryside and to perform an agrarian patriotism. If el huaso’s socioeconomic and racial ambiguity make him a palatable character, his connection to rural life, landscape and (patriotic) love, make him a favourable national character for criollo elite landowners whose patriotism emerges from the countryside.

The history of criollo-ization of el huaso exemplifies how criollo identity and practices were perceived as superior to not only Afro-descendant and Indigenous onto-epistemologies and practices but also to mestizaje. Shifting the identity of el huaso from mestizo to criollo illustrates the institutionalization of whiteness and white privilege in the Chilean imaginary.

This has an effect on cueca dance, since by connecting the dance form to el huaso, cueca dance slips from mestiza to criolla. Although I have not yet found scholars who address this slippage, I argue that despite el huaso’s and cueca’s muddled racial origins their coming together helps whitewash both of their pasts, making them significant vessels to carry a criollo Chilean national identity.

Moreover, if the unmarked come to be associated with whiteness, as Wolf (2019) proposes, then it is important to mark the unmarked. I qualify la cueca campesina-huasa as such

to illustrate that when scholars as well as the general public speak about “the” cueca they are referring to one version among many. Not marking or qualifying la cueca campesina-huasa allows this cueca dance version to slip into whiteness because it becomes universalized by standing in for all cueca dances.

Although cueca is not recognized or discussed as a white dance practice, civilizing the form by stripping it of its mestizaje, its history of mixture, and by criollo-izing it suggests this. Even when mestizaje is maintained as the “ethnic history” cueca dance, the dance form’s mestiza identification is manipulated to align the form with criollo identity. For example, cueca’s Spanish antecedents, such as Fandango, are much more pronouncedly forwarded and maintained than its Afro-descendant, Indigenous and even Peruvian connections. Additionally, these Hispanic precursors are reconfigured to suggest a Chilean ethnic origin through the Hispanic-Chilean genealogy, as I discuss above. In this way, mestizaje serves as a palimpsest on which to write a criollo Chilean history of cueca dance that is white supremacist and that civilizes the dance form according to criollo attitudes and beliefs.<sup>8</sup> This civilizing process demonstrates well how the savage-civilized dichotomy serves to rationalize the superiority of Euro-Western practices, values and beliefs. This process is an echo and consequence of the Spanish caste system, which served to keep Spanish and European people as well as criolla/os and their practices on top. It is not enough, then, to erase cueca dance’s racial ties; through the civilizing process the dance form also becomes strongly connected to criollo agrarian elites, the countryside of Chile’s Central Zone and el huaso.

What I have illustrated is that the rural cueca (dance) was used to impose a folklore from the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile on a burgeoning urban culture. This rural folklore,

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<sup>8</sup> Norbert Elias ([1994] 2000) provides a comprehensive study of the civilizing process in Europe, particularly with respect to Germany, France and England.

connected to agrarian elites and embodied in el huaso, became representative of the criollo Chilean nation in the twentieth century and stifled practices emerging from within urban centres including urban cuecas. The criollo-ization of cueca dance outlines how the civilizing process of the dance form was meant to distance cueca dance from racialized communities as well as from lower-class individuals; moreover, it illustrates the widespread effects of the Spanish caste system. Consequently, la cueca campesina-huasa becomes privileged and elevated over other cueca dance versions including la cueca chora-brava which emerged in las poblaciones + the urban shanty-towns. Although there have been critiques of analysing the tripartite practice from an urban-rural dichotomy (Espinosa 2017), this binary logic plays a significant role in Chile's nationalism and cueca's historiography. As I discuss and demonstrate next, Pinochet's military dictatorship also favoured an agrarian nationalism over an urban chilenidad + Chilean-ness through politics and cultural policies.

### 3.4.3 Cueca Dance and the Pinochet Dictatorship

In this sub-section, I concentrate on la cueca campesina-huasa in the context of the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990). I note how General Augusto Pinochet co-opted this cueca dance and nationalized it to unite el pueblo + the people, resulting in the codification of the dance form. I argue that the nationalization and codification of la cueca campesina-huasa resulted in splitting the form into a competitive variation and a social variation. Although part of the same genealogy, these two cueca dances look very different when performed, as I demonstrate in the following chapter.

On September 11, 1973, President Salvador Allende's democratically elected socialist government was overthrown by a CIA-funded, military coup d'état led by General Augusto

Pinochet Ugarte (North 2023, 15). Pinochet's dictatorship lasted from 1973 to 1990. During this period, the Congress of Chile was dissolved, the Constitution was suspended and roughly 130,000 people were arrested (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). Political opponents and supporters of Allende and his socialist views were blacklisted and had their citizenship revoked; therefore, many fled the country as political refugees or exiles to countries around the world including Canada (Da 2002; Escobar 2000; Foster and Carty 2023, 31; Peddie 2014; Simalchik 2006). Allende supporters who were not so lucky were rounded up, detained, tortured, executed and/or made disappeared (Escobar 2000; Peddie 2014; Simalchik 2006). Pinochet was determined to eradicate socialist and communist ideologies, politics and practices in Chile, which led to human rights violations.

Six years after the coup, on September 18, 1979, Pinochet legally nationalized cueca dance—more specifically, la cueca campesina-huasa—as the National Dance of Chile through Decree 23. This came on the heels of a protest cueca performed by women on March 8, 1978, who, in a denunciatory act, danced la cueca sola to make visible the disappearance of their husbands, brothers and sons (Olivares and Gomoll 2016). It is difficult not to see cueca dance's nationalization as a countermove by Pinochet since the appropriation and institutionalization of this dance form feels like a political manoeuvre for assimilating Chileans under a devised national identity (Cuevas 2008; Sotoconil 2009). By nationalizing la cueca campesina-huasa, Pinochet not only followed in the agrarian elites' tradition of imposing this cueca dance on el pueblo + the people, the dictator also consummated the agrarian elites' desire by staking la cueca campesina-huasa to *chilenidad* + Chilean-ness through a decree.

Decree 23 was crucial for appropriating cueca dance from the people because it functioned as nationalist propaganda. For example, the dance form is described as: 1) the

“genuine expression of the national soul”; 2) expressing the people’s “mischief”, “zest” and “melancholy”; 3) a medium that “has celebrated [... Chileans’] most glorious deeds”; 4) a medium that “[reflects ...] the national identity”; and 5) “an expression of authentic unity” (Decree 23 1979; see Appendix A: Decree 23 to read the full document). As ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2017) elaborates, “La idea era relacionar lo folclórico con lo nacional y lo nacional con lo militar, recuperando los ‘auténticos valores culturales’ con el fin de contribuir ‘a la formación de una conciencia folklórica’” + “The idea was to relate the folkloric with the national and the national with the military, as a way to recuperate ‘authentic cultural values’ with the aim of contributing ‘to the formation of a folkloric consciousness’ ” (89). What Espinosa (2017) highlights is that, by legally binding cueca dance to Chile and as Chilean, Pinochet’s dictatorship was invested in forwarding a collective memory of cueca dance that constructed and reinforced a particular (criollo) Chilean identity based on “authentic cultural values”, particularly those that “celebrated Chileans’ most glorious deeds”.

Furthermore, Decree 23 sets in motion cueca dance’s codification because it becomes mandatory to teach and dance it at school, as well as to perform it for national competitions. The legal document declares that the state “fomentará [...] la enseñansa, divulgación, promoción e investigación de sus valores musicales y coreográficos” + “will encourage [...] the teaching, dissemination, promotion and investigation of her musical and choreographic values”; and that every September a national cueca contest will be organized for elementary and secondary students. Establishing “ways of dancing cueca that are scholastic, competitive and nationalist” (Bolívar 2010, 154n5) not only supports Chile’s identity construction, it impacts cueca dance itself by creating a repeatable choreographic structure that is imposed on the public, which I will outline in the next chapter. Further, this codified structure carries and transmits heteropatriarchal

and settler colonial ideologies through stories, which I elaborate on below, as well as through ways of relating that are imparted through the practice and performance of cueca dance, which I discuss in the following chapter.

While it is not explicitly mentioned in Decree 23 which cueca dance is being nationalized, it can be surmised that it is la cueca campesina-huasa. The stories and histories about la cueca campesina-huasa, which I have elaborated on above, are adopted by the Pinochet regime and align this cueca well with the military junta's politics. Cultural policies that emerged during this time focus on restoration rather than renovation and reject many of Allende's reforms aimed at the working classes (North 1976, 189; "Elementos" 1975, n.p.). For example, Allende's educational reform was committed to the creation of the "new man" (North 1976, 185).<sup>9</sup> The dictatorship rejected the idea of the "new man", especially as it related to youth, and turned toward folklore-as-history to restore Chile to its roots ("Elementos" 1975, n.p.). By being more interested and invested in ideologies and practices that could tether a modern, neoliberal Chile's future with a particular history (Espinosa 2017, "Elementos" 1975), the military junta reinvents cueca as "huasa" (Sotoconil 2009). La cueca campesina-huasa's association with a rural folk tradition and el huaso, a loyal citizen-subject, permits the dictatorial government to mobilize this cueca dance as a national symbol.

Through the nationalizing process, la cueca campesina-huasa becomes synonymous with "the" cueca (dance) or understood as the "official" cueca (dance). In "Las cueca como representaciones estético-políticas de chilenidad en Santiago entre 1979 y 1989" + "The Cuecas as Aesthetic and Political Representation of Chilenidad in Santiago Between 1979 and 1989", literature scholar and historian Araucaria Rojas Sotoconil (2009) explains,

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<sup>9</sup> At the time, the upper and middle classes as well as the officer corps were agitated by Allende's proposal because it was perceived "as a totalitarian move to control the minds of *their* children" (North 1976, 185; original italics).

Cierto segmento del ‘folclor’, y con él de la cueca, es elegido para representar lo que será entendido dentro de un amplio y perdurable *imaginario* como ‘Cueca oficial’, expresión forzada y en constante proceso de cooptación autoritaria.

+ A particular segment of ‘folklore’, and with it cueca, is elected to represent that which would be understood within a broad and enduring *imaginary* as the “official Cueca”, a forced expression that was in a constant process of authoritarian cooptation. (72; original italics)

The Pinochet dictatorship used the “discursive canon” of cueca (Espinosa 2009)—the various written materials that provided “evidence” for a historiography of cueca based on a rural folklore—to forward a history of the practice based on one genealogy, the Hispanic-Chilean lineage.

This is not unlike the creation of “heritage choreography”, which the Yugoslavia area invested in to disseminate and educate the people about socialist values and ideologies (Petkovski 2023). Filip Petkovski (2023) recounts, “In order to embody ‘the people,’ and given that heritage choreography has to produce ties with the past and the nation’s folkloric symbols, many choreographers use archival material—in other words, dance knowledge stored in archives that is considered to be authentic” (101). Furthermore, as Petkovski (2023) claims, “Choreographing dance heritage is always a political act, given that choreographers must abide the norms and the ideologies of the state that dictate the rules and the means of its production” (101). The “discursive canon” (Espinosa 2009) of cueca dance served to authenticize, legitimize, officialize and politicize la cueca campesina-huasa, which had “ties with the past and the nation’s folkloric symbols” such as el huaso.

As I mentioned previously, this “discursive canon” also fostered a collective memory of cueca dance and it collapsed cueca dance’s multiplicity into a singularity. Forwarding an official cueca dance was a political manoeuvre that helped the Pinochet dictatorship reduce the pluralism of the Chilean population into one “imagined community”, to think with political scientist and

historian Benedict Anderson (1983) who coined the term to describe a social group, specifically nations, and the development of national feeling. Although there are many cuecas throughout Chile, the Pinochet regime clung to the cueca dance from the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile as the official cueca. This strategy created a “stereotypical” cueca dance (Margot Loyola qtd in Knudsen 2001, 68) that was used by the dictatorial government to further remove any associations that the dance form might have with other Chilean populations such as Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples as well as the urban poor and communities outside of the Central Zone of Chile.

The competitions that emerged throughout Chile during the dictatorship sedimented la cueca campesina-huasa as “the” cueca and, consequently, codified the dance form. The “how to” videos that I watched on YouTube demonstrated well how la cueca campesina-huasa is conflated with “the” cueca dance. The instructors rarely, if ever, acknowledge or specify “the” cueca dance’s connection to la cueca campesina-huasa even when they and their dance partners were dressed in traditional rural attire that is associated with this cueca dance, which I will discuss in the following section. Additionally, other performances of cueca dances that I observed on YouTube illustrated that la cueca campesina-huasa became split into two: 1) a competitive variation that follows a strict choreographic structure and codifies dancers’ ways of moving; and 2) a social variation that is more fluid in form and allows the dancers to engage a wider range of movements. I discuss these two cuecas in more depth in the sections that follow and in the next chapter.

Finally, the competitions imposed and imparted a comportment that was aligned with the dictatorship’s ideas of a loyal “citizen-subject” (Espinosa 2017; Sotoconil 2009). El huaso—the character associated with la cueca campesina-huasa—was mobilized not only as a representative

of the people but also as an ambassador for a dictatorial *chilenidad* + Chilean-ness that emphasized (blind) loyalty to the state. Filip Petkovski (2023) reminds that “Anthony Shay, who writes about dancers as cultural diplomats, argues that the peasant became ‘the perfect stand-in for the nation as a whole, and their performances of traditional dances served as a visual symbol of mass support for non-democratic regimes of all political stripes’ ” (108). Pinochet rejected Allende’s “new man” and, instead, returned to el huaso, an old character tethered to a folklore of the countryside and a criollo agrarian identity, as the example of a loyal citizen-subject. Araucaria Rojas Sotoconil (2009) argues that “la *chilenidad* durante el período del gobierno militar, se corporifica parcialmente en la figura del *huaso*, quien, gallardo e incólume, encarna valores de dicho ‘deber ser’ ” + “during the period of the military junta, *Chilean-ness* becomes partially corporealized in the figure of el *huaso*, who, gallant and unyielding, embodies the values of said ‘dutiful ought to be’ ” (55; original italics).<sup>10</sup> In the next section, I discuss in more depth el huaso as well as other Chilean characters—such as la china, el roto, la dama and la viuda—and their histories and stories. The multiplicity of cueca dance stories and characters make evident that an official history of cueca dance is incomplete.

### 3.5 Cueca Dance Stories and Characters

In this section, I detail how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism manifest in four cueca dance stories—the general stories and characters that are associated with certain cueca dances: 1) the story of the rooster and the hen; 2) the story of el huaso y la china + the rural criollo horseman and the Indigenous rural peasant woman who is the maid or servant of the landowner’s wife; 3)

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<sup>10</sup> While “incólume” can also mean “unscathed”, “unmarked” and “unabating”, I have chosen to go with “unyielding” because of how el huaso interacts with la china in the dance. However, it does not escape me how the first two terms connect to el huaso’s criollo-ization and construct this character in opposition to el roto.

the story of *el roto y la dama* + the urban, working-class mestizo man and an unnamed urban, working-class mestiza woman; and 4) the story of *la viuda y el compañero detenido-desaparecido* + the widow and the detained-disappeared (man) partner. Importantly, a cueca dance story refers to the stories to which each cueca dance is connected; whereas a story presented through cueca dance is what is enacted in a performance, the story the dancers convey. Frequently, cueca dance stories and stories presented through cueca dance are the same.

These four stories relate to and frame the five cueca dance versions and variations that I examine in this dissertation (see Table 3.2 above). For example, the stories of the rooster and the hen and *el huaso* and *la china* are connected to the competitive cueca *campesina-huasa*, the social cueca *campesina-huasa*, *la cueca a la bandera* and *la cueca a la Carmelita*.<sup>11</sup> The story of *el roto y la dama* is specifically associated with *la cueca chora-brava*. Finally, the story of *la viuda y el compañero detenido-desaparecido* relates mainly to *la cueca sola* by the women of *La Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos Desaparecidos* + The Group for Detained and Disappeared Family Members (AFDD) and, to some extent, the queer(ed) cueca dance performed by *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* + The Mares of the Apocalypse (*Las Yeguas*). These four stories inform each cueca dance as well as the stories that are or can be presented through each cueca dance version and variation.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, Indigenous Studies scholars and writers such as Daniel Heath Justice (2018), Lee Maracle (2015, 2017) and Q'um Q'um Xiiem (a.k.a. Jo-ann Archibald 2008) assert that storytelling is a world-making practice: stories serve to impart knowledges and create the worlds in which we live. Most of the stories (and characters) connected to the five

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<sup>11</sup> As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I have included *la cueca a la bandera* and *la cueca a la Carmelita* in this discussion because these dance forms illustrate well how settler colonial ideologies are enacted through cueca dance. Moreover, these cueca dances are extensions and variations of the competitive cueca *campesina-huasa*.

cueca dances that I analyze permeate Chilean collective memory; and they direct and shape what is considered a “normal” or even “natural” relationship between people and to land. Many of the stories reiterate and reinforce heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies by centering men as protagonists and the continual occupation of Indigenous lands—not to mention violence against women. These stories and characters create worlds for those in power and hinder other stories that could be told through cueca dance. Said differently, these cueca dance stories influence the stories that can be told through the form and that are enacted through the five cueca dances I examine, which I analyze in the next chapter.

Samuel Claro-Valdés (1993) acknowledges the possibility that cueca dance is the performance of a celestial dance. The author remarks that cueca dance’s circular trajectories mimic the rotation of the earth and its orbit around the sun, both of which move (from the perspective of North at the top) in a counterclockwise direction and, thus, to the right (Claro-Valdés 1993, 2032).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, there are Selk’nam and Mapuche stories that relate how the sun pursues the moon across the sky (see, for example, Ana María Pavez and Constanza Recart [2003], *Los Espíritus Selk’nam: Cuento basado en un mito Selk’nam*; Alicia Morel [1996 (1982)], *Cuentos Araucanos: La Gente de la Tierra*). The story of cueca dance as “a man’s conquest of a woman” (Claro-Valdés 1993, 2033; Espinosa 2021; 391) occludes this story and likely others; and ideologies such as heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism frame stories in ways that centre men’s desires and entitlement to women’s bodies as well as settler colonial occupation and claims to land.

As I demonstrate, heteropatriarchy shows up in the centering of men’s stories as well as in the uneven power dynamics between men and women in these stories. Most explicitly, by

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<sup>12</sup> As I will explain in the next chapter, the first curvilinear trajectory in a cueca dance is done to the right.

making men the protagonists of these stories, women become relegated to objects of affection or side characters that fulfill men's desires. This subject-object dichotomy becomes specially troubling when the story that the characters enact, such as in the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa, is about the conquest of a man over a woman. Yet, even when consent—instead of conquest—is central, such as in la cueca chora-brava, and women have a choice to leave their man partner, women are still lesser than men. These stories, then, reiterate and legitimate, in sometimes subtle ways, violence towards women, especially racialized women of lower class.

La cueca sola diverges significantly from the stories of conquest and men's desires, yet stills forward a heteronormative story. As I elaborate in detail below, la viuda takes to the floor alone and dances a cueca by herself to denounce the Pinochet dictatorship's human rights violations. Nevertheless, this cueca dance version depends on and, therefore, reinforces heteronormativity: la viuda dancing alone makes present the absence of her man companion and, thus, centres men as integral to the nuclear (socialist) household. Although this is an important tactic in this protest cueca dance, heteropatriarchy is still maintained.

Settler colonialism emerges through claims to and occupation of land-as-property. The competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa forward a story about the criollo huaso's conquest over an Indigenous, lower-class china—an Indigenous, rural peasant girl or woman who is the servant or maid of the landowner's wife. The racial and class inequalities transform these cueca dance variations into a settler colonial desire to remove (geographically and through racial mixing) Indigenous people with the aim of acquiring, occupying and raping land. This settler colonial entitlement is more clearly seen in la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita, which I argue and demonstrate are extensions of the competitive cueca campesina-

huasa. These two cueca dance variations re-territorialize Chile as rural through the characters of el huaso and la china, which the dancers personify through attire and which, in turn, propagates a criollo Chilean identity of the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile. Moreover, la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita re-claim land for settler colonial occupation and extraction (through a connection to agrarian elites) by re-creating “Chile” as a boundaried Catholic, rural, criollo nation-state since the dancers in rural attire perform *to* the flag and *to* an effigy of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, respectively. The competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa, la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita thus sanction settler colonial claims to land-as-property.

La cueca chora-brava, as I discuss below, does not replicate this militaristic settler-colonial occupation of and claim to land-as-property. Yet, this cueca dance version still upholds settler colonial ideology through the territorialization of urban space(s). As a story about urban life and love, la cueca chora-brava dislodges Chilean identity from the countryside by presenting an identity from an other(ed) Chile, a mestizo and poor Chile of the city. As such, this cueca dance claims the city as its own and, consequently, territorializes urban space.

It is the queer(ed) cueca dance performed by Las Yeguas that intervenes in the heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies that have influenced and become embedded in cueca dance stories. As I explain in detail below, this protest performance, which Las Yeguas titled *La Conquista de America + The Conquest of America*, sought to draw parallels between conquest and American imperialism, which funded many dictatorships in Central and South America. By dancing a cueca together but at separate ends of a map of Central and South America without boundaries, this protest performance, highlights how settler colonial entitlement to occupy and claim the Americas transforms land to property and reduces land to resource. By

dancing a cueca with bare feet on broken Coca-Cola bottles, Las Yeguas further illustrate, through the spilling and smearing of blood, that it is the marginalized—women, Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities and queer and poor people—who are the casualties of heteropatriarchal and settler colonial desires.

### 3.5.1 The Rooster and the Hen

In this sub-section, I detail the story of the rooster and the hen; the story that is most associated with cueca dance, but that pertains to la cueca campesina-huasa. I also note how this story forwards heteropatriarchy by favouring the male protagonist's desires.

Growing up, my mother would often tell me that cueca dance is a performance between a rooster and a hen: the rooster chases the hen, and the hen evades the rooster by going this way and then that way. The rooster circles in on the hen until he finally catches her. My mother would recount that she was taught this story about cueca dance in school—a story that is known to most, if not all, Chileans. Within and outside of Chile, cueca dance is understood to be “a courting dance” (Knudsen 2001, 66; Wolf 2019, 126) that is “an embodied and gendered interpretation of a rooster and chicken mating ritual” (Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 155; Torres 2008, 20).

Folklorist Santiago Figueroa Torres (2008) disagrees with this interpretation of cueca dance. The author states that “alguno estudiosos han pretendido darle una significación muy intensa en lo amatorio, llegando incluso a decir: ‘Que la cueca es la lucha amorosa del gallo y la gallina’ ” + “some scholars have attempted to give it an intense significance with respect to love, going so far as to say: ‘That la cueca is the love fight between the rooster and the hen’ ” (20). The reason that Torres (2008) is not convinced of this story's connection to the dance form is

because oftentimes, as the author remarks, cueca is danced between family members such as between a mother and a son or an uncle and a niece. In these instances, Torres (2008) argues, cueca dance cannot be about courtship or romantic love. Nevertheless, Torres's (2008) comment suggests that even though some might oppose this interpretation, this story about cueca dance is still part of Chilean collective memory. This rural folk fable about a rooster who chases a hen until he ultimately catches her has become the story that is connected to cueca dance first and foremost, and thus, the story that the nationalized cueca dance enacts.<sup>13</sup>

Because the story of the rooster and the hen evoke rural life, landscape and love, this tale is connected to one cueca dance in particular: la cueca campesina-huasa, which I discuss in more detail below.<sup>14</sup> The conflation of cueca dance, generally, with la cueca campesina-huasa further demonstrates how this singular cueca dance variation has become established as "the" cueca dance in Chile and beyond, which in effect obscures other cueca dances and stories. Oftentimes, it goes unacknowledged that there are diverse and divergent variations of cueca dance because la cueca campesina-huasa and the story it performs stand in for all cueca dance forms.

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<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Wikipedia has an entry that states that zamacueca, cueca's Peruvian precursor, performs a similar story; but, in this case, the hen is the protagonist. The Wikipedia entry "Afro-Chileans" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Chileans>) explains that "zama" is a derivation of "zamba", the Spanish caste category for a woman of Indigenous and Afro-descendent mixture. The entry also explains that "cueca" stems from "clueca" which means "broody" and refers to the state of the hen after she has laid an egg. During the zamacueca, then, the eszamba woman makes the movements of a broody hen while dancing. Unfortunately, even though the Wikipedia entry's sources are legitimate, the citations were incorrect. After digging a little deeper, I was unable to find exactly from which sources the Wikipedia entry was getting this specific information. Moreover, in the literature on cueca that I encountered, there was never any mention of the story that zamacueca performs, which feels more like an oversight and less like there is little information on this topic. Nevertheless, it is interesting to think about how the story that zamacueca performs inverts the protagonist of the dance.

<sup>14</sup> As I explained above, the term "huasa" is the adjectival form of the noun "huaso", the term for the Chilean rural horseman and an important Chilean character who I will elaborate on below. Because "cueca" is a feminine noun, this adjective takes the feminine ending based on Spanish conventions. "Huaso" does not have a direct, one-word translation in English; therefore, I have chosen to keep the term "huasa" when speaking about this cueca in English. Importantly, the term "huasa" does not refer to el huaso's feminine counterpart and partner in the dance: la china + the rural peasant girl/woman. I will discuss la china in more depth below as well.

As I highlighted in the previous section, the history of cueca dance has repeatedly forwarded la cueca campesina-huasa as “the” cueca dance. In the twentieth century, this occurred specifically to align cueca dance with criollo agrarian elites’ values and, thus, to connect cueca dance to a criollo Chilean folklore that developed in the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile. These associations were strengthened during the Pinochet dictatorship, who nationalized la cueca campesina-huasa and further sedimented this cueca dance as “the” cueca dance.

The story of the rooster and the hen enact heteropatriarchal ideologies. This story embraces uneven power dynamics—since it is a one-sided pursuit—that favour the male protagonist.<sup>15</sup> What is presented is a rigged game in which the rooster always manages to catch the object of his affection: the hen. Despite this story being a rigged game, the rooster still aggressively pursues the hen, who evades the rooster until she is caught. This story, therefore, presents, reiterates and reinforces heteropatriarchal ideologies that position males as protagonists and that “naturalizes” their superiority to females.

### 3.5.2 El Huaso y la China

In this section, I reveal that the story of the rooster and the hen is connected to two national characters: el huaso and la china. Having elaborated on el huaso in the previous section, I spend time fleshing out la china, an Indigenous indentured woman. I also reveal how the story of el huaso and la china propagate heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies by forwarding uneven power relations between men and women as well as by framing the story as the conquest

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<sup>15</sup> I use “male” here because this is a biological story in the sense that the rooster and the hen are male and female animals. In the stories that follow, I use the gender terms “men” and “women” when referring to the characters that correspond to these gender categories. This differentiation is important because the story of the rooster and the hen, at times, serve to naturalize the relationship that is enacted.

of a criollo man over an Indigenous woman. Settler colonists' occupation and claims to land are further elaborated on through a discussion on *la cueca a la bandera* and *la cueca a la Carmelita*.

Both the social and competitive *cueca campesina-huasa* enact the story of the rooster and the hen through specific national characters: *el huaso* and *la china*. *El huaso* + the rural horseman (of the central region of Chile), who I discussed extensively in the previous section, is a criollo-ized Chilean character that resembles the American cowboy and Argentinian gaucho (Espinosa 2017, 89; Wolf 2019, 31). *La china*, on the other hand, has no direct translation in English because she is not a cowgirl. Rather, *la china* is considered to be an Indigenous, rural peasant girl or woman who is oftentimes the maid or servant of the elite landowner's wife (Wolf 196n14).

Like the rooster and the hen, *el huaso* and *la china* are not equals in terms of class, race and gender. Although *la china* is understood to be the maid of the elite landowner's wife, Wolf (2019) further notes that the word "china" is "a Quechua term for servant" and is also "found as a caste in some regions of Latin America" (196n14), once more pointing to the insidious nature of the Spanish caste system. In Quechua-Spanish and Quechua-French dictionaries the term "china" also translates to "hembra" + "female animal" (De Thoron 1886, 115; Gobierno Regional Cusco 2005, 60, 848, 885, 921; Navarro 1903, 43). What this suggests is that, unlike *el huaso*, *la china* is neither socioeconomically nor racially ambiguous. While the latter is not explicit, the term's association to female animals has an underlying derogatory and dehumanizing sentiment that suggests that *la china* is racialized and even Indigenized since the term is Quechua, an Indigenous language.<sup>16</sup> *La china*, then, is a socioeconomically and racially

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<sup>16</sup> In two separate instances I have been told that "china" is sometimes evoked to dehumanize racialized and/or working-class women. In one case, I was talking with an Indigenous woman from the Indigenous town of Saraguro, Ecuador, who recounted that she had been called "china" when she was younger, and it was meant to be derogatory because of the word's association with female animals. She was also surprised to find out that *china* is the name of a national character in Chile.

marked woman. Her “saving grace” is that she is from el campo + the countryside, which aligns with the rural patriotism forwarded by criollo Chilean elites.

El huaso and la china not only represent the rooster and the hen, respectively, in la cueca campesina-huasa, they also embody and perform criollo Chilean values. In *Styling Blackness in Chile*, folklorist and ethnomusicologist Juan Eduardo Wolf (2019) states that nineteenth-century Chilean writers “known as the *costumbristas*” would often describe el huaso as strong but lazy because of his “content with a difficult but steady life” (31; original italics). Wolf (2019) explains that “[the] next two generations of writers, however, associated the huaso with another set of qualities. He was to epitomize common sense, reject putting on airs, and value the simple, rural life and the Chilean countryside” (31). As such, el huaso personified ideas and ideals that were important to a burgeoning nation.

Unlike el huaso, there is little information available on la china as a character but she is often recognized as an extension of el huaso. When la china is mentioned alongside el huaso she is often acknowledged in the possessive—“el huaso and *his* china”—which contains and propagates a sense of ownership, or even double ownership because she belongs to el huaso and to the patron’s wife. Moreover, the cueca that el huaso and la china dance is named “huasa”, which could be translated to “of the huaso”, indicating that this cueca presents his story, not hers, once more highlighting the heteropatriarchal ideologies embedded in the story. Therefore, at best, la china can be understood as an extension of el huaso and, at worst, as his property. Despite this, la china is an important character in el huaso’s story since the performance of la cueca campesina-huasa is about how el huaso-as-rooster chases and catches la china-as-hen.

Therefore, without her, there might be no dance. However, in this performance, la china

has no choice but to play the role of the object of el huaso's affection: the object which el huaso acquires every time at the end of each dance. This leaves la china with very little power.

Again, the story presented through el huaso and la china in la cueca campesina-huasa is heteropatriarchal because it is that of a rigged game that is always in favour of el huaso-as-rooster. In "Orígenes árabe-andaluces de la cueca o chilena" + "Arabic-Andalucian origins of la cueca or chilena", musicologist Samuel Claro-Valdés (1993) explains, "La coreografía de la danza, *de asedio y conquista del hombre a la mujer*, consiste, a su vez, en cuatro círculos que describen los bailarines en cada uno de los cuatros pies en que se divide" + "The dance's choreography, *of a man's siege and conquest of a woman*, consists of four circles that the dancers perform in each of the four sections into which [cueca dance] is divided" (2033; emphasis mine).<sup>17</sup> The prescribed chase (siege) and catch (conquest) is reframed as a courtship dance that is based on uneven power dynamics between men and women because the story always centres el huaso's desires.

Moreover, Claro-Valdés (1993) inadvertently points to how this story serves settler colonialism since it is about a criollo character who must chase and catch an enslaved Indigenous woman. I say "inadvertently" because, as I encountered in my research, it is common to frame cueca dance as "una conquista amorosa" + "an amorous conquest" (Espinosa 2021, 391), which has implications. As I mentioned above, el huaso and la china are not equals: el huaso was criollo-ized and allowed to climb the socio-economic ladder over time; and transformed into a character who was aligned with the values of criollo agrarian elites who owned latifundios in the "fertile central valley of Chile" (González 2005, 206). La china, on the other hand, is Indigenized through her Quechua name and recognized to be of lower socio-economic status through her

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<sup>17</sup> The four sections that Claro-Valdés (1993) speaks of here are the four circular displacements that appear in the dance, which I describe in detail in the next chapter.

profession as maid or servant to the landowner's wife, as I discussed above. This story, then, enacts a settler colonial desire to remove (geographically and through racial mixing) Indigenous people with the aim of acquiring, occupying and raping land.

El huaso and la china also show up in la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita. As I mentioned in the Introduction and will elaborate on in the next chapter, these two cueca dances are variations of la cueca campesina-huasa, particularly the competitive version. What makes them variations of la cueca campesina-huasa is their choreographic structure and the codification, which I will discuss in more depth in the following chapter; as well as the rural attire that people wear when performing these cueca dances, which signals that they are dancing as huasos or chinas. El huaso's attire consists of knee-high leather boots with spurs, a tailored shirt and a wool chamanto (a reversible poncho) etched with designs.<sup>18</sup> Over his head, el huaso dons a chupalla, a flat-top hat. La china is clothed in a ruffled blouse and a pollera, a large one-piece skirt, worn over many underskirts and embellished with embroidered flowers. Sometimes la china will also wear an apron over her pollera. Both dancers also hold pañuelos + handkerchiefs, which are sometimes embroidered or printed with a design such as copihues + lapagerias, the national flower of Chile.<sup>19</sup>

Settler colonial practices such as patriotism and territorialization are further storied in la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita because these cueca dances are for the criollo Chilean nation-state and the Catholic Church. In these cueca dances, performers in rural attire partner either the Chilean flag or an effigy of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, respectively. By performing to the flag or to the Virgin, metonyms of country and Church, the story about el

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<sup>18</sup> "Chamanto" is derived from the Mapudungun "chamall". Mapudungun is the name of the Mapuche language.

<sup>19</sup> See Figure 5.14 and Figure 5.15 for examples of pañuelos with embroidery and printed designs.

huaso's conquest of la china transforms into another settler colonial story about a citizen-subject's self-colonization through patriotism and Catholicism and a re-occupation of land.

La cueca a la bandera is a story that re-creates the criollo Chilean nation-state by acknowledging Chile as a Republic that is independent from Spain; and by celebrating Chilean expansionism (through the War of the Pacific [1879-1883] and other battles and wars).<sup>20</sup> This is apparent when el huaso or la china is substituted by a person in military uniform. This person in uniform does not erase or replace el huaso or la china, it re-imagines them. As I mentioned above, ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2017) asserts that the purpose of Decree 23, which nationalized la cueca campesina-huasa, “was to relate the folkloric with the national and the national with the military” (89). A double territorialization occurs through this story, then: the flag, which symbolizes the Chilean nation-state, reclaims the territory as Chilean; and its association with (a military) huaso or china imagines this territory as the Chile of the countryside. Through this cueca dance variation, settler colonial subjects are able to re-establish their occupation on Indigenous land.

La cueca a la Carmelita presents another story of occupation and territorialization by connecting the rural, criollo Chilean nation-state to the Catholic Church. The Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel became the patroness of Chile on October 24, 1923, through a papal decree by Pope Pius XI (“Virgen del Carmen, Reina y Madre de Chile” 2022, n.p). On December 19, 1926, la Carmelita, as she is affectionately called, was further crowned as Queen of Chile by Monsignor Benedicto Aloisi Masella; an act that was repeated by Pope John Paul II in 1987

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<sup>20</sup> During the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) Chile extended itself northward through the acquisition of Bolivian and Peruvian territories. Chile's gains also came with access to already established ports in these areas. Arica, Chile's current northern-most city and port, was taken from Peru during the War of the Pacific, “[coming] under Chilean control in 1880” and was “finally ceded fully to Chile via treaty in 1929” (Wolf 2019, 22). Significantly, these kinds of acquisitions and boundary shiftings have resulted in different kinds of losses for both Peru and Bolivia. The latter, for example, lost access to the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, this war has exacerbated tensions between Chile and its neighbouring countries.

during a visit to Chile (“Virgen del Carmen, Reina y Madre de Chile” 2022, n.p.). Aside from these legitimate titles, la Carmelita was also officially albeit illegitimately appointed the Patroness of the Armed Forces by Supreme Director Bernardo O’Higgins—a Chilean Independence leader and one of Chile’s founding fathers. Therefore, La Carmelita has a long history with the criollo Chilean nation-state and the military and, therefore, is an “icono del nacionalismo católico militar-colonial” + “icon of a Catholic military-colonial nationalism” (150), as sociologist and social scientist Fernanda Carvajal (2023) asserts in *La convulsión coliza*. By dancing as huasos or chinas in la cueca a la Carmelita, the performers enact a settler colonial story of occupation as well as of subservience and allegiance to a Catholic, militaristic, rural, criollo Chilean nation-state, re-creating the nation in those ways. These connected stories about el huaso and la china—and their military counterparts—propagate and maintain heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies.

### 3.5.3 El Roto y la Dama

In this subsection, I discuss the story of el roto and la dama, an urban proletariat story about working-class people. I offer a brief history of el roto and reveal that la dama, an unnamed woman, gets subsumed within this masculinist history. Moreover, I argue that this story propagates heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies by favouring men’s desires and through the territorialization of urban spaces.

Unlike la cueca campesina-huasa, la cueca chora-brava does not perform the story of the rooster and the hen. Instead, la cueca chora-brava takes up el roto Chileno + the poor, working-class, mestizo urban Chilean man and his stories about life in the city. El roto Chileno has become a national character who personifies this other(ed) Chile of the city as well as embodies

the suffering and oppression of a racialized, poor working class. Similar to el huaso, el roto has a woman counterpart and partner. However, she is not given a name and is generally referred to as “la dama” + “the lady”. In la cueca chora-brava, el roto and la dama perform an urban proletariat story of class struggles, liberatory sexuality and consent that diverges significantly from the story of the rooster and the hen.

As I mentioned above, the Spanish caste system served to keep Spanish/European people and criollos above racialized and mixed individuals. Therefore, vestiges of the Spanish caste system such as socioeconomic and racial structures as well as geography have contributed to positioning el roto below el huaso over time in Chilean collective memory (Bolívar 2010, 152n2; Espinosa 2009; Gutiérrez 2010; Wolf 2019, 31). In “Exaltación del mestizo” + “Exaltation of the mestizo”, historian Horacio Gutiérrez (2010) explains that attempts at “racial homogenization” in the twentieth century were based on creating “personajes mestizos representativos de lo nacional, tipos-síntesis de la nación; en el caso de Chile, el *roto* y el *huaso*, uno de origen urbano, el otro rural” + “mestizo characters that could represent the nation, that could be personifications of the nation; in the Chilean case, el *roto* and el *huaso*, one of urban origin, the other, rural” (138; original italics). As noted above, el huaso underwent a process of whitewashing that granted him upward social mobility, to some extent. Conversely, el roto + the poor, working-class, mestizo urban man remained racially, socioeconomically and geographically marked and, thus, inferior along all of these dimensions to el huaso.

The paradox is that el roto is simultaneously condemned in Chilean society and elevated above other mestizos across Latin America by Chileans. El roto’s mestizaje is not only informed by the Spanish caste system but also by a “scientific racism”, influenced by social Darwinism and male chauvinism, that was prominent in Latin America during the second half of the

nineteenth century (Gutiérrez 2010, 124). Nicolás Palacios, a doctor and writer who was the “most famous proponent of mestizaje in Chile” (Wolf 2019, 24), forwarded that el roto’s mestizaje had noble Germanic and Araucanian roots—Palacios viewed the Araucanian Indigenous people as a superior race because they were patriarchal (Gutiérrez 2010; Wolf 2019).<sup>21</sup> These “noble” associations, informed by heteropatriarchal, racist and classist ideologies, positioned el roto Chileno “above other forms of Latin American mestizaje” (Wolf 2019, 24) even though he has also become disdained by criollo agrarian elites and by social classes that align themselves with the criollo Chilean elites.

Despite el roto’s “noble origins” and “superior” mestizaje, this character could never be the embodiment of the respectable chilenidad + Chilean-ness that the criollo agrarian elites wanted to forward. Still, el roto did not disappear from Chilean collective memory since this character has become a symbol for the urban poor (Gutiérrez 2010, 135), as I discussed above. Moreover, his cueca, la cueca chora-brava, has become the medium through which to express the frustration, anger, injustices and hardships that this pueblo + people experiences (Muñoz and Padilla 2008).

Nevertheless, both a history and story of el roto forward a masculinist identity that erases or, at least, ignores women’s involvement and stories (Gutiérrez 2010, 137). Gutiérrez (2010) elaborates,

No existen mujeres *rotas*, por muy patriotas que hayan sido o lo sean. Una mujer nunca sería llamada *rota*, porque sería una ofensa, ni ellas jamás se autodenominarían de esa forma, porque sería un menoscabo  
+ There are no women *rotas*, no matter how patriotic they have been or are. A woman would never be called *rota*, because it would be offensive, nor would they ever call themselves that, because it would be damaging to their reputation. (137; original italics)

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<sup>21</sup> Gutiérrez (2010) explains that Palacios’s book, *Raza Chilena + The Chilean Race*, in which this Germanic-Araucanian mixture is addressed, “fue la encarnación de un anhelo nacional, abriendo nuevos horizontes al orgullo patrio, al darle una base de nobleza étnica” + “was the incarnation of a national desire, opening new horizons toward national pride, by founding it on ethnic nobility” (126).

What Gutiérrez (2010) is speaking about here is how the terms “roto” (masculine singular) and “rota” (feminine singular) are derogatory because, in Chile, they are colloquially understood as a “persona maleducada de modales groseros” + “uneducated person with rude manners” (Diccionario de la lengua española 2024). Therefore, even though “roto” has been reclaimed by the urban community to create a national character and symbol, “rota” is still inflected with these negative connotations. This has contributed to the collapsing of urban women’s experiences into those of urban men: Because there is no “rota” or another name for the poor, working-class, mestiza urban woman, her participation in this community becomes erased, even though she has always been present in the history and story that centres el roto (Gutiérrez 2010). The exclusion of women in the construction of el roto—and the collapsing of women’s experiences into men’s—illustrates how histories of heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism in Chile are inflected in the present moment; in other words, these systemic issues and practices permeate cueca dance stories and impact marginalized communities and their identity construction.

Even though she is sidelined, la dama + the lady plays an important role in la cueca chora-brava. In this cueca, el roto and la dama enact a story about city life and love that revolves around a liberatory sexuality, sensuality and consent—aspects that are absent from most of the other cueca dances I discuss. In “Principales ejes de estudio de la cueca chilena” + “Main areas of study of the Chilean cueca”, ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2021) states that “la cueca ‘chora’ es un elemento que reivindica el placer del cuerpo y el erotismo, abriendo una perspectiva corporal novedosa del ‘Chile disidente’ ” + “la cueca ‘chora’ is a medium that claims bodily pleasure and eroticism, opening up a novel embodied perspective of a ‘dissident Chile’ ” (Rubí Carreño Bolívar qtd in Espinosa 2021, 46). From this perspective, el roto and la dama’s overt display of sexuality and sensuality is a mode of political defiance that is knotted with

pleasure. El roto and la dama play with vulgarity and lewdness to push the boundaries of respectability in a criollo, Catholic society; to present a different attitude towards life and living that is urban; and to engage eroticism politically and aesthetically for the purpose of bodily liberation (Bolívar 2010, 154-155; Espinosa 2021, 46). This dissident Chile has its own desires, which el roto and la dama equally enact and express through their story.

El roto and la dama enact a heteropatriarchal story. As I explained above, la dama's experience is collapsed into el roto's, suggesting, once again, that el roto is the protagonist of this story. Not only that, la dama has no name, which means that el roto, a specific character, dances la cueca chora-brava with a nameless, unspecified woman. Heteropatriarchy, then, manifests in this story not in terms of control, but in terms of who is excluded from the story.

However, there is a significant contradiction in this heteropatriarchal story because consent—instead of conquest—is centred in the performance. In la cueca chora-brava, the amorous pursuit is not one-sided and it is not a given that la dama will stay with el roto at the end of the dance. The goal in this cueca, therefore, is not capture but rather captivating the other dancer, which is done through sensuality and playfulness; and both performers must obtain permission from each other. Because of this, the dancers must draw attention to themselves—and el roto has the bigger challenge here—as well as get close to each other to feel things out (literally and metaphorically) and get a sense of the interests of the other person to be able to respond accordingly. La dama is allowed to make moves on el roto, to express her sexuality and to leave by herself at the end. As such, both dancers have agency, which is uncommon in heteropatriarchal structures.

Even though this story is not about the conquest of a man over a woman or about settler colonial occupation of a national territory, el roto and la dama still present a story that

territorializes urban spaces. Christian Spencer Espinosa (2017) recognizes that “la cueca [brava] permite la sociabilidad y territorializa un sentimiento de pertenencia a la ciudad que se aprecia en el uso repetido de sus espacios” + “la cueca [chora] foster socialization and territorializes a sense of belonging to the city that can be seen through the repetitive use of its spaces” (99). Despite being marginalized in Chilean society, *el roto* and *la dama* find and take up space in the city, creating an other(ed) Chile.

#### 3.5.4 La Viuda y el Compañero Detenido-Desaparecido

In this section, I present the story of *la viuda* and *el compañero detenido-desaparecido*. This is a story with a recent history since it emerged during the Pinochet dictatorship. As such, *la viuda*, while symbolic, is also tied to a violent reality. This story is dependent on heteropatriarchy to condemn the dictatorship because it makes present the absent man. By evoking the disappeared man, *la viuda* also reminds of the military junta’s destruction of (heteronormative) partnerships and family units. Nonetheless, this story also condemns the settler colonial practice of erasure

La Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos Desaparecidos + The Group for Detained and Disappeared Family Members (AFDD) is a collective of mothers, wives, sisters and daughters that formed in 1974, following General Augusto Pinochet’s coup d’état on September 11, 1973. This collective’s mission was to find the whereabouts of their detained and disappeared family members (“Inicio” n.d.). In “Intervention / Resurrection”, history of consciousness scholars Lissette Olivares and Lucian Gomoll (2016) recount that these women “met while searching for their missing loved ones, crossing paths at detention sites while flashing photos of the disappeared to the prison guards” (160). The authors further reveal that, in 1976, this group began “developing a variety of tactics that would force the military state to acknowledge their

[loved ones'] presence and release information" (Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 161). Olivares and Gomoll (2016) relate that "[by] 1977 they began to interrupt public spaces with political demonstrations. [...] They chained themselves to the gates of Congress, staged fifty-hour hunger strikes, burned themselves, and marched the streets of the city with large signs that demanded to know: 'Where are they?' " (161).

Following the formation of the AFDD, a folk group emerged within the collective in 1978. Olivares and Gomoll (2016) recount that "Apolonia Ramirez, Ana Gonzalez, and Gabriela Bravo suggested creating a group that would use song to represent their struggle. Led by Gala Torres, a peasant vernacular musician, their group of approximately twenty-five women began to meet weekly, learning to play instruments and sing together for the return of their missing" (161). In fact, it was Torres who composed the music for and created the lyrics to *la cueca sola*. By innovating with *cueca*, Torres and the women of the AFDD were able to tell a different story—a story about state violence—through *cueca* music, song and dance. *La cueca sola*, a protest performance, "became a widely recognized symbol of courage and protest for others who had also lost loved ones during the dictatorship" (Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 161).

*La cueca sola* was first performed on March 8, 1978, at the Caupolicán Theatre in Santiago; and, since then, has continued to be performed in various spaces and for different occasions. *La cueca sola* served to lament the people who were detained and made disappeared by the Pinochet dictatorship as well as denounce the military junta's human rights violation, which the dictatorship kept denying. On International Women's Day, in front of six thousand people, Gabriela Bravo, followed by Violeta Zúñiga and Marta Pérez, took to the floor alone to dance *la cueca sola* together; each woman had a photograph of their family member placed on their chest, which had become the AFDD's way of involving their loved ones in their protests

(Olivares and Gomoll 2016). I noticed that la cueca sola functioned much like the photograph, which anthropologist Malathi de Alwis (2009) states has the “unique ability to simultaneously encompass both presence and absence” (382): by dancing together but alone, the women of the AFDD transformed what is normally a couple’s dance into a solitary cueca and arguably made present the absence of men and, by extension, other family members whom the military government had taken. La cueca sola intervened in the dictatorship’s actions by memorializing violence and inserting a different story into collective memory.

Through this performance, another national “character” emerged: la viuda + the widow.<sup>22</sup> Literature scholar Rubí Carreño Bolívar (2010) remarks, “A diferencia de Argentina, en que se privilegió a las madres como sujeto de la denuncia, en Chile predominó la imagen de la viuda” + “Unlike Argentina, in which mothers were privileged as subjects of denunciation, in Chile the image of the widow predominated” (154). This is because la cueca sola indexes an intimate relationship, as Bolívar (2010) acknowledges: la cueca sola “denuncia al mismo tiempo la ausencia del compañero erótico, de baile, y las formas de vida asociadas [...] a esa pareja primigenia popular. La cueca sola reclama la necesidad de gozar a la vez que [...] señala el lugar de la violencia y la destrucción: un vacío que capturó el cuerpo del amado” + “simultaneously denounces the absence of the erotic dance partner as well as the ways of living associated [...] with that original working-class couple. La cueca sola reclaims the need for enjoyment while [...] marking the site of violence and destruction: a void that seized the body of the lover” (159).

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<sup>22</sup> I add the quotation marks here because la viuda is not an imagined, idealized national character as is el huaso and el roto to some extent. This is a condemnatory character who emerged from the lived experiences and subjectivities of the women of the AFDD. Mobilizing against the dictatorship’s human rights violations by dancing alone, without their men partners, formed this image of them as widows even though they were mothers, wives, sisters and daughters.

By conjuring el compañero detenido-desaparecido + the detained-disappeared partner or companion through la cueca sola, the women of the AFDD engender la viuda.

In la cueca sola, la viuda serves as a character with which to present the terrible reality that the dictatorship attempts to hide. In “Las cueca como representaciones estético-políticas de chilenidad en Santiago entre 1979 y 1989” + “The Cuecas as Aesthetic and Political Representation of Chilenidad in Santiago Between 1979 and 1989”, literature scholar and historian Araucaria Rojas Sotoconil (2009) states, “La brutal ausencia del compañero de baile y vida trasunta en la escenificación de la *cueca sola* una literalidad que pone al descubierto lacerías y dolores, prescindiendo en ese acto de metáforas u ornamentos estéticos accesorios” + “The brutal absence of the dance and life partner is transposed onto the staging of la *cueca sola* which literally reflects and exposes the lacerations and hurt, dispensing with metaphors or aesthetic ornaments” (60; original italics). Through la cueca sola, la viuda condemns the state-sanctioned violence that destroyed the (socialist) family unit and becomes the embodiment of grief, mourning, outrage and determination by continually demanding “where are they?” (Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 161). What can be seen is that la viuda and her story stand in direct opposition to the military junta’s continual denial of human rights violations: she exposes the dictatorship’s shameful acts through la cueca sola, which makes visible those who have been detained and/or disappeared.

Through la cueca sola and la viuda, the women of the AFDD garnered global attention. Specifically, singer and musician Sting was so moved by the strength and determination of the women of the AFDD as well as by their cueca sola that the artist composed a protest song based on their experience. “They Dance Alone” was released in 1987 and the music video, featuring women from the AFDD dancing la cueca sola, aired the same year. This national character, who

emerges during a horrific period in Chile's history, becomes a global messenger who recounts the brutal events the Pinochet dictatorship attempted to keep hidden.

The story of la viuda and her compañero detenido-desaparecido engages with heteropatriarchy to make their statement and turns it against the state; however, this story also maintains this ideology. I argue that la cueca sola is reliant on a heteropatriarchal logic to protest and condemn the Pinochet dictatorship's atrocities by highlighting the military government's destruction of (heteronormative) partnerships and family units. In *La convulsión coliza*, sociologist and social scientist Fernanda Carvajal (2023) explains that collectives such as the AFDD “no tuvieron un posicionamiento explícitamente feminista” + “did not have an explicit feminist position” (Carvajal 2023, 225n393). For these groups, Carvajal (2023) elaborates, “la libertad consistía en reconstruir su familia, puesto que el terrorismo de Estado había quebrantado los lazos filiales” + “liberty resided in reconstructing their family, since state terrorism had broken filial ties” (225n393). Furthermore, the story of la viuda dancing alone evokes and centres the absent compañero detenido-desaparecido, a missing man, and not necessarily the missing and/or murdered woman or child—citizens who were also detained and killed during the military government (Vergara 2023). I do not disagree with the strategic use of heteropatriarchy: engaging with this ideology, in which men are protagonists, was a necessary tactic that helped politicize the performance and activate la viuda to bring to light the horrendous acts of the dictatorship. However, this does not mean that this strategy does not have implications. By using heteropatriarchy against the state, the tactic nonetheless re-centres heteropatriarchy as a norm.

Still, the story of la viuda also points to and condemns the settler colonial practice and project of erasure. In this case, however, what is usually reserved for “the other” was used on the Chilean people, on Chilean citizens. The Pinochet dictatorship turned against anyone who

supported Allende and socialism as well as those who did not embrace the military junta's far-right, fascist ideologies. The dictatorship sought to eradicate anyone who was at odds with its policies and politics and convert those who remained. The women of the AFDD made visible the danger of the military junta. By focusing on "familial fragmentation"—the disruption of "a network of affiliations and obligations that require constant care and commitment" (Justice 2018, 48)—the story of la viuda makes the violent settler colonial practice of erasure present.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.5.5 Unstoried

In this subsection, I discuss *La Conquista de América + The Conquest of America*, a performance by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse (Las Yeguas, henceforth). Las Yeguas' performance, which cites la cueca sola, extends the violence that the women of the AFDD highlight in la cueca sola to conquest and to American(-Canadian) imperialism during the 1980s, drawing parallels between both. This performance subverts heteropatriarchal and settler colonial logics: two queer men in bare feet dance a cueca in close proximity over a map of Central and South America with no boundaries demarcating territories and with a topography of broken glass. Their bleeding feet spread blood over the map, signalling the genocides and massacres that have occurred over this landmass since colonization. Las Yeguas remind that the dictatorship is connected to a larger collective history of violence.

*La Conquista de America* was a one-time protest performance by Las Yeguas, a queer collective composed of Pedro Mardones Lemebel and Francisco Casas Silva. This performance

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel Heath Justice (2018) is speaking specifically about Indigenous people's "familial fragmentation". However, settler colonialism and its practices extend beyond Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities to other marginalized groups. As Justice (2018) reminds, settler colonialism "[is] woven into all aspects of our experience, and those strangling threads are too often invisible and all the more wounding as a result" (48). Familial fragmentation is one of those threads that the women of the AFDD were making visible.

was one of many interventions that Las Yeguas staged from 1987 to 1997. On October 12, 1989, a date that in Latin America and Spain is known as Día de la Raza + Race Day and commemorates Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of America as well as Hispanic ethnicity,<sup>24</sup> Las Yeguas cited la cueca sola *La Conquista de América* + *The Conquest of America*. The protest performance took place at the Chilean Commission on Human Rights in Santiago and denounced the Pinochet dictatorship by "[drawing] a parallel between the colonial process of 'The Conquest' and the support that North American imperialism had provided to Latin American military governments"; both of which have resulted in the massacres of people in Chile and beyond because of cannibalistic extractive practices ("1989 / The Conquest of America" 2018).

The collective's name is a play on the Biblical Horsemen of the Apocalypse, which Lemebel and Silva subvert by replacing the word "horseman" with "yegua" + "mare". This substitution makes their queerness explicit since the term "yegua" + "mare" is often used as a derogatory term for homosexual men in Chile (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 37). Furthermore, the re-appropriation of this term functions as the collective's "inaugural conceptual-performative action" in which they "attempt to re-signify its degraded connotation into a politicized branding" (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 38). Silva describes their transformation in the following manner, "We reinvented ourselves as a body, different morbidly sexed, and lumpen. We became a female animal, a mare, a warring machine from another time, beasts of burden; animals in disuse at the mercy of the spur ... Two plus two, four legs to turn back the homosexed centaur that neighed at the troop and sniffed, the sadistic, syphilitic, and immune deficient wound on the cadaver of the nation" (qtd in Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 38). The mare, thus, becomes re-articulated as a

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<sup>24</sup> October 12 is also known in Latin America and Spain as Día de la Hispanidad + Day of Hispanic-ness and el Descubrimiento de America + the Discovery of America.

disturbing and disruptive “warring machine from another time” who stands up to the “homosexed centaur” of the nation. Therefore, history of consciousness scholars Lucian Gomoll and Lissette Olivares (2012) note how “the collective’s title emphasizes their dedication to a contentious and ‘battling visibility’ in the midst of a repressive dictatorship and social order” (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 37).

Gomoll and Olivares (2012) explain that “the queer men of Las Yeguas were arguably prevented from embodying ‘the everyday’ and thus their physical presence is inflected with a different and more urgent visibility politics” (37). Therefore, even the name of their collective disavows Chile’s “imposition of heterosexual *conformity and normativity*” (Fischer 2016, 7; original italics). Moreover, Las Yeguas’ bodies “are particularly deviant when considered in relation to the hypermasculine construction of a military officer or soldier, whose uniform transforms the vulnerable individual body into a closed and impenetrable unit of aggression” (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 46). Las Yeguas do not present a Chilean “deber ser” + “dutiful ought to be” (Sotoconil 2009) as does the military officer or soldier. They evade this “deber ser” by embodying “a queer abscess that eats away at the conceptualization of a social body that often tries to eliminate them” (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 39).

As such, Las Yeguas’ performance brings to light a different kind of everyday experience. The collective not only highlights their “deviance” from “heterosexual conformity and normativity” (Fischer 2106, 7); I argue that Las Yeguas also focusses on the resulting poverty and devastation—loss, erasure and bloodshed of marginalized peoples—from neoliberal economics that the dictatorship wished to censor. If the nationalized cueca campesina-huasa is about courtship and conventions, love of country and civil duty, then Las Yeguas’ cueca dance is about querying and queering this chilenidad.

Las Yeguas make genocide and murder a central theme in *La Conquista de América*. Las Yeguas' performance was meant to critique how Chile's Catholic national narrative and allegiance to American(-Canadian) neoliberal economics propagates the persecution and genocide of marginalized peoples and promotes a continued rape of the land through cannibalistic extractive practices. As their website states, "[The objective] of the performance was to denounce the massacres executed by the various dictatorships of the Southern Cone in their respective territories, alluding especially to the situation of Chile under [the] military dictatorship" ("1989 / The Conquest of America" 2018). The collective performed a cueca dance in bare feet over a large map of Central and South America; a map devoid of national boundaries and with a glassy topography made from broken Coca-Cola bottles ("1989 / The Conquest of America" 2018). The map, a black outline on white paper, makes the issue of land explicit in Las Yeguas' political intervention. The blood that spills from their feet as they dance on broken glass and that smears across the map as they move presents a visual for the genocides that have occurred through the conquest of peoples and land and that continue to occur through violent settler colonial practices, such as those engaged by the Pinochet dictatorship.

Las Yeguas' political intervention stories the silenced and removed by evoking people who are never figured in settler colonial practices and projects. Maura Brescia (1989), a journalist who covered the event, cites Silva (1989) following the performance: "Pensé en los muertos y caídos, en much sangre sobre América" + "I was thinking about the dead and fallen, about how much blood covers America" (27). Lemebel (1989) elaborates Silva's comment by focussing on erasure and the fight for visibility of particular groups of people. Speaking about another work focused on transvestism and homosexuality, Lemebel explains how it

[enfatisa] todo lo que implica la homosexualidad como material de desecho y connotación de delinquentes, a quienes se nos coloca junto a las prostitutas, los

neopreneros, los drogadictos. Es decir, en un margen en el cual la homosexualidad no es opcional, sino es una enfermedad. Y pónle doble enfermedad si eres araucano; homosexual y mapuche, y además pobre, significa doble o triple marginilidad. + [emphasizes] all that homosexuality implies as a material of waste and as connoting criminality, since we are placed alongside [women] prostitutes, neopreneros [people who inhale neoprén], drug addicts. We are framed and marginalized in such a way that homosexuality is not optional, but rather a disease. And it is a double disease if you are Araucano [Indigenous]; homosexual and Mapuche, and additionally poor, means a double or a triple marginalization. (qtd in Bresica 1989, 27)

I extend these thoughts to Las Yeguas' *La Conquista de America* since the people most affected by Spanish conquest and American(-Canadian) imperialism have been Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, the poor and queer people: those who are figured as “waste” and “criminals” and whose “blood covers America”.

Las Yeguas' performance makes evident that marginalized people end up paying the cost for ways of being that are oppressive and colonising. This cueca dance, like la cueca sola of the women of the AFDD, offers a story about different lived experiences during the dictatorship, one that relates to the consequences of American(-Canadian) imperialism. As Las Yeguas remind, “Vamos todos a la democracia, pero no vamos todos juntos, ya que nos han sumado a las minorías. Sumados, pero, por lo mismo, anulados: todos, pero quienes; todos, pero nadie” + “We are all heading towards democracy, but we are not going there together, since we have been added to the minorities. Added, but, at the same time, annulled: everybody, but who; everybody, but nobody” (qtd in Bresica 1989, 27). Las Yeguas' intervention calls out settler colonial violence that seeks to “destroy and replace” (Patrick Wolfe qtd in Daniel Heath Justice 2018, 10) and remembers a story that settler colonialism tries to forget.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined a history of cueca dance that traced cueca, generally, and la cueca campesina-huasa, specifically, through four time periods of Chile's history: 1) the Era of Independence (1810-1818); 2) the subsequent Republican Era (1818-1891); 3) early-to-mid-twentieth century (1920s-1960s); and 4) the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1990). I revealed that the tripartite practice is acknowledged as being a mestiza art form—the result of Indigenous, Afro-descendent and Spanish cultural miscegenation—and that this identification simultaneously serves to erase these communities' influences. The burgeoning criollo Chilean nation-state, governed by agrarian elites who owned latifundios in the Central Zone of Chile, thus mobilized mestizaje as a palimpsest through which to designate cueca as “Chilean”.

Additionally, I illustrated that this history privileges la cueca campesina-huasa as “the” cueca dance. By collapsing cueca dance's multiplicity into a singularity, la cueca campesina-huasa comes to stand in for all cueca dances. Connected to the Central Zone of Chile and to agrarian elites, la cueca campesina-huasa imposes on the Chilean populus a criollo folklore of the countryside that is connected to an agrarian nationalism. As such, I argued that la cueca campesina-huasa slips from a mestiza identification to a criolla identity. This slippage occurs through la cueca campesina-huasa's connection to el huaso + the rural horseman of the Central Zone of Chile. Initially conceived as a person of ambiguous socio-economic status as well as racially ambiguous, over time el huaso came to be understood as criollo, a term that, by the twentieth century, signified “home-grown” (Wolf 2019). The criollo-ization of el huaso helped to criollo-ize la cueca campesina-huasa. It is this cueca dance version that General Augusto Pinochet nationalizes in 1979 to “unify” Chile during the dictatorship. The nationalization of la cueca campesina-huasa splits this cueca dance version into two variations: a competitive

variation, which is performed at national competitions, and a social variation. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the nationalization of la cueca campesina leads to the codification of the dance form; the competitive cueca campesina-huasa performs this rigid choreography.

In this chapter, I also presented four cueca dance stories that align with or intervene in and add to a history of cueca dance. The stories of the rooster and then hen and el huaso and la china + a rural peasant girl/woman who is the maid/servant of the landowner's wife support the history of la cueca campesina-huasa.<sup>25</sup> Whereas the story of el roto + the poor, working-class urban man and la dama + the (unnamed) poor, working class urban woman intervene in this history by reminding that there are urban cueca dances, that the countryside does not represent all of Chile and that there are histories that are ignored or erased in a history of cueca dance. The story of la viuda + the widow and el compañero detenido-desaparece + the detained-disappeared (man) partner also intervenes in the official discourses of the Pinochet dictatorship by making visible and denouncing the military junta's human rights violations, which it initially denied. The queer collective Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse, who cite la cueca sola in their performance *La Conquista de America* + *The Conquest of America*, further add to a collective history of violence. Their queer(ed) cueca dance reminds that American(-Canadian) imperialism in Central and South America, which funded dictatorships and had violent and bloody consequences, is part of the history of conquest and colonization. Their intervention brings attention to populations who never figure in official histories and who are the collateral damage of oppressive processes and structures: Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, queer people (with or without HIV-AIDS), women and the poor.

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<sup>25</sup> I make the case above that this is an Indigenous character of lower class. As such, la china is positioned below the criollo and socioeconomically ambiguous huaso in the Chilean imaginary based on the Spanish Caste system.

Importantly, I attend to how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism are embedded in a history of cueca dance as well as in cueca dance stories. Specifically, I focussed on how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism manifest through ways of relating in the cueca dance stories. In many of the stories that I described, men are the protagonists and women show up as objects of affection and, therefore, as side characters in these stories. This is specifically true for the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa but it is also present in la cueca chora-brava. Although the latter attempts to present men and women as equals by enacting an urban proletariat story that centres consent, women's experiences are collapsed into men's and, moreover, they appear as unnamed characters, as I explained in detail above. Even la cueca sola by the women of the AFDD centres detained and disappeared men as the absence that these women make present by dancing alone. While this is a strategy, the story nonetheless highlights the fracturing of a nuclear, heteronormative family unit through the absence of men. As such, heteropatriarchy not only shows up through the centering of men in these stories but also through the uneven power dynamics between men and women that are presented and forwarded, sometimes inadvertently and in subtle ways.

Settler colonialism manifests in insidious ways in most of these cueca dance stories. The dominant story in collective memory about cueca dance is that it is a mating ritual or an amorous pursuit between a rooster and a hen, whereby the rooster must conquer the hen (Knudsen 2001; Olivares and Gomoll 2016; Torres 2008; Wolf 2019). However, as I elaborated on above, this story only makes sense in relation to the competitive cueca campesina-huasa and the social cueca campesina-huasa because these cueca dances enact the story of el huaso-as-rooster chasing and catching la china-as-hen. Moreover, when gender, race and class are highlighted, the domination of el huaso-as-rooster over la china-as-hen is one in which a criollo, albeit socioeconomically

ambiguous, rural horseman must conquer an Indigenous enslaved woman or, at least, an Indigenous woman who is the maid or servant of the landowner's wife. Therefore, attending to "settler colonial race logics" (Justice 2018, 15) reveals a hidden layer in the story of an amorous pursuit: the re-conquering of land as well as criollo claims to occupation, domination and extraction of said land through latifundios.

La cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita further highlight how cueca dance can be mobilized to legitimize land claims and settler colonial occupation. In these two cueca dances, the performers usually dance alone and to the flag or to an effigy of the Virgin of Mount Carmel. The flag and the effigy of the Virgin serve as metonyms for the criollo Chilean nation-state and the Catholic Church; therefore, by directing their movements to these national symbols the story that is enacted is one that recognizes Chile as a bounded territory as well as a Catholic nation-state. Additionally, because the dancers performing these cueca dances usually personify *el huaso* or *la china*, la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita re-territorialize Chile as the Chile from the countryside, re-fortifying a criollo agrarian elite identity and their settler colonist pursuits. This is made apparent when comparing these cueca dances to la cueca chora-brava, which takes up an urban proletariat story. By taking up an urban story, la cueca chora-brava defies being territorialized and consumed by an all-encompassing identity from the countryside of the Central Zone of Chile; and, instead, forwards a story about urban working-class and poor individuals. Still, this cueca dance version also evokes territorialization as a tactic to occupy and claim urban spaces for an other(ed) Chile.

The queer(ed) cueca dance performed by Las Yeguas, intervenes in heteropatriarchal and settler colonist ideologies. Las Yeguas' queer(ed) cueca dance, which cites la cueca sola, was performed only once by Pedro Mardones Lemebel and Francisco Casas Silva, in 1989, as the

Pinochet dictatorship was coming to an end. Yet, it has remained in collective memory because of the subject matter: in their performance, Las Yeguas danced a cueca in close proximity, queering the heteronormativity of the form. Moreover, this queried conquest and settler colonialism. By performing barefoot on a map without borders and with a glass topography, Lemebe and Silva's feet became wounded, spilling and smearing blood across the map. Las Yeguas' intervention evoked the presence (through blood) of the casualties of progress—those who have been dispossessed, disenfranchised, murdered or made disappeared by colonial and settler colonial pursuits.

A history of cueca dance, the cueca dance stories and the ideologies woven through them are part of a memory of cueca dance. While this context serves as a mnemonic or memory aid for cueca dances—and vice versa—it also informs the collective memory or “discursive canon” (Espinosa 2009) of cueca dance. This collective memory helps cultivate a memory of cueca dance in a particular direction, towards racist, classist, sexist, misogynist and heteronormative ways of relating. As such, this memory will be “orientated” (Ahmed 2006) towards remembering harmful and even violent ways of relating.

This context is crucial for understanding how dance is a mnemonic practice that commits to memory and re-members ways of relating through ways of moving. Because a history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories organize around heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies, these ideologies infiltrate cueca dances. The organization of a history of cueca dance and of cueca dance stories structure and shape cueca choreographies and even dictate the ways of moving and ways of relating that cueca dance choreographies present, propagate and impart, as I demonstrate in the following chapter. The ideologies embedded in a history of cueca dance and in cueca dance stories become embodied through cueca dances and are, inadvertently or not,

committed to memory through movement. Again, “commit to memory” refers to a process whereby memory is simultaneously activated and shaped by a commitment to remember, to think with Maracle (2015). Heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism inform a history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories; and this context shapes and is re-created by cueca dance choreographies, the focus of the next chapter. By not attending to memory critically some histories and stories will continue to be erased, ways of relating that are harmful will go unchecked, and the potential of the dance form and the worlds it is involved in creating will become limited (to the benefit of some, at the cost of many).

## Chapter 4 | Performing Cueca Dance: Elements and Choreographies

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine contemporary videos of cueca dance available on YouTube to illustrate that the dance form is actually flexible and malleable. I examine “how to” dance cueca videos on YouTube, which break down cueca dance into constituent parts or what I call “cueca dance elements”, as well as cueca dance performance posted to YouTube. Using dance analysis, I illustrate that cueca dance elements can be performed by dancers as well as re-membered or pieced together anew in choreographies in a range of ways. I argue that this range of performing and re-membering cueca dance elements highlights cueca dance’s multiplicity and demonstrates that the dance form can present a myriad of stories.

The five cueca dances I analyze include: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa + the competitive rural-huasa cueca; 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava; 4) la cueca sola + the solitary cueca; and 5) a queer(ed) cueca dance performed by the queer collective Las Yeguas del Apocalypsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse (Las Yeguas). Each of these cueca dances offers different examples of how cueca dance elements can be performed and provides evidence to show the vast range of articulations and flexibility of the dance form—that vary according to the story or event being enacted. As mentioned in previous chapters, the term “version” refers to cueca dances that are different from each other because they emerge from specific historical moments and/or communities. The term “variation” refers to cueca dances that I have grouped together based on family resemblances in terms of movement as well as the ideologies they forward (please see Table 4.3 below).

The dash line in the Table below connects Las Yeguas’ queer(ed) cueca dance to la cueca campesina-huasa. This connection is meant to acknowledge that Las Yeguas’ cueca performance was interpreted as “la cueca” + “the cueca”, which, as I argue in this chapter, always implicitly refers to la cueca campesina-huasa and perhaps even the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. I do not mean to suggest that Las Yeguas’ cueca dance was aligned with the ideologies forwarded by this cueca dance version and the variations that stem from it. Rather, I am acknowledging that Las Yeguas’ cueca dance cited both la cueca sola and la cueca campesina-huasa, as I elaborate on below. This is, of course, my interpretation of the performance, for which I will make a case.

| Versions   | la cueca<br>campesina-huasa              |                                     | la cueca<br>chora-brava | la cueca sola                           |
|------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Variations | the competitive cueca<br>campesina-huasa | the social cueca<br>campesina-huasa |                         | Las Yeguas’<br>queer(ed) cueca<br>dance |

Table 4.3: Cueca dance versions and variations (with dash line)

Cueca dance’s flexibility is not always acknowledged. There is a view in the academic community that perceives cueca dance as the most rigid aspect of the tripartite practice (Torres 2008, 18, 32). Additionally, because cueca scholarship is mainly focussed on the music and/or song aspects of the tripartite practice, there is little analysis of the movements engaged in cueca dance by cueca scholars. In cueca (dance) scholarship, the dance aspect is framed and maintained as a heteronormative courtship dance, as I discussed in Chapter 3 and which I touch on in this chapter. Although some scholars critique the framing of cueca dance as a courtship dance (Torres 2008), it is nonetheless accepted in academic scholarship and collective memory (Espinosa 2021; Knudsen 2001; Olivares and Gomoll 2016; Wolf 2019). Consequently, these

limiting perceptions of the dance form impede a close look at the ways of moving and ways of relating that are possible in cueca dance.

In “Nuevas perspectivas en el estudio de la cueca chilena” + “New perspectives in the study of the Chilean cueca”, ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2022) disagrees with Torres’s (2008) assertion that cueca dance as well as the music component are rigid or fixed. Speaking against the scholarly focus on the structures and structuring of cueca dance and music, Espinosa (2022) states,

Esta explicación parece un constructo cerrado que encasilla o delimita las prácticas musicales en vez de explicar sus transformaciones. Si nos regimos por este punto de vista, por ejemplo, las cuecas improvisadas no serían cuecas al no cumplir en su estructura el orden de 14 versos; las cuecas bailadas en la danza contemporáneo no lo serían (por no cumplir con los giros obligatorios) y las fusiones con jazz serían fragmentos deformados de un original.

+ This explanation appears to be a closed conceptualization that pigeonholes or delimits musical practices instead of explaining their transformations. If we follow this point of view, for example, improvised cuecas would not be considered cuecas if their structure did not adhere to the 14-verse order; cuecas dances performed in contemporary dance would not be considered cueca dances (for failing to perform the required displacements) and fusions with jazz would be distorted fragments of an original. (276)

What can be gathered from Espinosa (2022), is that this line of inquiry fixates on boundaries and not on the practice’s transformation over time. By maintaining particular boundaries otherwise articulations of the tripartite practice become erased or, at least, ignored. This kind of fixation risks relegating cueca to the past and perhaps even as “pure”, rather than conceptualizing cueca as a practice that continues to unfold, develop and change through innovation and/or by coming into contact with other practices. Although this is not the focus of my research, what I demonstrate in this chapter is that cueca dance, generally, is not rigid because of the various ways it can be articulated.

Instead of focusing on “what cueca (dance) is”, Espinosa (2022) is more concerned with what cueca (dance) can do. As such, the author advises, “Pero en vez de preguntarnos ‘donde

empieza' o 'donde termina' una cueca (es decir, qué *es*) parece más prudente preguntarse 'como cambia' la cueca cueca o bien 'qué hace' la gente con ella en un tiempo y espacio determinados (es decir, qué *permite*)" + "But instead of asking 'where does cueca begin' or 'where does it end' (in other words, what *is* cueca) it seems more prudent to ask 'how does cueca change' or 'what do people do' with cueca in a certain time and space (in other words, what does cueca *allow*)" (Espinosa 2022, 276; original italics). What Espinosa (2022) alludes to here is that, throughout its history, cueca dance has allowed people to move with the times and to re-member the form in ways that allow them to tell their stories.

By looking closely at how cueca dance is re-membered each time it is danced, I have also noticed how cueca dance shifts from couple to couple and from community to community. I have also observed how cueca dance molds and responds to environments, issues and times, which Espinosa (2022) alludes to and which I discussed in Chapter 3. La cueca sola, for instance, emerged during the Pinochet dictatorship in response to and to condemn the military junta's human rights violations. As such, I agree with Espinosa's (2022) assertion that cueca dance transforms according to dancer(s), community and context and, therefore, that there is no one way to dance a cueca. In other words, "what is cueca (dance)" does not have single answer or a fixed structure; and oftentimes the definition and/or demarcation of a cueca (dance) is established by practitioners and even the government, as I will illustrate. The performances that I analyze below are integral to understanding cueca dance's flexibility and malleability. Moreover, they highlight cueca dance's multiplicity and how the form allows for diverse and divergent stories to be performed.

There are two dimensions to stories here: the cueca dance stories that frame particular cueca dances and the stories that are presented through cueca dance vocabularies and

choreographies. Often, hegemonic cueca dance stories profoundly shape the stories that can be performed in a cueca dance because the latter must conform to the prior. Cueca dance stories inform how cueca dance elements are articulated and, additionally, prescribe cueca choreographies: cueca performances must unfold in a way that aligns and re-presents the story in movement form. Cueca dance stories, then, have an “orientating” (Ahmed 2006) effect on the stories that are presented through a particular cueca dance vocabulary and choreography and on how they are enacted and performed by the dancers.

Dance scholar Marta Savigliano (1995) reveals that tango song and tango dance, two forms of storytelling, convey different things: “What is sung (said) in tango is not necessarily what is danced (done), and the music can dispense with both” (13). For this reason, Savigliano (1995) states, “I attempt to draw attention to the patterns of body movement because of the dance’s defiance to intellectualization, the powerful messages of the bodies in motion” (13). Similarly to Savigliano (1995), I draw attention to bodies in movement to demonstrate what cueca dance elements in motion do; particularly how the ways the dancers perform the elements align or not with notions of gender, race, class and sexuality connected to heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to recognize that the stories connected to each of these cueca dance versions and variations, which I detailed in the previous chapter, serve as mnemonics for the cueca dances. Thinking with Indigenous author Lee Maracle (2015), “mnemonics” here is a memory aid as these stories help dancers commit to memory the relationships that unfold between the characters. As discussed in Chapter 2, Maracle (2015) maintains that committing to

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was inspired by Dr. Bridget Cauthery’s course “DANC 1900: Dance, Film and Culture”, for which I have been a Teaching Assistant for many years. In this course, students analyze movement in dance films along the dimensions of gender, race, class, sexuality, heteronormativity and more, reminding that dance is also influenced by and can reiterate and maintain social constructs and ideologies.

memory is a responsibility to remember events, stories, practices, ways of relating. This commitment to remember shapes memory because, as Maracle (2015) argues, it directs the memory of the dancers towards a particular future. By committing the stories of their respective cueca dances to memory, dancers are committing to remember the ideologies and histories embedded in those stories, which inform the ways of relating between the characters they embody. These ways of relating are then enacted and re-membered in a cueca dance.

However, dancers can also choose to remember these stories without replicating them. In this project, for example, I was committed to learning the official history of cueca dance and the stories connected to the form. Moreover, I was also committed to questioning them in order to not reproduce them, but specifically harmful and violent ways of relating. Paying attention to what I was committing to memory was significant for moving away from these ways of relating and presenting otherwise stories, which I discuss in Chapter 6.

It is crucial, therefore, to attend to the stories embedded in cueca dance, and the ideologies and histories that inform them, because they influence the stories that can be presented through the dance form. The cueca dance stories that I discussed in the previous chapter serve as a framework for telling similar stories through cueca dance. Which is why in this chapter I examine how ways of moving—gestures, postures, steps, movement phrases and trajectories—and ways of relating—the relationships that are enacted through dance—are shaped by the stories that each cueca dance is trying to present. I offer movement description and analysis to demonstrate how heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism manifest through movement—the ways that men and women are made to embody the characters I discussed in Chapter 3 as well as how they relate to each other through gestures, postures and movement phrases. What I show is that ways of moving are not neutral, they are inflected with ideologies

and shape ways of relating—the relationships that are enacted through dance. This makes dance forms political.

Cueca dances bring these stories to life and enable transference. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Paul Connerton's (1989) investigation, *How Societies Remember*, focuses on how acts of transfer—both commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices—are knotted with memory. For Connerton (1989), the memory that is involved in acts of transfer is performative because individuals learn and perform the “mnemonic systems” (102) of the societies to which they belong. Through these mnemonic systems, Connerton (1989) suggests, “memory is sedimented, or amassed, in the body” (72). Cueca dances, as bodily practices, offer an opportunity for Chilean “mnemonic systems” to “amass in the body” as a memory; and they are also involved in its transference.

This chapter extends from the previous chapter, adding to the memory of cueca dance that I cultivated during my research. The numerous ways of performing cueca dance elements, despite how each cueca dance orientated those elements towards their own stories, contributed to the cultivation of my memory of cueca dance, which was extensive. The variety of cueca dance performances and range of articulations of cueca dance elements highlighted for me the flexibility and multiplicity of the dance form. Cueca dance's repertoire(s) thus further contributed to the cultivation and shaping of my memory of cueca dance. Additionally, the range for articulating cueca dance elements inspired how I engaged with cueca dance elements to co-choreograph *Copucha + Gup Shup*, the topic of the final chapter.

As I explain in Chapter 5, I began including YouTube videos of cueca dance during the second phase of my year of research. I initially began with “how to” dance cueca tutorials and then started searching for videos of cueca dance performances. My searches on YouTube were

general at first, but as I got acquainted with how individuals labelled their performances, I began refining my searches. I would qualify my entries on the search bar on YouTube by typing, for example, “cueca *campesina*”, “cueca *chora*” or “cueca *sola*”. I would also scroll down the list of videos on the right side of the platform and to find additional videos to watch in that moment or to save for another day. I usually watched a video at least three times: once with the volume turned on to get a sense of the performance and twice more with the volume muted. During the muted viewings, I would first observe one of the dancers and then the other. Often, I watched the video more than three times, specially if I was analysing the movement.

In this chapter, I have chosen one video to be the example for each of the cueca dances I examine, except for the queer(ed) cueca dance by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis. As I explain below, Las Yeguas wanted their performance to be ephemeral and, as such, made no recording of their cueca dance. I chose specific videos to analyze because they exemplify well the arguments that I am trying to make about each cueca dance, which I elaborate on in the chapter breakdown below. Together, these videos also show cueca dance’s flexibility and malleability. As you will see, the dancers in each video perform cueca dance elements in distinctly different ways. Sometimes the ways of moving overlap and sometimes they deviate significantly, demonstrating how cueca dance can be engaged to present a range of stories.

In the sections where I analyze specific performances, I also include affective drawings to offer a sense of what I felt while watching or reading about each cueca dance performance. These affective drawings are not representations of the dance form; they are my way of engaging a research-creation methodology to process, interpret and reflect on what I saw, sensed and felt. These drawings are another way of feeling through the performances to make sense of them. In these drawings, I take up the circle, a reference to cueca dance’s curvilinear trajectories. Sticking

to “circles” helped me focus on my feelings about the performances and reveal what I sensed. Put differently, the circles are frames for my feelings and sensations. The colours that I use in each drawing were chosen based on my movement-colour synesthesia, the stimulation of colour while moving, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5. In this case, however, it was not moving that evoked specific colours, it was watching the movements in the performances over and over again. I use the colours that were conjured by the performances to create the affective drawings.

In the first section, “A Codified Cueca Choreography”, I outline the structure of a cueca choreography informed by the “how to” dance cueca videos on YouTube. As I discuss, although these videos present the choreography as “the” cueca, they actually present the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. I elaborate on the eight sections in a codified cueca choreography: 1) invitation; 2) paseo + promenade; 3) palmas + clapping; 4) el giro inicial + the initial rotation or circle; 5) media lunas + halfmoons; 6) la figura de “8” + the figure “8”; 7) el espiral + the spiral; and 8) exit. Moreover, I describe the cueca dance elements that serve as the building blocks for this choreography and other cueca dances: 1) curvilinear paths; 2) dance steps; 3) postures; 4) distance and proximity; 5) pañuelo + handkerchief movements and holds; 6) clapping; 7) gaze; and 8) rhythm. I note that cueca dance elements are not always all engaged or performed in the same way by dancers. Cueca dance elements are articulated by dancers in varying and yet specific ways, depending on the cueca dance version or variation they are performing. As such, I also demonstrate that cueca dance elements are re-membered or pieced together anew in a range of ways in the sections that follow.

In the next section, “The Huaso-China Dichotomy in the Competitive Cueca Campesina-Huasa”, I examine a competitive cueca campesina-huasa posted to YouTube in 2014. The

choreography of this competitive cueca performance closely adheres to the codified cueca choreography and enacts the story of the rooster and the hen. Moreover, through an analysis of the performance, I illustrate that the dancers perform el huaso and la china as gendered inversions: el huaso-as-rooster is embodied in a manner that is assertive, direct and vigorous, whereas la china-as-hen is personified as passive, demure and delicate. This dichotomy limits the ways in which men- and women-presenting dancers perform the cueca dance elements, which are given specific gendered qualities. Even though men- and women-presenting dancers share the same vocabulary, the way they perform the cueca dance elements is significantly different and perpetuates a (gendered) segregation of their repertoires. The prescribed ways of moving additionally highlight inequalities between el huaso and la china, particularly because this dance is framed as the (amorous) conquest of a man over a woman. This framing centres el huaso's desires and turns la china into the object of his affection. The choreography that is presented, then, is that of a rigged game since the cocky huaso always gets the submissive china at the end.

In the next section, "Challenging the Gender Dichotomy in the Social Cueca Campesina-Huasa", I focus on a social cueca campesina-huasa posted to YouTube in 2016. I note how the choreography of this cueca dance performance deviates from a codified cueca choreography by removing and rearranging the different sections. Despite being connected to the story of the rooster and the hen, this cueca dance variation challenges the gender dichotomy presented in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa: the dancers do not perform el huaso-as-rooster and la china-as-hen as inversions. Instead of being demure, la china is more assertive and stands her ground. El huaso, on the other hand, is less aggressive and his cockiness is muted. Moreover, playfulness is most present in the performance, seen in the way the dancers joke with and tease each other throughout the dance. The overlap in the quality of movement gives the impression that these

characters are in a more egalitarian relationship. However, in spite of these alternative ways of embodying el huaso and la china, the social cueca campesina-huasa still enacts a story about the conquest of a man over a woman. In other words, the movements and the ways of relating are orientated towards a violating and violent story.

In the fourth section, “Captivation and Consent in la Cueca Chora-Brava”, I analyze a cueca chora-brava posted to YouTube in 2021 and concentrate on how captivation and consent are choreographed into this cueca dance. In la cueca chora-brava, el roto, la dama and their story about city life and sexual liberation are the focus. Significantly, in this cueca dance, la dama can choose whether or not to stay with el roto at the end. By centering consent, the performance shifts: the amorous pursuit is not one-sided since both dancers must captivate the other. El roto, particularly, must work hard to captivate la dama during the performance in order to end up with her at the end. Although el roto’s attitude at times resembles that of el huaso in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, the prior’s movements are more akin to feats of strength. On the other hand, la dama is nothing like the demure, submissive china of the competitive cueca campesina-huasa: la dama stands her ground and makes el roto come to her; and even sways her hips as she walks slowly around the space. To express sexual liberation, el roto and la dama push the boundaries of proximity getting really close to each other and even touching each other with their pañuelos. La cueca chora-brava showcases a wide range of movements; where it falls short is in the gendered qualities with which the dancers perform the cueca dance elements.

In “Absence and Minimalism in la Cueca Sola”, the fifth section, I examine la cueca sola performed by the women of La Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos-Desaparecidos + The Group to Detained and Disappeared Family Members (AFDD). La cueca sola was first performed in 1978 to denounce the dictatorship’s human rights violations. In this cueca dance

version, *la viuda* + the widow makes present the absence of her *compañero detenido-desaparecido* + detained-disappeared (man) partner by dancing a *cueca* alone. The video of *la cueca sola* I analyse, which was performed in 1990 once democracy had been restored to Chile, demonstrates that not all *cueca* dance elements need to be present in a *cueca* dance performance. The minimalism in *la cueca sola* shows how *cueca* dance elements can be dis/engaged with to present an otherwise story and serves to make a point in this this protest *cueca* dance. *La cueca sola* does not just deviate from the codified *cueca* choreography, it completely subverts it.

In the final section, “Queering *Cueca* Dance”, I look at another protest *cueca*; a performance by *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* + *The Mares of the Apocalypse* (*Las Yeguas*), a queer collective comprised of Pedro Mardones Lemebel and Francisco Casas Silva. *Las Yeguas*’ performance queers *cueca* dance and also cites *la cueca sola*: Lemebel and Silva dance a *cueca* in queer proximity and, like the women of the AFDD, use *cueca* dance against the Chilean nation-state. Extending from the story of violence that *la cueca sola* presents, *Las Yeguas* connect the dictatorship’s human rights violations to a longer history of violence in the Americas, from conquest to the neo-colonization of Central and South America through American(-Canadian) imperialism. This is the only *cueca* dance performance for which there is no video; as such, I rely mainly on secondary sources as well as a personal account by a journalist to construct the performance. What is suggested in the materials is that Lemebel and Silva danced a *cueca* with all the trajectories and elements. While their *cueca* dance might have resembled a codified *cueca* choreography, the addition of a map, broken glass and blood orientate the *cueca* dance elements towards violence to bodies and land.

## 4.2 A Codified Cueca Choreography

In this section, I describe a codified cueca choreography, what cueca dance has been distilled to based on a history that privileges la cueca campesina-huasa. I came to recognize a codified cueca choreography by watching cueca dance “how to” videos I observed on YouTube and in reading cueca (dance) literature; this structured cueca choreography was followed by most of the “how to” videos and also showed up in literature on cueca (dance) (Claro-Valdés 1993; Figueroa Torres 2008; Knudsen 2001; Wolf 2019).<sup>2</sup> As I note, ethno/musicologists and folklorists do not consider certain sections that I have identified, such as the la invitación + the invitation or el paseo + promenade (elaborated below), to be part of a cueca choreography; however, as I argue, the four additional sections I observed are important to cueca choreographies. For these scholars, only the four curvilinear trajectories that dancers trace in the space constitutes the dance aspect of cueca, something that is problematic and that I address below. As such, I focus on the “how to” videos for the description of a codified cueca choreography and refer to the literature for further considerations and support.

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<sup>2</sup> The videos that I used to create this choreographic map are:

- 1) “CLASE DE CUECA 2021” posted by Municipalidad de La Reina on August 19, 2020 (<https://youtu.be/KQhXY6C9IJ4?si=krm7RZRPJyJS-zY2>);
- 2) “Clase de cueca con Claudia Miranda y Felipe Basaez” posted by Elige Vivir Sano on September 16, 2020 (<https://youtu.be/iahmYUatV2k?si=aWkcAA8iNpVoqMmd>);
- 3) “Como bailar cueca paso a paso” posted by FOLCLORE CHILE on August 4, 2017 (<https://youtu.be/wHcICUKTP3o?si=TpANwTbyfv5c9xSV>);
- 4) “Como bailar CUECA \*tutorial\*” posted by ESTEBAN BLESSED on September 11, 2020 (<https://youtu.be/eLDpjik-n6w?si=uapEMYDu8qPzmB4Z>);
- 5) “Como Bailar la Cueca – Escuela Altamira Coyhaique” posted by Escuela Altamira Coyhaique on August 10, 2017 (<https://youtu.be/YMJTrK-s-Hg?si=5fuTB2k35d6UTmAH>);
- 6) “CURSO DE CUECA” posted by El wn dlas Plantax on September 5, 2017 ([https://youtu.be/qW7ZxTpn3Co?si=RCsgDNJOG\\_RZceDh](https://youtu.be/qW7ZxTpn3Co?si=RCsgDNJOG_RZceDh));
- 7) “Revista Revolver: How to dance the cueca” posted by RevistaRevolver on March 17, 2025 (<https://youtu.be/Zc4aOBueW5M?si=xEb5eZNBVkVyVrva>); and,
- 8) “VIDEO TUTORIAL DE LA CUECA” posted by Coni Ramirez Zapata on October 18, 2015 (<https://youtu.be/7HpXkKlzoh8?si=9uGaf-ARQs8BZer0>).

These videos were last accessed on February 5, 2026.

In recognizing a codified cueca choreography, I show what cueca dance has been reduced to and how this structure does not apply to all cueca dance versions and variations. This codified cueca choreography cannot even contain itself since there is always more in the steps, postures, gestures and trajectories than the instructors and their choreographies offer—qualities and indications related to gender performativity and its intersections with race, class and sexuality, as I discuss in the section that follow. In other words, instructors rarely qualify cueca dance movements, yet they always imbue them with qualities that exceed the instructions given, qualities that are related to gender performativity (Butler 1990) and its intersections with race, class and sexuality, as I will address in the sections that follow.

I use a codified cueca choreography to analyze the constituent parts that make up a cueca dance, which I call cueca dance elements. I note specific sections of a codified cueca choreography and examine the cueca dance steps that are performed in each section. These cueca dance elements are re-membered during cueca dance performances, but not always in ways that are presented in a codified cueca choreography. I first reveal how dance instructors take a codified cueca choreography apart and then show how cueca dance elements are re-membered or pieced together anew in performances. This allows an understanding of how cueca dances that deviate from this structure do so to tell different stories. Moreover, it offers insights into the expansiveness of my memory of cueca dance because each dance element is a node with multiple branches. The cueca dance performances that I analyse in the rest of the chapter demonstrate the variety of ways that cueca dance elements can be interpreted and re-orientated (Ahmed 2006)—in ways that showcase the multiplicity, flexibility and possibilities of the dance form.

Great examples of a codified cueca choreography can be seen in the YouTube Videos “CURSO DE CUECA” (2017)<sup>3</sup> and “Como bailar CUECA \*tutorial\*” (2020).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, these videos reveal the conflation between cueca dance and the (competitive) cueca campesina-huasa. In “CURSO DE CUECA” (2017), the instructors are dressed in black t-shirts and joggers and colourful sneakers while teaching the cueca dance steps and trajectories. However, at the end of the video, when they perform the cueca dance steps and trajectories, the dancers are dressed in attire that references el huaso and la china (the characters of la cueca campesina-huasa version, as outlined in Chapter 3). The man-presenting instructor wears a red button-up shirt, a red cummerbund, black pants, black boots and a black chupalla, the flat-top hat he wears on his head that signals huaso, as I discussed in Chapter 3. The woman-presenting instructor wears a red and white one-piece dress with some copihues + lapagerias, the Chilean national flower, embroidered on her dress and chest. This dress is worn over underskirts that provide structure to the dress. She also wears black, heeled mary janes on her feet. These costumes, while not exactly what el huaso and la china wear, which I describe in Chapter 3, reference these characters.

Similarly, in “Como bailar CUECA \*tutorial\*” (2020), the instructors wear casual clothing—jeans, t-shirts and runners—while teaching cueca dance steps and trajectories and then change into rural attire when performing the cueca dance. The man-presenting dancer dons black knee-high leather boots with spurs and fringe; black pants; a tailored shirt; a wool chamanto with horizontal stripes that alternate between a pastel rust red and a pastel light green and that has a floral pattern etched in the middle; and a beige chupalla. The woman-presenting dancer wears

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<sup>3</sup> This video was posted by El wn dlas Plantax (formerly Ramon Herrera) on September 5, 2017, and can be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/qW7ZxTpn3Co?si=OUyOFTdmEphG-Mtd>. This video was last accessed on February 5, 2026.

<sup>4</sup> This video was posted by ESTEBAN BLESSED on September 11, 2020, and can be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/eLDpjik-n6w?si=7iTgGGnY6Ss6fvL6>. This video was last accessed on February 5, 2026.

black t-strap mary janes; a one-piece dress that is sky blue with a large white floral pattern; and underskirts to give her dress shape. Again, the dancers reference el huaso and la china through their costumes and are, therefore, dancing a (competitive) cueca campesina-huasa.

Many of the other “how to” videos I examine also have instructors/dancers in rural attire. In those instances, the costuming suggests—although it is never explicitly stated—that they are imparting and dancing a particular cueca: la cueca campesina-huasa. However, it is the “how to” videos that change the attire of the instructors/dancers that highlights for me the reduction of cueca dance’s multiplicity into a singularity—how the (competitive) cueca campesina-huasa has come to stand in for cueca dance, generally, and thus all cueca dances. The conflation between cueca dance and the competitive cueca campesina-huasa will become more apparent when I analyse the latter in the section that follows. As I will illustrate, the competitive cueca campesina-huasa does not stray very far from a codified cueca choreography.

In what follows, I outline in detail the eight sections that make up a codified cueca choreography. I also share the various cueca dance steps that show up in a codified cueca choreography and where they tend to fall in the cueca choreography. Following this description, I take apart this codified cueca choreography and break it down into elements. I argue that these cueca dance elements serve as building blocks for cueca dance performances, which I will illustrate in the next section when I discuss seven cueca dance versions and variations. It is these cueca elements that I brought into the choreographic process to re-member cueca dance through a research-creation project, which is the topic of the next chapter.

#### 4.2.1 Performing a Codified Cueca Choreography

In this sub-section, I describe the eight sections of a codified cueca choreography as well as the steps that the dancers perform during each section. At the end of the sub-section, I offer a brief overview of how the five cueca dances I examine in this chapter take up or deviate from this codified cueca choreography.

Cueca scholars agree that a cueca choreography consists of four circular displacements, which the dancers perform to each of the four sections that the cueca music and cueca song are divided into (Claro-Valdés 1993, 2033; Figueroa Torres 2008, 18; Knudsen 2001, 66). While this is not incorrect, this view is limited because it does not include four additional sections that are important to cueca choreographies, which many of the “how to” videos include in their pedagogy: the invitation; el paseo + the promenade; palmas + clapping; and the exit. These sections become particularly important to consider when observing cueca dance versions and variations that deviate from the competitive cueca campesina-huasa (discussed below), which is the most codified as I reveal below. What follows is a description of a codified cueca choreography that details the various trajectories and steps that appear in many cueca dances as well as the important (and sometimes subtle) ways that the dancers engage with each other, such as through eye contact and pañuelo movements.

In a codified cueca choreography there are approximately eight sections divided into three parts that coincide with the music and song aspects of cueca (See Table 4.1 below). The first part consists of three sections: 1) la invitación + the invitation; 2) el paseo + the promenade; and 3) palmas + clapping. These sections are performed during the musical introduction of the cueca composition, which can last up to a minute. The second part is made up of four sections: 1) el giro inicial + the initial rotation or circle; 2) media lunas + half moons; 3) la figura de “8” +

the figure “8”; and 4) el espiral + the spiral. During these four displacements, the dancers switch places by tracing circular trajectories on the dance floor. After each switch, the dancers stay put and perform cueca dance steps in place. These four displacements or spatial changes begin and end with the singing portion of the cueca composition. The final part and the eighth section is the exit, which occurs after the music and song have ended. I will elaborate on each of the eight sections in turn.

| <b>Music and Song</b> | <i>Instrumental Introduction</i>                                        | <i>Music and Song</i>                                                                                                               | <i>Break</i>        |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Dance Sections</b> | Part I<br>1. Invitation<br>2. Paseo + Promenade<br>3. Palmas + Clapping | Part II<br>4. Giro Inicial + Initial Rotation<br>5. Media Lunas + Halfmoons<br>6. Figura de “8” + Figure “8”<br>7. Espiral + Spiral | Part III<br>8. Exit |

Table 4.4: The eight sections of cueca dance within the cueca music and song structure

The first section, the invitation, marks the beginning of the cueca dance. During the invitation, the man-presenting dancer asks the woman-presenting dancer to dance. If the woman accepts, the man leads her to the dance floor and un paseo ensues.

El paseo is the second section in cueca dance. During el paseo, which is the first of two times when the performers touch, the man walks the woman around the space. Sometimes the promenade is done in a straight line (Figuerola Torres 2008, 18); at other times, the dancers perform a circular trajectory in counterclockwise direction as I observed in some of the “how to” videos. At the end of el paseo, the man places the woman in her spot. Then, he walks to his spot directly across from her. This is the main axis of the choreography since the dancers will be

returning to these places at various times during the performance. These locations set the central point of the imaginary circle the performers will be tracing through the various displacements during the rest of the cueca choreography.

Once the woman-presenting and the man-presenting dancers are in their spots both performers begin their *palmas*, which is the third section. *Palmas* usually clap out beats one, three, four and six of a 6/8-time signature (see Figure 4.3). The beats that are emphasized in this pattern, however, are counts 3 and 6—with the exception of the first count one (as I have noted below with bold)—and creates a rhythm that sounds like a beating heart. Because the dancers perform *palmas* across from each other, eye contact—watching and gazing at each other—begins during this section and is maintained throughout the rest of the choreography.

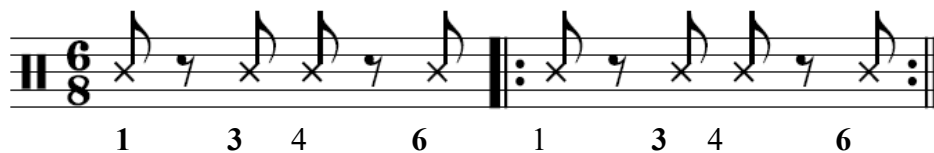


Figure 4.3: The pulse rhythm in 6/8 time that is clapped by the dancers

The invitation, *el paseo* and *palmas* are the first three sections in a codified cueca choreography; and they are performed during the instrumental portion of the cueca music. This instrumental introduction usually lasts up to a minute and precedes the singing portion during which the dancers perform the next four sections of cueca choreography: the initial turn and three additional displacements.

Once the cueca vocalists begin singing, the fourth section begins: *el giro inicial*, sometimes called *la redonda* + the circle. During this first displacement, the dancers trace an imaginary circle on the floor. While maintaining eye contact, the performers travel to their right and keep an equal distance from each other throughout the circular trajectory. The travel step

engages the rhythmic pattern of the pulse that was set during las palmas and consists of the dancers crossing their left leg over their right leg.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the performers move their pañuelos in circular motions over or close to their heads, which adds flourishes to the dance. During el giro inicial, the dancers either exchange places and stop where their partner began or continue on until they reach their original starting position.

Whether each dancer traces a semi-circle or a full circle around the space, once they reach their place, both performers do a turn in place and/or escobillado + brush steps. Escobillado is also performed to the pulse rhythm and involves stepping onto one foot and brushing the other foot in front of the first one and then switching. Although there is other footwork that can be brought in at this time often it is escobillado that is performed first. This step marks the end of the fourth section.

The fifth section, and the second displacement, is las media lunas. The dancers mirror each other and do the travel step towards the same direction—usually towards the man’s right side—and meet each other at one side of the imaginary circle. Once they reach this side of the imaginary circle the dancers do another escobillado for a few counts before performing another media luna and travelling to the other side of the circle. The dancers might repeat this trajectory one or two more times depending on how much space they must fill in the music. Again, the dancers move their pañuelos in circular motions but in different ways. Usually, the man-presenting dancer performs a vigorous lasso movement with his pañuelo, whereas the woman-presenting dancer rotates her pañuelo delicately and slowly. At the end of this section, the

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<sup>5</sup> The subsection “6.2 Teaching Cueca Elements” in Chapter 6 provides specific instructions on how to perform the travel step, escobillado + brush step and zapateo + stomping step to the pulse rhythm. Please refer to this description for a more detailed account on how these steps are performed to the heartbeat or pulse rhythm.

dancers end up back where they began, across from each other on the main axis of the circle, ready to start their next trajectory.

The sixth section, and third displacement, is la figura de “8”. The name of the trajectory stems from the dancers tracing two “S” shapes on the floor that, at the end of the section, culminates in a figure 8. During this trajectory, the performers change places by crossing the middle of the imaginary circle. Additionally, this trajectory combines el giro inicial and las media lunas. Both dancers travel to the right and trace a small half moon as they move towards the middle of the imaginary circle, where they meet momentarily. At the centre of the circle, the dancers switch their leading foot by placing their left foot beside their right foot. This allows them to do a small half-turn in place and to trace a second small half moon back to the periphery of the circle by travelling to the left. At the end of their first “S” shape each dancer ends up where their partner began the displacement and, therefore, across from each other again.

Then, both dancers perform a zapateo + stomping step. The man and the woman use this step to approach each other, moving towards the middle of the circle, and then to retreat to their spot. While performing the travelling stomping step, the man grabs his pañuelo in both hands and places it above his head. Unlike her partner, the woman either moves her pañuelo in delicate circular movements or holds her pañuelo in front of her with both hands as if she is displaying it for or offering it to the man. These pañuelos movements are performed until they are back at their spot.

Once they return to their position at the edge of the circle, the dancers perform an inverse figure “S”. This time, the displacement begins by travelling to the left and into the middle of the circle where the dancers meet again, switch leading foot and do a small half-turn in place to complete the last part of the displacement going to the right. This final, small half moon takes the

performers back to the edge of the circle. At the periphery of the circle, the dancers perform another zapateo and, once again, approach each other and then retreat. By the end of this section, the dancers have switched places twice by crossing the middle of the circle and completed la figura de “8”. They have also returned to their original spot.

The seventh section, and fourth displacement, is el espiral, a variation of el giro inicial. Moving towards the right, the dancers spiral into the centre of the circle as the cueca music and song begin to wrap up. As the music and singing end, the man and women come together at the centre of the imaginary circle. Oftentimes, this joining unfolds seamlessly as the woman’s arm slips smoothly into her partner’s arm. This is the second and last time that the dancers touch. With this coming together, the second part of a cueca comes to an end.

The joining is either followed by another round of cueca dance or an exit. Because cueca dances are short, dancers usually perform three pies + rounds before exiting the dance floor (Wolf 2019). When they do exit, the man usually leaves the dance floor with his partner’s arm wrapped around his, marking the completion of a cueca dance or a round of cueca dances. Although most scholars dismiss the exit as a section in a cueca choreography, I consider the exit an important part of the performance. Exiting together is in itself a performance, particularly because it mirrors and bookends the invitation. In the sections that follow, it will become more apparent how the exit is used in different cueca dances to suggest different ways of relating. For example, in la cueca chora-brava, which engages with consent, the woman can leave the dance floor on her own after the dance is done. The exit, then, is significant; and I consider it to be the third part and eighth section of a cueca choreography.

What I have outlined above is a simplified and structured mapping of a codified cueca choreography. I have noted that a cueca choreography can be divided into three parts, which

coincide with the cueca music and song aspects of the tripartite practice. These three parts can be further separated into eight sections: 1) invitation; 2) paseo; 3) palmas; 4) el giro inicial; 5) las media lunas; 6) la figura de “8”; 7) el espiral; and 8) the exit. I have described these sections as well as the steps that usually occur in a particular section. I have also explained that during a cueca performance, the dancers maintain eye contact and move their pañuelos in different ways to playfully engage with each other. Please refer to Figure 4.4 for a video of me dancing this codified cueca choreography. The video contains captions that name the different sections and steps.<sup>6</sup>

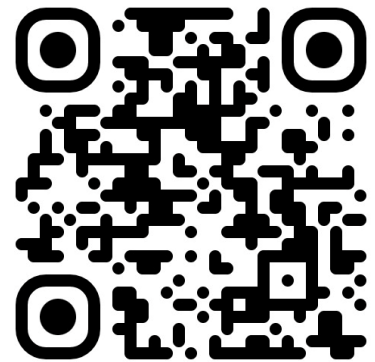


Figure 4.4: Dance still from December 20, 2022 (video with sections and steps noted)

This codified cueca choreography is a highly structured variation of cueca dance that has trouble containing itself. The videos shared similarities and overlapped significantly like a multi-circle Venn diagram with a wide intersection, which is why it was easy to map out a codified cueca choreography. Still, there were aspects from each video that remained outside of that intersection. These aspects related to what the instructor stressed was important to the cueca

<sup>6</sup> The video can also be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/Q1c8GOZjm6Y?si=cqhwTfGuovZaVCxg>.

choreography or to the details that they provided for a step or movement phrase. In short, each instructor had their own idea of how to perform this structured cueca choreography. As such, no two “how to” videos were the same and no choreography was exactly alike.<sup>7</sup>

More importantly, this codified cueca choreography does not relate to all cueca dances. This codified cueca choreography is forwarded and foregrounded as “the” cueca dance—as can be seen in the names of the different videos (see note 2)—despite it relating specifically to the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, as I will illustrate below. This lack of acknowledgement reveals the conflation between “cueca dance” or “cueca” and the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, a variation of la cueca campesina-huasa that emerged after Pinochet nationalized cueca dance, which I discussed in the previous chapter. This conflation has the effect of erasing other cueca dances that are present and performed throughout Chile. This erasure collapses cueca dances into a singularity and cultivates a memory of cueca dance that is inaccurate and incomplete, as I showed in the previous chapter when I traced a history of cueca dance.

In the sections that follow, I describe and analyze in detail the movements that appear in five cueca dances: 1) the competitive cueca campesina-huasa; 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava; 4) la cueca sola; and 5) a cueca dance performance by Las Yeguas. What I demonstrate is that some of these cueca dance versions and variations follow closely the codified cueca choreography described above; whereas others deviate dramatically from this codified choreography, revealing that there are various ways of performing a cueca choreography.

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<sup>7</sup> It would be interesting to do a temporal analysis of cueca dance “how to” videos to see if the choreography has shifted, stayed the same or become more sedimented. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but certainly a future direction of this research.

What becomes visible as I move through these cueca dance versions and variations is that the choreography and performance are flexible and multiplicitous. For example, the competitive cueca campesina-huasa strictly adheres to the codified cueca choreography, which makes sense since they have become conflated. La cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita also follow the codified cueca choreography closely; however, they differ from the competitive cueca campesina-huasa in that they substitute their human partner for the national flag and an effigy of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, respectively. These non-human partners affect the choreography only slightly.

The social cueca campesina-huasa, on the other hand, is looser with its structure, allowing sections to be taken away and/or re-arranged. Similarly, la cueca chora-brava is also fluid with the structure of the choreography and the curvilinear trajectories become less defined. La cueca sola by the women of the AFDD is nebulous in terms of structure. In this cueca dance version, the specific curvilinear trajectories are barely visible; what remains are only curved paths as the women dance around the space alone evoking their absent partner. Las Yeguas' queer(ed) cueca dance demonstrates alternative re-orientations of a codified cueca choreography. I was unable to find a video of this cueca dance variation and, as such, I had to rely on accounts found mostly in secondary sources with the exception of one primary source.

In piecing this cueca dance together, I noticed that Las Yeguas do not do away with the choreography completely. Instead, they subvert it by putting their queer bodies in proximity, through their stripped-down attire and by adding another layer to their performance: a map of Central and South America (without national borders) covered in broken Coca-Cola bottles on which they dance. These choices help to transform Las Yeguas' movements in a similar but different way than that of the absent partner in la cueca sola transforms a codified cueca

choreography. Nonetheless, the codified cueca choreography offers insights into the elements that constitute cueca dance, generally, which I discuss next.

#### 4.2.2 General Cueca Dance Elements

In this sub-section, I outline the eight cueca dance elements that I noticed in the codified cueca choreography. I also explain that these cueca dance elements serve as the building blocks for cueca dance performances.

The codified cueca choreography I describe above illustrates that there are general cueca dance elements that are foundational to the dance form: 1) curvilinear paths or figures; 2) cueca dance steps (i.e. the travel step, escobillado and zapateo); 3) postures; 4) distance and proximity; and 5) pañuelo movements and holds; 6) clapping; 7) gaze; and 8) rhythm (see Table 4.5 below). In some way or another, these cueca dance elements are present in the cueca dances I describe and analyse below. Additionally, these cueca dance performances show that there are numerous ways of interpreting cueca dance elements; as such, there is a spectrum of movement that can be generated from them.

Despite serving as building blocks for cueca dances, these general cueca dance elements manifest in specific ways in cueca dances. This is because dancers give these general cueca dance elements specific qualities when they perform them in a cueca dance. These qualities were even present in the “how to” videos and became particularly apparent when the instructors switched from giving directions to performing the cueca choreography. In other words, the performances that the instructors did at the end of the “how to” videos always exceeded their instructions as the instructors gave cueca dance steps and movement phrases personal qualities during their illustrative performances. Therefore, cueca dance elements reside on a spectrum of

movement since they manifest in ways that are specific to the bodies that are performing them as well as to the each cueca dance version and variation. For this reason, I turn attention to five cueca dance performances that I analyzed for the rest of the chapter, comparing and contrasting these with a codified cueca choreography and to each other. In doing so, I highlight and analyse how general cueca dance elements manifest in specific ways in cueca dances as well as the relationships between the dances, their associated narratives and thus the ways of relating that are re-membered and reiterated in the process.

| Cueca Dance Elements           |                                                             |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| General Elements               | Specific Manifestations                                     |
| 1) Pañuelo movements and holds | 1) Lasso, soft circular motions, limp hold, etc.            |
| 2) Curvilinear paths           | 2) Initial rotation, halfmoons, figure 8, spiral, undefined |
| 3) Distance and proximity      | 3) Advance/retreat, touching, together but alone, etc.      |
| 4) Steps                       | 4) Travel, seguillida, brush, stomp, syncopation, etc.      |
| 5) Postures                    | 5) Upright, bent, levels, on one knee, etc.                 |
| 6) Rhythm                      | 6) Pulse rhythm, even 6/8 time, etc.                        |
| 7) Clapping                    | 7) Pulse rhythm, syncopation, etc.                          |
| 8) Gaze                        | 8) Playful, contemplative, etc.                             |

Table 4.5: Cueca Dance Elements – General Elements and Specific Manifestations

As I show, gender performativity (Butler 1990) and its intersection with race, class and sexuality affect the qualities that cueca dance elements are given by dancing bodies or how the cueca dance elements are performed. Consequently, ideas about gender, race and class are

committed to memory through the cueca dance elements, exemplifying how movement and culture co-constitute one another (Novack 1990). The cueca dance stories that I described in the previous chapter also play an important role in how cueca dance elements are qualified: dancers must embody the characters of the stories they are enacting, which inform how they move and how the cueca dance elements are interpreted and performed. Heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism also affect how cueca dance elements are interpreted because these ideologies are intertwined with cueca dance stories and the characters that are embodied in cueca dances.

#### 4.3 The Huaso-China Dichotomy in the Competitive Cueca Campesina-Huasa

In this section, I analyse a competitive cueca campesina-huasa to demonstrate how this cueca dance variation presents el huaso and la china as a dichotomy. Many of the competitive cuecas campesina-huasa that I watched on YouTube performed el huaso and la china as inversions of each other.<sup>8</sup> In this section, I analyse the YouTube video “3o Cueca Campeones de arica 2014” (2014) posted by Hans Ariaga on November 4, 2014,<sup>9</sup> to illustrate how el huaso and la china perform movements that are, respectively, vigorous/delicate, loud/muted, assertive/demure and

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<sup>8</sup> The competitive cueca campesina-huasa videos that I watched are:

- 1) “3o Cueca Campeones de arica 2014.” posted by Hans Arriaga on November 4, 2014 ([https://youtu.be/2LgAbnsXaNQ?si=qrsQ7l9B3ma\\_oyjw](https://youtu.be/2LgAbnsXaNQ?si=qrsQ7l9B3ma_oyjw));
- 2) “Campeonato cueca huasa Paine 2020” posted by Felipe Osorio on January 16, 2020a ([https://youtu.be/B\\_s892SpDNk?si=AEOL66J4v7xGrO5c](https://youtu.be/B_s892SpDNk?si=AEOL66J4v7xGrO5c));
- 3) “Campeonato cueca huasa Paine 2020” posted by Felipe Osorio on January 16, 2020b ([https://youtu.be/G-cg2cYEu\\_k?si=JUZ6GDpNPHF\\_y9Vf](https://youtu.be/G-cg2cYEu_k?si=JUZ6GDpNPHF_y9Vf));
- 4) “Campeones Nacionales de cueca Club de huasos de Arica 2024” posted by Cindy Bustamante on June 8, 2024 (<https://youtu.be/J7j7QldDYYw?si=UPkQ2ldOEtCjm83m>);
- 5) “campeones nacionales de cueca juvenil 2013” posted by Karen Flores Miranda on October 19, 2013 ([https://youtu.be/Pc\\_Tbka2mHY?si=F19OFwdYU8D1FBjw](https://youtu.be/Pc_Tbka2mHY?si=F19OFwdYU8D1FBjw));
- 6) “Campeones Nacionales de Cueca Padre e Hija 2025” posted by conociendoachile on September 13, 2025 (<https://youtu.be/c26KgWd0MSE?si=CcbbTM8f-uo-ZC1c>); and,
- 7) “Maite y Joaco – Regional de cueca Infantiles de Chile – Hualqui” posted by Claudio Cancino on December 2, 2024 ([https://youtu.be/KM3a3EYgD24?si=MIDLSLt\\_GIv-99w2](https://youtu.be/KM3a3EYgD24?si=MIDLSLt_GIv-99w2)).

All videos were last accessed on February 5, 2026.

<sup>9</sup> This video can be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/2LgAbnsXaNQ>. This video was last accessed on February 5, 2026.

direct/evasive, to name a few (see Figure 4.5 below for a QR code to access this video). By performing el huaso and la china in terms of opposition, a huaso-china dichotomy emerges that reiterates gender as a social construct based on biological sex, which further intersects with race and class dynamics. This is important to recognize because, in standing in for all cuecas, this variation and the stories it transmits reach a wide audience.

As noted above, typically the competitive cueca campesina-huasa strictly adheres to the codified cueca choreography. Folklorist Margot Loyola comments on how the cueca dance competitions that emerged after General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte decreed cueca dance the National Dance of Chile in 1979, which I elaborated on in the previous chapter, shaped what cueca choreography is “supposed” to look like. As the author comments, “[The FENAC championships]<sup>10</sup> created a stereotypical *cueca*. In Chile there are more than one hundred different types of *cueca*, which I have identified in my work. Because of the competitions, people got the impression that there is only one correct Chilean *cueca*: the *huaso cueca* of the Zona Central” (qtd in Knudsen 2001, 68; original italics). Competitions have collapsed numerous ways of performing cueca dance into the singular, codified cueca choreography that I detailed above and that is also reflected in the cueca campesina-huasa discussed here.

The competitive cueca campesina-huasa enacts the story of el huaso-as-rooster chasing and catching la china-as-hen. Although this story serves as a mnemonic for the dance, what is less acknowledged is how the story also perpetuates and commits to memory heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies, as I explained in the previous chapter. The competitive cueca campesina-huasa, then, centres men’s desires as well as criollo agrarian elites’ claims to and occupation of land-as-property. The criollo huaso, for example, is the protagonist of this cueca

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<sup>10</sup> FENAC is an abbreviation that stands for “Federación Nacional de la Cueca” + “Cueca National Federation”

dance variation, not only because it is named after him, but also because it is he who gets, who catches, the Indigenous china at the end of the performance.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, this dance must be interpreted within the context of settler colonialism, in which criollo or white agrarian elite men believe they are entitled to claim, occupy and manage land-as-property. Within this context, el huaso emerges as the personification of a criollo agrarian elite identity and la china, as the embodiment of an Indigenous woman, in her floral-patterned skirt or dress gets transformed into land and property. The prescribed ways of moving and choreography in this cueca dance variation demonstrate the gender, racial and class inequalities between el huaso and la china.

Watching performances of el huaso in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa created tension in my body, which is why it stuck in my memory. Although I knew the story of the rooster and hen prior to watching cueca dances on YouTube, seeing it play out in the choreography was surprising. I was not expecting el huaso and la china to be embodied in such unequal ways: el huaso as hyper-masculine, assertive and, at times, aggressive; and la china as submissive and demure, presenting a conservative, stereotypical femininity. These qualities are continuously reiterated and re-presented in the performance and, thus, committed to memory through the act of performing and watching. Moreover, these qualities create a situation where el huaso has a strong presence and la china, a muted one (see Figure 4.5). As such, el huaso does not just take up space, he takes over the space and consumes la china.

I remember having a strong visceral reaction to el huaso, specifically. I simultaneously admired his complex footwork and felt repelled by his behaviour towards la china, especially his aggressiveness and cockiness—pardon the pun—attributes that do not resonate with me as a

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<sup>11</sup> In Chapter 4 I explained that in Quechua “china” means “servant” as well as “female dog”, suggesting that the character is connected to a racist, dehumanizing association of Indigeneity. I also mentioned that la china is often the maid or servant of the landowner’s wife (Wolf 2019), which makes her low-class and a kind of property.

queer, racialized, disabled man who was taught to move and relate with women in specific ways that intend respect. These ways of relating, enacted in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, highlighted for me the violence towards racialized women that this story and cueca dance variation perpetuate. The dance physicalized the story in a way that I could clearly see the centering of men's desires at the expense of women's as well as the entitlement to women's bodies and land. I did not want to perform that. I did not want to become that. I did not want to relate (to women) in that way.

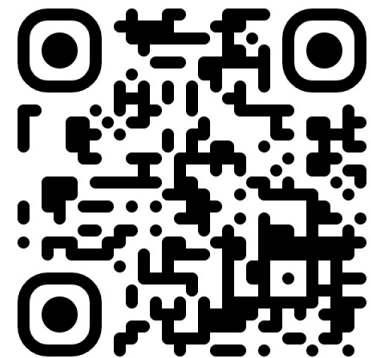
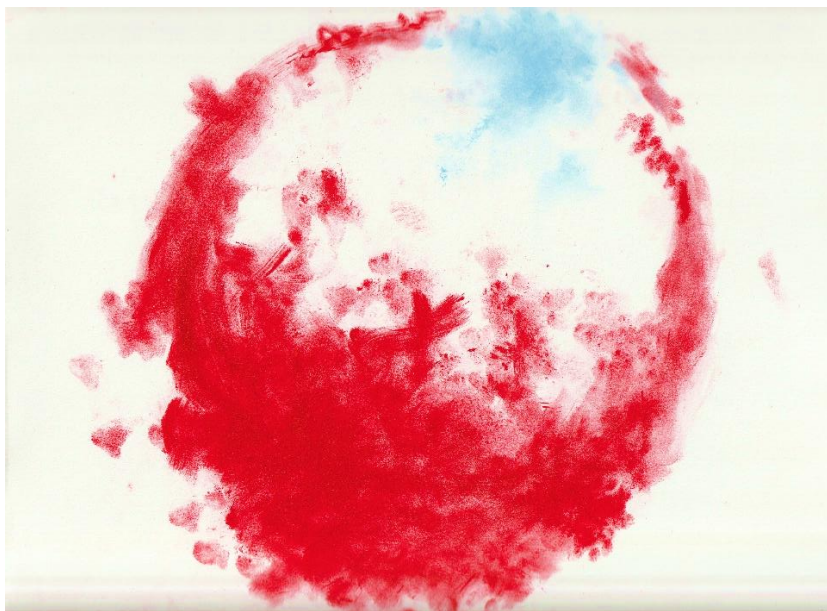


Figure 4.5: Affective drawing of “3o Cueca Campeones de arica 2014.” (2014)

Many of the cueca dance sections I mapped out above are present in this competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Still, although the competitive cueca campesina-huasa is conflated with the codified cueca, this particular choreography deviates slightly from the codified choreography since the dancers add personal flairs to their interpretation of the sections and steps. The dance begins like the codified cueca choreography: el huaso invites la china to dance. They smoothly

transition into el paseo, with her arm wrapped around his, and walk around the space in a counterclockwise direction. El huaso then places la china in her spot, however, he does not walk to his starting position right away. Instead, el huaso traces crescent moon shapes, zigzagging around la china before making his way to his place. Along a similar vein, la china does not stay in her place the whole time: she steps into the imaginary circle keeping her eyes on el huaso and then steps back to her position.

All the while, the dancers have been doing their palmas, albeit in different ways. La china's palmas are soft and delicate; and she is doing them with her pañuelo in her hand. El huaso, on the other hand, opens and closes his hand, which are in front and slightly above his face, with strength and assertiveness. He maintains this energy until the cueca song begins.

Once the singing starts, el huaso goes from “gallant” to “unyielding” in one swift movement (Sotoconil 2009, 55). El huaso has a lot of stamina and is quite vigorous, showcasing well the “zest” that is connected to this character (Decree 23 1979). This is particularly present at the beginning of the first displacement, when el huaso pulls out his pañuelo and breaks into zapateo—this is surprising since in the codified cueca choreography this step appears after the third displacement, la figura de “8”. El huaso's virility is also seen when he is doing el giro inicial because he goes into quick footwork all the while waving his pañuelo as a lasso and leaning from side to side trying to block la china from getting away.

His movements, and the way he interacts with la china, actively demonstrate that he is chasing her. El huaso and la china do not perform el giro inicial as I described it above: they do not stay equidistant from each other as they perform this first displacement. Instead, el huaso moves along the imaginary circle towards la china who stays in her spot, performing footwork in place. As he approaches her, she begins to travel along the edge of the imaginary circle.

Consequently, el huaso and la china perform el giro inicial together until they reach la china's initial spot, which is when el huaso retreats by doing a galloping step backwards, keeping his eyes on la china. A literal chase, then, is choreographed into this cueca dance performance.

There is a stark contrast between el huaso's movements and la china's. La china is walked around the space and then placed by her gallant partner. She waits for el huaso to come to her. She even follows the structure of the choreography more closely than he does. And even though la china also performs intricate footwork, it is much more gentle and subtle than that of her partner. This suggests that la china is el huaso's inverse. Comparing el huaso and la china reveals that this inversion occurs along the lines of gender.

The gendering of movement is particularly apparent in the footwork, the use of pañuelos, the use of gaze and how each dancer performs their character. With respect to the footwork, for example, even though both dancers perform intricate steps, the execution of the footwork varies: el huaso begins the dance with a zapateo—a step that is often reserved for later in the dance because it works well as kind of climactic movement—that engages the pulse-like rhythm in 6/8 time. But then the pattern of the footwork changes: as el huaso travels to the right, his footwork fills the phrasing of the music with quick stamps. Additionally, throughout the dance el huaso's footwork moves between the steady, swinging pulse-like rhythm and a quick, staccato evenness; and he even adds some steps that are reminiscent of horse-like movements. Around 1:32 minutes, after doing el giro inicial, el huaso performs a galloping movement as he recedes from la china. Then around the two-minute mark he brushes his right foot in front of himself as if he is pulling at the ground and getting ready to take off. Moreover, there are many moments when el huaso's feet extend out in front of him or to his sides. El huaso oozes verve and virility as he performs this complex footwork smoothly and with ease.

Conversely, after doing el giro inicial, la china performs an escobillado—marking, from the get-go, a gender difference in the performance. Whereas zapateo is vigorous and gives off a lot of sound depending on how hard the dancer hits the ground, escobillado is less intense and much quieter because the feet brush against the floor. Similar to el huaso, la china's footwork oscillates between the pulse rhythm and a staccato pattern. She even mirrors el huaso's complex footwork by adding tapping movements here and there to fill the phrasing of the cueca music. What differs in her footwork, however, is that her steps are performed underneath her hips and, therefore, are much more contained than el huaso's steps. Furthermore, la china does not add any flairs to her footwork. This makes la china's footwork feel muted in comparison to el huaso's, giving it a sense of daintiness.

The ways in which la china uses her pañuelo further add to her modesty and grace. For example, the most that the pañuelo moves is when la china rotates her wrist in slow circular movements—a gesture that tends to occur mostly above and to the right of her face although there is one instance in which she does this in front of her body. Then, there is the placement of the pañuelo over her head by holding her hand directly above to top of her head and letting the pañuelo hang so that it just touches her hair. Finally, there are the times when she does not use the pañuelo at all, which is when she grabs her dress with both hands. Near the end, she holds the pañuelo in front of her face with both hands this one time, and then that gesture is not repeated.

On the other hand, el huaso's pañuelo is in constant motion: it lives and moves around the dancer's right side and his front as well as anywhere between the top of his head and the tips of his toes. Moreover, el huaso moves and holds his pañuelo in a variety of ways: he grasps his pañuelo with both hands and holds it above his head; he moves it in a lasso-like gesture; uses it like a whip; wraps it around la china—without touching her—to keep her close; waves it close to

the ground; places it over his head like a rooster's comb; and even transfers it to the other hand at the end of the dance. In short, el huaso moves his pañuelo more freely and the gestures emphasize strength, virility, masculinity and capture.

Additionally, there is something about the way that el huaso holds his pañuelo with both hands above his head and square to la china prior to el giro inicial that exudes a directness that is assertive and imposing. Furthermore, even though the pañuelo is meant to be moved in a lasso-movement by el huaso, this huaso takes the movement metaphor a step further. He uses the pañuelo to “contain” la china temporarily at various points throughout the dance—a movement that is not replicated by la china.

Therefore, while not all competitive cueca dances are the same, there are certainly some liberties that el huaso can take that la china does not or cannot. Perhaps this is because la china is supposed to be gentle and demure if not completely submissive—the inverse of el huaso. A huaso-china dichotomy manifests in the qualities that each dancer embodies when they perform their character. El huaso confidently advances towards la china and moves around her with his quick footwork as well as in the way he commands the dance floor. There are other elements that emphasize this playfulness(-turned-arrogance) such as when el huaso moves his head from side to side with a big smile on his face—a move he does throughout the dance but that can be seen most clearly around 2:16 minutes. Looking past the smile, the façade, the postures and gestures reveal el huaso's arrogant demeanour.

As mentioned earlier, the gaze plays a significant role in cueca dance. In this case, el huaso's eyes are persistently on la china. Although el huaso is vying for her attention, his gaze does not have an adoring, doting or sensual quality. It is an intense focus, a persistent stare. While this could be due to el huaso's height difference and, thus, the angle at which he watches

la china it nonetheless still adds to his cockiness. La china, on the other hand, is coquettish. She not only returns the gaze, she also plays with the way in which she stares back. Unlike el huaso, her head does not stay square over her shoulders. She lifts and lowers her chin as well as tilts her head in a diagonal manner. All of these movements affect her gaze. Significantly, la china also does not stare back in an adoring or doting way. Her playfulness combined with the assurance in her demeanour, her composure even, suggests that her gaze is flirtatious.

I find the way that la china uses her dress to shape the engagement with her partner fascinating. At various points in the dance la china grabs her dress at the sides and lifts it. At times this lift is done in a twisting motion so that the right side is pointing towards the front and the left side towards the back, for example. I do not want to analyse the dress and propose that it “represents” a vulva due to all the ruffles, although it could be interpreted in that way despite the fact that this cueca dance variation tries to mute sexuality. What I do want to concentrate on is how la china uses her dress as an extension of her body in a similar way to how el huaso uses his pañuelo as an extension of his. If, for instance, the pañuelo is meant to be a lasso to “catch” la china then could the dress not be a way of “shielding” herself from el huaso’s lasso as well as from his advances? Around 1:39 minutes la china holds her dress in that lift-and-twist position described above while she advances towards her partner. La china transforms the contours of her body to create a kind of barrier with her dress, which is lifted both at the front and back revealing the various layers of ruffles. This is an assertive gesture and it offers protection because of how it extends her personal space.

Furthermore, the way that la china moves her dress throughout the choreography suggests that she is responding to el huaso’s moves in her own playful manner. Even though she does not move her pañuelo as much as el huaso, she does tend to enliven her dress through the different

ways that she moves it, which adds to her character's attitude. The way la china handles her dress contradicts the delicateness and demureness that she is supposed to embody and with which she executes her other steps and gestures. There is strength in the way la china uses her dress to protect herself and ward off el huaso's advances. Or, perhaps, it is just a feigning of deflection, a kind of flirtation—a game within a game—because at the end of the dance she is still going to be caught.

There are other subversive moments in this choreography such as when la china advances towards el huaso during one of the media lunas and he retreats; or when la china stands her ground by either putting her pañuelo in front of her body or leaning into his space. Yet, these moments are fleeting and the exception. Overall, el huaso takes up more space than la china in the dance—he takes over the space, which he feels entitled to, in a similar way that men oftentimes speak more than women in public settings. As Latin American film, visual culture and literature scholar, Carl Fischer (2016) reminds in *Queering the Chilean Way*, “These small ways in which women's participation in the public sphere is repressed by men often indicate larger exclusions” (269n41)—exclusions and, I would add, violations.

Again, this cueca dance is el huaso's cueca, it is about this character and his desires, his conquests. Viewed in this way, la china becomes the object of his affection. An object that he always possesses in the end. This courtship dance transforms when it is remembered that there is a chase and a catch choreographed into it; when it is remembered that the dancers, particularly women, have little to no choice in how the performance unfolds and ends.

What I have shown is that in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa el huaso and la china co-constitute each other; and their co-constitution is founded on inversion. The codification that results from the nationalization of la cueca campesina-huasa constructs a

relationship, a way of relating, based on “gender performativities” (Butler 1990a) that are dichotomous: vigorous/delicate, loud/muted, assertive/demure, direct/evasive and more. This rigid dichotomy becomes normalized and “naturalized” through the animal story about the rooster and the hen, aligning closely to social constructions of the gender binary based on “natural” biological sex distinctions. Clearly, the nationalization and codification of cueca dance has had a lasting effect since this huaso-china dichotomy continues to be reiterated and reinforced, as seen not only in the performances but also in the cueca dance “how to” videos.

Consequently, this dichotomy perpetuates unequal power dynamics that are also informed by understandings of men/males and women/females found in Catholic, heteronormative, monogamous relationships or “churched relationships” (191), as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2022) calls them in *Rehearsals for Living*. Simpson (2022) reminds that settler colonists’ domination over constructions of gender, sexuality and intimate relationships—the “heterosexual matrix”—serve to control (Indigenous) bodies (184). While the author is speaking from and about the Canadian perspective the observation can be extended to Chile because Spanish conquistadors and colonizers also brought with them Catholic views and practices of conversion and control to other parts of the Americas. Chile, as a national project, cannot be detangled from Catholic and Christian ways of relating. This connection is clear in la cueca a la Carmelita, which will be discussed below. Through the performance of el huaso and la china, as inverse partners bound to a “churched relationship”, performers enact ways of relating through movement that are conducive to propagating a Catholic, heteropatriarchal, settler colonial nation-state.

Furthermore, Fischer (2016) notes how “Chile’s supposedly economic and political status—particularly since 1965—rests not only upon the status of exception that silenced dissent

and enabled financial and labor exploitations; it is constructed, often quite aggressively, in tandem with models of masculine, heterosexual comportment. It hinges upon heterosexual families and even dynasties [...] whose ‘patrimony’ is safely couched within what Judith Butler called the ‘heterosexual matrix’ ” (5)—a sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system. The competitive cueca campesina-huasa replicates this “heterosexual matrix” through its gender dichotomy as well as reinforces it through ways of relating that model a “masculine, heterosexual comportment” that favours men and their desires as well as the nation’s (Claro-Valdés 1993).<sup>12</sup> Because the competitive cueca campesina-huasa is understood as a courtship dance, this cueca dance has the potential to fortify other social norms such as marriage, parenthood and the nuclear family and expectations of how men and women should relate in these situations. Of course, these conventions are constructed from a Catholic, heteropatriarchal, settler colonial perspective.

This makes me wonder, when la china is caught, what else does she get caught up in? What does el huaso get caught up in when he catches la china? The dance may end at the catch, but there is another social performance that el huaso and la china enter into as they exit the dance floor (and that perhaps even emerges out of this encounter). Musicologist Samuel Claro-Valdés (1993) forwards that cueca is a microcosm that “refleja ese [cosmico] orden inmutable, como un síntesis final y condensada de la interpretación de las leyes del universo” + “reflects that immutable [cosmic] order, like a final and condensed synthesis that interprets the laws of the universe” (2033). But if that is the case, then whose universal laws (read: stories) are being reflected and reiterated?

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<sup>12</sup> Musicologist Samuel Claro-Valdés (1993) mentions that cueca dance’s choreography is “of a man’s siege and conquest of a woman” (2033). The plot of this story centres men as the protagonist and, therefore, his desires; la china is merely a character in his story who is oftentimes reduced to the object of his affection—the object that he will “get” at the end of the dance. The gendered ways of moving that I describe above illustrate how el huaso and la china perform these roles: el huaso moves in ways that take up space and dominate, whereas la china’s movements are muted, which, it could be argued, allow her to be dominated. These power dynamics reflect unequal ways of relating that are aligned with heteropatriarchy because they are in favour of men, as I discussed in Chapter 3.

Speaking about the invitation in cueca, Torres (2008) explains,

“Quedan en nuestra Cueca Chilena ciertos resabios de pasados épocas en los que había un acentuado formulismo social, dentro de los cuales, el principal, era que el varón tenía que solicitar la venia de la dama, inclusive a su familia; si ella accedía, él le ofrecía galantemente el brazo y la llevaba a la pista, estrado o lugar donde la danze iba a desarrollarse y, una vez que esta terminaba, la acompañaba al lugar de donde la invitó a bailar”

+ “There remains in our Chilean cueca certain remnants of past times during which there was an accentuated social formality, of which, the main one, was that the man had to request the permission of the lady, including her family; if she accepted, he would gallantly offer her his arm and would take her to the floor, stage or place where the dance would unfold and, once it was over, he would accompany her back to the place where he invited her to dance” (18).

What Torres (2008) suggests here is that in “past times” the invitation was an act of respect because the man had to “request for permission” from the lady and her family before taking her to the dance floor. This invitation also included bringing the woman back to where he invited her to dance, making the return just as important as the request because it was part of the social protocol. That aspects of this social formality remain in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa suggests that there is a particular etiquette and microcosm—likely that of agrarian elites—that is still being performed and reiterated.

Torres’s (2008) recounting makes me wonder about how it was that the woman’s choice was choreographed out of cueca dance; as well as how el huaso’s “unyielding” advances became the norm. Additionally, I wonder about what it is that la china gives permission to when she accepts an invitation to dance cueca. These remnants suggest certain conventions about how men and women are supposed to relate when dancing cueca and beyond. Performances of the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, whether they intend to or not, replicate uneven ways of relating by demonstrating that men are agentive and that women are passive, that men are “gallant and unyielding” and that women have little or no choice.

In the sections that follow, I present additional cueca dance versions and variations that illustrate the flexibility and multiplicity of cueca choreographies and that add to the cueca dance repertoire. The social cueca campesina-huasa, for instance, challenges the gender dichotomy and propose otherwise ways of relating between dancers. The various cueca dances below also present additional ways of performing cueca dance elements, which, again, are connected to the characters and stories the dancers embody.

#### 4.4 Challenging the Gender Dichotomy in the Social Cueca Campesina-Huasa

In this section, I analyse a social cueca campesina-huasa to show how this cueca dance variation challenges a huaso-china dichotomy and engages the choreographic structure loosely by removing and rearranging different sections and reimagining the characters. Unlike in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, the dancers in the social cuecas campesina-huasa that I observed on YouTube did not perform el huaso and la china characters as inversions; therefore, these characters did not replicate a biological sex dichotomy.<sup>13</sup> As I elaborate on below, el huaso and la china's movements overlap significantly; and la china even performs steps relegated to the realm of el huaso in other cueca dances such as the lasso pañuelo movement and a vigorous zapateo. In this section, I analyse the YouTube video "Cueca Campesina Chilena ....

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<sup>13</sup> The social cueca campesina-huasa videos that I watched were:

1) "Cueca Campesina Chilena .... Buenísima!!" posted by Fabiola Andrea González Escobar on February 1, 2016 (<https://youtu.be/XYvOb6i0Fw0?si=CEfJrHgOe8-muq1e>);

2) "Cueca campesina en Ninhue, fiesta de la vendimia" posted by Municipalidad Ninhue on April 12, 2017 (<https://youtu.be/E3ijvse71ss>);

3) "Cueca campesina en Ranguí" posted by barbarellabel on September 24, 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb0VGA8NFes>);

4) "La Mejor Cueca Campesina Uyuiii!" posted by Camila Vasquez on July 20, 2014 ([https://youtu.be/ytl\\_mIXIQf0?si=h\\_eeSDZBDGmJMbbr](https://youtu.be/ytl_mIXIQf0?si=h_eeSDZBDGmJMbbr)); and,

5) "Una cuequita campesina bailada con Juanita Fernandez y el Tata Luchito Torres ." posted by Juanita Fernandez on June 22, 2025 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11oxQPYYoLY>).

All videos were last accessed on February 5, 2026.

Buenísima!!” (2016) posted by Fabiola González Escobar on February 1, 2016,<sup>14</sup> to elaborate on how the dancers in this performance challenge a gender dichotomy (see Figure 4.6 below for a QR code to access this video).

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the nationalization of la cueca campesina-huasa by Pinochet’s dictatorial government split this dance version into two similar yet different cueca dance variations informed by the same history and stories. Like the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, then, the social cueca campesina-huasa also enacts a story of conquest: el huaso-as-rooster chases and catches la china-as-hen. As such, this cueca dance variation presents and forwards heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies. Because el huaso’s desires are still centred in this cueca dance, criollo agrarian elites’ desires are also centred. Consequently, the Indigenous china remains the object of el huaso’s affection: who/what he “gets” at the end of the dance. This replicates a settler colonial entitlement to as well as seizure and control of land-as-property. The connection to the story of the rooster and the hen frames the social cueca campesina-huasa in a similar way to the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. It serves as a mnemonic for this cueca dance variation and informs the overarching choreography.

Although the choreography of the social cueca campesina-huasa is prescribed, the way that it is performed is not and it gives the impression that el huaso and la china approach a more egalitarian relationship. In this cueca dance variation, the dancers do not perform the curvilinear trajectories in as strict a manner as they do in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Rather, the performers offer their own interpretation of the curvilinear trajectories: they adjust them to suit the playfulness of the dance such as by adding comedic interruptions. Additionally, the dancers perform la china and el huaso with a different demeanour than that found in the

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<sup>14</sup> The video can be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/XYvOb6i0Fw0?si=CEfJrHgOe8-muq1e>. The video was last accessed on February 5, 2026.

competitive cueca campesina-huasa. For instance, la china is assertive and finds ways to take up space and assert herself. Additionally, el huaso's cockiness and confidence are more muted, which made the character a little more digestible for me. These shifts in demeanour and performance create some balance between la china and el huaso (see Figure 4.6).

It is possible that these (balanced) embodiments of el huaso-as-rooster and la china-as-hen are inspired by life in the countryside, by living and taking care of roosters and hens. This proximity, I speculate, allows dancers to witness otherwise ways of moving and relating that they can draw on in their cueca dance performances. For example, is it not possible that a hen might actually stand her ground in an interaction with a rooster? Or, that a hen could evade a rooster and not get caught? It is not as if these animals do not have agency or as if their interactions always lead to the same ending. The social cueca campesina-huasa leans into these different interactions, ways of moving and relating that are, perhaps, more situated in the countryside. This is in contradistinction to the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, which distances itself from the animals that it performs to replicate an idealized criollo story and nostalgic imaginary. Therefore, the social cueca campesina-huasa presents other ways of moving and ways of relating than the codified choreography prescribes, demonstrating that cueca dance is multiplicitious and flexible.

What also stands out to me while watching this video is an overwhelming sense of playfulness since, throughout the performance, the dancers maintain a similarly playful energy (see Figure 4.6). The way the dancers interact with each other reminds me of my extended family; how teasing and joking are a part of our social fabric. The movement phrases are reminiscent of the way that a comment can sound so serious, but then the tone changes, an elongated “aaaahhhhh” sound follows and laughter erupts—you have just been got. The

misdirection of the comment, signalled by the revelatory “aaaaahhhh”, sets the receiver of the teasing and the audience up for a big laugh. This is the opposite of what I sense in this performance: it is all jokes and taunts and teasing; and both dancers equally dish it out and take it, which is why it is fun to watch and why it stuck in my memory. The performers made me want to become more like them, a little looser and care-free.



Figure 4.6: Affective drawing of “Cueca Campesina Chilena .... Buenísima!!” (2016)

The performance begins with an interactive component as audience members clapping the pulse rhythm; and it is their palmas that draws and encourages the dancers out onto the grassy dance space. This is one of the many instances that this social cueca campesina-huasa deviates from the codified cueca choreography and cueca dances described and analysed above. Additionally, this performance does not contain a typical invitation or a paseo. As the clapping from the audience takes hold, el huaso runs out of the crowd as if he is being pushed out into the dance space by la china, who follows him. Here, the invitation is subverted since it appears that it

is la china who wants to dance. Furthermore, instead of a paseo—during which el huaso usually takes la china's arm in his to walk her to her place—la china walks over to where she wants to begin and, with her hand, directs el huaso to take his place. This begs the question: who is inviting whom to dance? Is it the audience? La china? Or both? One thing is for certain; it is not el huaso.

Once el huaso reaches his spot, la china begins to egg him on with her palmas, done to the pulse rhythm. Unlike la china in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa analysed above, this china performs her palmas with a lot of energy: she opens her hands wide and smacks her hands together with force. The movement ripples through her body as she taps and moves her hips to the pulse rhythm while doing palmas. All the while, el huaso stands in place adjusting his pañuelo in his hand and fixing his blue t-shirt. At one point, he even looks out to the audience and makes a gesture towards la china as if he is asking the audience “do I have to dance with her?” If el huaso in the competitive campesina-huasa was cocky and confident, this huaso is shy and gentle.

Before the first displacement starts, la china and el huaso joke with each other through gestures, something that they do throughout the performance. While doing palmas, la china advances towards el huaso trying to get him to copy her. When he does not bite, she retreats and shakes her floral-patterned skirt. El huaso turns away quickly and then waves his hand over his nose: the insinuation is that she has farted or released a stinky smell. Joking, taunting and kidding become part of the dance and show up throughout the performance. As such, zest and mischief, which permeate the dance, are not relegated solely to the realm of el huaso.

Moreover, in this cueca dance variation, the dancers challenge the gender dichotomy established by the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. El huaso and la china are more fluid in

the ways they move and in how their movement vocabularies overlap. This is particularly seen in how they perform their footwork with vigour, move their hips and activate el pañuelo as a lasso, which I elaborate on below. La china's demeanour is also more assertive in this cueca, further challenging a gender dichotomy.

In this social cueca campesina-huasa, el huaso and la china perform a variation of the travel step called seguillida. Seguillida is done by stepping on each eighth note of the 6/8-time signature and not to the pulse-like rhythm mentioned above. This way of doing the travel step adds energy to the performance.<sup>15</sup> By stepping on each eighth note the dancers must move their feet more quickly because they do not get the usual rest or hold when doing travel steps to the pulse-like rhythm (usually performed to beats 3 and 4, and 6 and 1; please see Figure 4.3). Moving on each beat makes the steps, the curvilinear trajectories and the dance as a whole feel faster and more energetic.

Another overlap is that both dancers move their hips. This movement is not seen in other cueca dances, apart from la cueca chora-brava, which I discuss next. However, in la cueca chora-brava, it is only the woman-presenting dancer who moves her hips. In this social cueca campesina-huasa, the hip movements are not relegated to the woman's vocabulary. Part of the reason may be that the dancers' hip wiggles are a consequence of the interaction between their bent-body attitude, untucked pelvis and the fast-paced seguillida. Leaving the hips loose by untucking the pelvis (or by having more lordosis) allows the hips to move when performing fast footwork, which both dancers do in this cueca dance variation. The only difference is that la china's hip wiggles are slightly more pronounced than el huaso's. This could be a result of his

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<sup>15</sup> As I explained in a previous section and in Chapter 5, in 6-8 time there are six eighth notes per bar and these eighth notes are often clumped into two groups of three beats: **1-2-3 4-5-6** (bolded notes indicate the beats emphasized in a typical 6/8-time structure; please see Figure 5.17).

posture since el huaso bends more deeply at the waist as well as at the knees, contributing to a lower crouch.

Significantly, la china is the one who activates her pañuelo the most in the performance. Throughout the performance, la china moves her pañuelo as a lasso. In the “how to” videos and the competitive cueca campesina-huasa performances, this pañuelo movement was reserved only for el huaso’s repertoire. Because the lasso movement is performed by la china in this video, the movement is dislodged from masculinity and becomes part of el huaso *and* la china’s cueca dance vocabulary. Along a similar vein, it is la china who performs the most energetic gestures with her pañuelo such as when she shakes it vigorously to attract el huaso’s attention during the first media luna. At 1:08 minutes, after they have completed el giro inicial, la china travels to the right and shakes her pañuelo at hip height. She repeats this gesture during the third media luna (at 1:22 minutes), la figura de “8” (at 1:33 and 1:44 minutes) and at the end of el espiral (at 2:03 minutes).

On the other hand, el huaso’s pañuelo remains quite inactive during the performance. El huaso alternates between holding his pañuelo with both hands by his knees (not above his head like in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa) or keeping his pañuelo limp in his right hand, again by his knees—limp but mobile since el huaso’s bodily movements ripple through the pañuelo. The only times that el huaso activates his pañuelo on purpose are during el giro inicial, when el huaso does a swirling motion with it (at 1:03 minutes), and during the first media luna, when he performs a low, whipping motion towards la china (at 1:13 minutes). By switching who moves and who activates their pañuelo, the dancers go against the gendered conventions of the codified cueca choreography and the competitive cueca campesina-huasa; and challenge a gender dichotomy.

Another subversion of gendered conventions occurs during the second part of *la figura de 8* when *la china* ruffles her skirt vigorously. At 1:48 minutes, the dancers have just swirled into the middle of the circle. Just as they are about to change their leading foot, *el huaso* stops beside *la china* and attempts to peak under her skirt—teasing that borders sexual harassment. This sends *la china* into a frenzy. Just when you think the dance could not get any quicker *la china* begins shaking her skirt rapidly with both hands while simultaneously performing a *zapateo*. The way *la china* moves reminds me of a chicken with ruffled feathers shaking her body in a furor. *El huaso* retreats and then comes back to tease *la china* further: he gets close to her and puts his hands on her skirt to either hinder or help her ruffle it—it is hard to tell which—at which point she smacks his hands away with her *pañuelo*. This action is similar to but different than how *la china* in the competitive *cueca campesina-huasa* uses her dress, which I discussed above. In that case, *la china* twists and holds her dress to extend her body, but she keeps it steady. In this case, *la china* uses her skirt to increase presence, her energy. This is my favourite part of the dance because of how *la china* stands her ground, takes up space and asserts herself.

A gesture that evokes a similar feeling is when *la china* snubs *el huaso*'s advances at 1:26 minutes. During the fourth *media luna*, *el huaso* gets really close to *la china*. As they are travelling towards *la china*'s right, she quickly moves her face away from his, rebuffing his advances. This gesture as well as the way she ruffles her skirt are empowering movements. Moreover, they open up the presumed *cueca* dance repertoire because they move away from and do not reiterate the demure and submissive *china* that is performed in the competitive *cueca campesina-huasa* and codified *cueca* choreography.

An additional way that the social *cueca campesina-huasa* expands the choreography is through play with proximity, specifically touching. For example, throughout the performance the

dancers get quite close to each other; touch one another multiple times (both sensually and teasingly); and hold each other momentarily. This kind of proximity is uncommon in the codified cueca choreography and the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Likely because touching in public is perceived as inappropriate and low-class, particularly from a Catholic perspective that condemns anything that could lead to sins of the body. The evidence for this resides in la cueca chora-brava, a cueca dance about the sexual liberation of the poor, working-class mestizo urban couple. As I will discuss below, la cueca chora-brava is the cueca dance that pushes the limits of proximity.

The ending of this social cueca campesina-huasa, which is a performance in and of itself, further highlights how the dancers play with the boundaries of proximity. As the music begins to wrap up, the dancers spiral into each other. Just as they reach the middle el huaso grabs at la china; but la china evades el huaso by stepping back—her last attempt to avoid getting caught. La china runs away from el huaso but then she stops and looks back at which point he catches up to her. El huaso puts his arms around la china, leans in for a kiss, dips her and, as the music comes to an end, they both fall to the ground. The scenario, however, continues: the couple stays on the ground for a little while after the music ends. El huaso tries to touch la china's skirt once more, but she uses her pañuelo to smack his hands away, again. The performance ends as el huaso along with an audience member help la china off the ground. At this point, el huaso lifts both arms in the air and moves them up and down—he has triumphed, he has got la china.

Despite both dancers transgressing some conventions of the codified cueca choreography and the competitive cueca campesina-huasa described above—by adding different steps, sharing gestures and postures, playing with proximity and stretching the performance—the courtship story remains: a rooster chases a hen until he catches her. That is, the social cueca campesina-

huasa still propagates a story that centres on men's desires and that favour men. The teasing, playfulness and subversions are not enough to break what the storied choreographic structure dictates. La china can attempt to get away, stand up for herself and even joke back but, in the end, she will still be caught by el huaso because she is bound to the choreography. Therefore, while, on the one hand, the social cueca campesina-huasa presents a more egalitarian relationship, on the other hand, it still serves as a mnemonic for heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism and, regrettably, normalizes violence towards women. Where does choice exist in this dance? Who gets to make those choices? And where is consent?

The story that serves as a mnemonic for performances of la cueca campesina-huasa and the variations that extend from this cueca dance raises concerns about the kinds of relationships and ways of relating that these cueca dances imagine and propagate. Even if you take away the idea that these uneven ways of relating will be remembered and enacted in daily life—or that the performance will inform how men and women relate with each other generally—the dance still illustrates that there are roles that men and women *ought* to embody because it is a re-membered bodily performance. This might not be the “deber ser” + “dutiful ought to be” (Sotoconil 2009) of the dictatorship, but men and women are still made to play out certain roles and rules in the performance. The memory of those actions remain since these performances are continuously re-membered and witnessed.

In the next section I discuss how choreographing captivation and consent change the rules of engagement in la cueca chora-brava. In this cueca dance version, the choreography presents another story, one in which men- and women-presenting dancers have more room for interpreting el roto and la dama, respectively. Although this cueca dance version often replicates

a gender binary, the dancers' movements overlap and are not always inversely related. Therefore, this cueca dance offers additional ways of expanding and adapting cueca dance, generally.

#### 4.5 Captivation and Consent in la Cueca Chora-Brava

In this section, I examine la cueca chora-brava<sup>16</sup> to illustrate how the centering of consent in this cueca dance version provokes a different way of relating between la dama and el roto. In la cueca chora-brava la dama can decide to stay/leave with el roto at the end of the dance or to leave by herself. Therefore, la cueca chora-brava demonstrates a fluid engagement with the choreographic structure. In this cueca dance it is less about capture, as in the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa, and more about captivation: both dancers, but more so el roto, must draw attention to themselves to leave together at the end of the dance.<sup>17</sup> I also demonstrate that despite some overlap in the ways that el roto and la dama move in this cueca dance, the performers

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<sup>16</sup> The terms “chora”, “brava” and “urbana” are terms that are used synonymously to describe the cueca dance that emerges from poblaciones urbanas + urban poor neighbourhoods in Chile. In this dissertation, I have chosen the designation “chora-brava” to differentiate this urban cueca dance from those of the port cities, which are known as la cueca porteña + cueca of the port. La cueca porteña shares a genealogy with la cueca chora-brava as well as el roto and la dama as characters in this cueca dance.

<sup>17</sup> The videos of la cueca chora-brava I watched were:

- 1) “Antumapu 45 años: Cueca Agustín Parra y Susana Espinoza. 20-11-2016” posted by Cristian Jaque on December 25, 2016 ([https://youtu.be/rr-ek27c\\_Yg?si=JnaK8B6J9madpqr5](https://youtu.be/rr-ek27c_Yg?si=JnaK8B6J9madpqr5));
- 2) “Campeones Nacionales Cueca Chora 2017 , El Llolly” posted by Jose Miguel Farias on November 3, 2017 (<https://youtu.be/vhoVwowpFhM?si=O3IKQ8scRGev2Mft>);
- 3) “Campeones nacional de cueca chora 2014” posted by Stefany Siefert on September 8, 2014 ([https://youtu.be/jeGAehO0Uz4?si=xqjm5L\\_LMfS9g4pc](https://youtu.be/jeGAehO0Uz4?si=xqjm5L_LMfS9g4pc));
- 4) “Campeones Nacionales de Cueca Chora 2016 | Día del Cuequero Chillán 2022 | 3 Cuecas choras” posted by conociendoachile on September 14, 2022 ([https://youtu.be/hL1q\\_xVMWXs?si=Se9mc15mxuhk9ELE](https://youtu.be/hL1q_xVMWXs?si=Se9mc15mxuhk9ELE));
- 5) “CUECA CHORA” posted by Fran y Gonza Cueca Chilena on November 12, 2017 (<https://youtu.be/LHKtPbRpmtM?si=K7Y-FJ9nrfzEV3b>);
- 6) “Cueca Chora (o Brava) , la cueca del roto chileno! en Londres” posted by Chilean Dances on February 5, 2011 ([https://youtu.be/7-Ad-rP8kqw?si=AgR\\_DPAPPOqMrfc6](https://youtu.be/7-Ad-rP8kqw?si=AgR_DPAPPOqMrfc6));
- 7) “CUECA URBANA” posted by Fran y Gonza Cueca Chilena on September 12, 2021 ([https://youtu.be/7iWa\\_LMuO2A?si=6zyTKArrMFt8yWID](https://youtu.be/7iWa_LMuO2A?si=6zyTKArrMFt8yWID));
- 8) “Cueca Urbana Chilena” posted by TalleraLechvaz on January 21, 2009 ([https://youtu.be/ZMra2sItg5k?si=e-3Pr\\_V22ktf\\_ChS](https://youtu.be/ZMra2sItg5k?si=e-3Pr_V22ktf_ChS)); and,
- 9) “El Baile. ‘BRAVA, CUECA URBANA EN STGO’ ” posted by Daniela Plubins on December 27, 2015 ([https://youtu.be/uC5fk4uYMFs?si=rbhsNe09B\\_etX83X](https://youtu.be/uC5fk4uYMFs?si=rbhsNe09B_etX83X)).

All videos were last accessed on February 5, 2026.

nonetheless replicate a stereotypical masculinity and femininity through their movements. Gendered ways of moving are particularly evident in la dama and el roto's seduction strategies. Moreover, these gendered movements also intersect with race, class and sexuality. I analyze the YouTube video "CUECA URBANA" (2021) posted by Fran y Gonza Cueca Chilena on September 12, 2021, to demonstrate how dancers try to captivate each other and centre consent (see Figure 4.7 below for a QR code to access this video).<sup>18</sup>

La cueca chora-brava, as I discussed in the previous chapter, enacts a story about el roto and la dama, their class struggles and a liberatory sexuality. El roto and la dama personify working-class urban mestizo people from las poblaciones + the poor neighbourhoods and embody the suffering and oppression of this racialized class. Similarly to the story of el huaso and la china, el roto is the protagonist of this story and la dama, a woman with no name, is collapsed into his story. Heteropatriarchy thus manifests through the exclusion of women from the story of el roto as well as the character's history, which forwards a masculinist identity. Moreover, settler colonialism emerges with the territorialization of urban spaces through cueca performances that enact a story about city life and love that revolves around a liberatory sexuality. El roto and la dama show that this "other(ed)" dissident Chile has its own desires.

One of the most significant aspects of la cueca chora-brava is that consent is choreographed into the dance. The centering of consent changes the ways the dancers must relate with each other. Even though this cueca dance version is still a heteronormative courtship dance, the amorous pursuit is not one sided. Both dancers must obtain permission from each other, through suggestive gestures and moves as well as by playing with proximity, to stay with each other at the end. Proximity, specifically, plays an important role because by getting close to each

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<sup>18</sup> The video can be accessed at: [https://youtu.be/7iWa\\_LMuO2A?si=6ntujtOenhX8\\_VW8](https://youtu.be/7iWa_LMuO2A?si=6ntujtOenhX8_VW8). The video was last accessed on February 5, 2026.

other to feel things out (literally and metaphorically), the dancers are able to get a sense of each other's interests and respond accordingly. Additionally, because both dancers have agency, the power dynamics are more fluid and dependent on the movement strategies the dancers use to draw their partner's attention. La cueca chora-brava, then, presents a way of relating that is alternative to that of the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa. By centering consent, this cueca dance enacts a story that is less harmful to women.

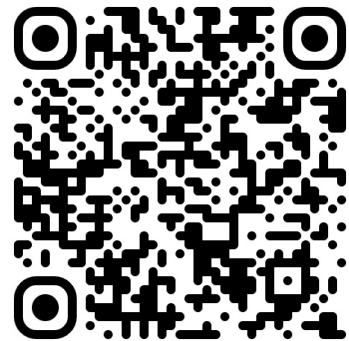
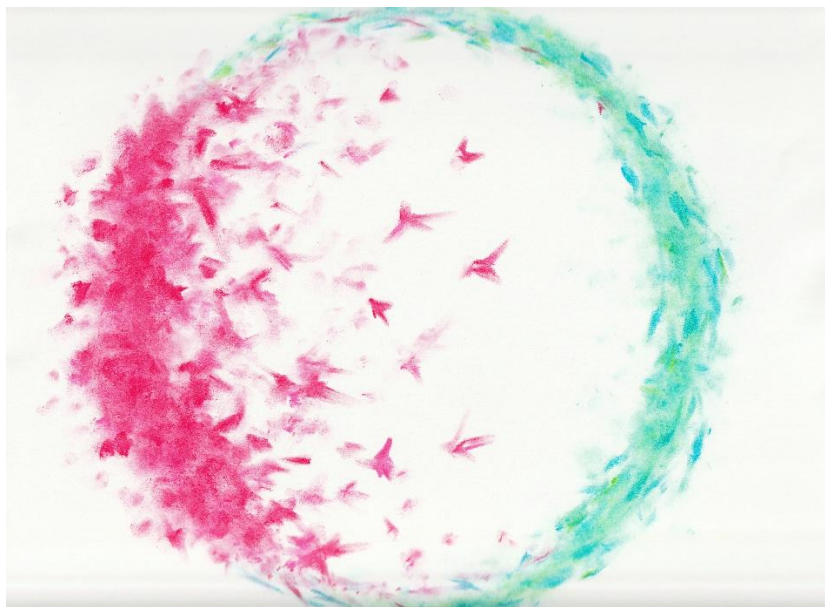


Figure 4.7: Affective drawing of “CUECA URBANA” (2021)

I do not sense domination, particularly the domination of el roto over la dama, in la cueca chora-brava. Instead, I sense a lot of teasing in the video “CUECA URBANA” (2021), as well as in other videos of la cueca chora-brava that I have watched. This teasing is not like the joking that I notice in the social cueca campesina-huasa. The teasing in la cueca chora-brava is sensual: a caress here, a glance there. Moreover, the teasing unfolds like two flirtatious games or as two seductive strategies: la dama stays to the periphery of the circle, this is her preferred space, her

home turf; and waits for el roto to come to her. Whereas el roto comes in and out of the imaginary circle: he penetrates the circle continuously, advancing towards la dama and retreating in bursts. Although he is forced to come to her, he uses the whole space to show off. Finally, the dancers riff off each other to push the boundaries of proximity.

The performance begins as a “casual” encounter and the invitation unfolds slowly. The scenario that the dancers set up suggest that el roto is asking la dama to dance. El roto and la dama are already on the dance floor, surrounded by an audience sitting at tables and forming a circle around them. La dama appears to be listening to el roto, who seems to be talking to her. The suggestion is that el roto is trying to convince la dama to dance and she is considering it.

El roto starts quite close to la dama. He wears a white button-up shirt tucked into khaki pants, taupe suspenders and black dress shoes with wooden soles. She wears a pastel turquoise, tight-fitted dress with a pattern that resembles fossils in a darker shade of turquoise. The dress shows off her legs as it only goes down to the mid-thigh; and her legs are further accentuated by the gold high-heeled shoes that strap around her ankles. El roto takes a couple of steps back slowly, giving la dama some space, before nonchalantly approaching her again. Then, el roto offers his right hand. It takes a moment, but la dama accepts by putting her hand in his and they begin walking around the space in a circle and in a counterclockwise direction.

El paseo that ensues is similar to that of the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. What differentiates it is that la dama is in charge of her own movements around the space. Despite el roto holding her hand, she does not follow him in the same way that la china follows el huaso in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. La dama, in this case, is more assertive with her walk and appears to guide herself around the space. Instead of waiting for el roto to lead her to her position, she takes charge and goes by herself, while still holding onto his hand. El roto is made

to catch up with her by sending his hand in the direction that she is already moving. By choosing her spot, from where she wants to perform las palmas and begin el giro inicial, la dama takes charge of her body and her movement.

The invitation and el paseo have transformed in this cueca dance and illustrate how la cueca chora-brava do not engage with the formality found in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Instead of a “proper” or “formal” invitation onto the dance floor there is proposition and interest, but nothing is set in stone. This creates space for aloofness, teasing, flirting and another kind of game to unfold.

During las palmas section, la dama and el roto showcase contrasting energies: la dama’s energy is more muted while el roto’s energy is louder. How each dancer moves around the space (or not) and the quality of their clapping both contribute to this difference in energy. La dama, for instance, stays in her spot for the duration of the section. On the other hand, el roto crosses the middle of the circle multiple times in a series of retreats and advances.

The palmas each dancer performs share with the ambulatory movements (or lack thereof) a similar energetic output. La dama’s palmas are unassertive: she opens her hands wide enough to clap with a little bit of force. This contrasts significantly with el roto’s vigorous palmas, which he performs further away from his body. El roto opens his arms wide, to the width of his shoulders, and claps forcefully. The distance of the palmas from his body also give the impression that he is sending his energy towards la dama or at least into the space.

A gendered difference can be seen in the posture of the dancers. La dama, for example, remains tall and poised for the duration of the performance. She even maintains this upright posture in her torso during moments when she bends her knees. I suspect that this uprightness is in part due to the high heels and tight-fitted dress she wears, which restrict how much she can

bend at the waist. On the other hand, el roto continuously switches between being upright and erect to bending at the waist and knees so that his body tilts forward while crouching. This bent body attitude allows him to get his pañuelo close to and on the ground. This range in postures illustrates that el roto, unlike la dama, is not bound to verticality.

Posture is one of the ways that movement in la cueca chora-brava also intersect with class. El roto's bent body attitude is a significant departure from the upright body posture in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Because la cueca chora-brava is about the poor, working-class urban population, this posture signals low class in comparison to the upright criollo, Catholic comportment seen in the aforementioned cueca dances, which is connected to high(er) class. I want to be clear that I do not interpret bent bodies as "low class"; rather, I am pointing out that this interpretation and mnemonic already circulate in Chilean society because it is constructed against ideas of etiquette and comportment that are viewed as high class.

El roto's giro inicial is more like a spiral. He travels around the space but ends up near la dama at the end, on her side of the imaginary circle. El roto's travel steps do not follow the pulse rhythm. Rather, his footwork, as he moves around the space takes, on an unsteady rhythmic structure as he performs various kinds of steps in no particular sequence: crossing one foot over the other; little kicks; foot drags; toe taps; stamps; and speedy runs on his toes. El roto's footwork oscillates between being performed underneath his hips and extending beyond them, a pattern that he repeats throughout the dance and that takes up space.

La dama, unlike el roto, begins and ends her giro inicial from the same place. She starts her first curvilinear trajectory by tracing a semicircle with her right foot. This is one of two moments when la dama's footwork extends beyond her immediate personal space or kinesphere; most of her steps occur underneath her hips or slightly outside them when doing travel steps and

therefore do not take up a lot of space. Her travel step, unlike el roto's, follows a steady slow-quick rhythm as she criss-crosses her feet while travelling to the right, adding a toe tap here and there, until she reaches her starting spot. La dama's walk has a stalking quality, especially when she takes slow strides. As la dama completes her giro inicial, el roto is there to meet her. A variation of the slow-quick rhythm also guides the way la dama traces curves with her pañuelo around her body and the space during el giro inicial. Although la dama does not perform wrist rotations to activate her pañuelo, it nonetheless responds to la dama's arm movements, drifting in the air as she traces curves.

Conversely, el roto does not move his pañuelo until the end of el giro inicial when he approaches la dama and brings his pañuelo beside the right side of her face and swings it up to meet her pañuelo. Similarly to la dama, el roto maintains his right hand still throughout el giro inicial by placing his hand in his left pocket.

At the end of el giro inicial (at 47 seconds) is the first brief intimate moment in the dance. Even though el roto has been playing with distance and proximity up to this point, this moment pushes the boundary of proximity: he gets much closer to la dama than in previous moments and he uses his pañuelo to caress la dama, not corral her (as el huaso does in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa analyzed above). This kind of proximity is intimate and sensual.

After le giro inicial, the curvilinear trajectories become less defined as the dancers, particularly el roto, continue to play with distance and proximity. For example, las media lunas that the dancers perform are quite different than those from the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. El roto and la dama travel around the circle using the same steps from el giro inicial: el roto moves to his erratic rhythm, performing criss-crosses, toe tap, stomps, drags and lunging motions; and la dama moves to her slow-quick pace, criss-crossing her feet and adding toe taps

here and there. Because they both travel in the same direction, the dancers do not meet until the end of the trajectory when el roto crosses the circle and moves towards la dama.

The media lunas section further highlights the differences in posture between la dama and el roto. Whereas la dama maintains her upright posture throughout las media lunas, el roto plays with verticality. At the end of the first media luna, el roto is in a deep crouch as he brings his pañuelo to the ground. From here, he moves smoothly to a straight spine, which reaches its peak at the end of the second media luna as he moves his pañuelo over his and la dama's head. This oscillation between bent body and upright body demonstrates that el roto is free to perform a range of postures. La dama, on the other hand, is confined to a rigid verticality.

La figura de "8" further illustrates how the dancers offer their own interpretations of the curvilinear trajectories. Whereas the first half of la figura de "8" follows the convention, during the second half of the trajectory, the dancers travel in the same direction, re-tracing their steps instead of inverting them. This means that la dama performs an "S" twice and that el roto performs an "2" twice, rather than each dancer performing both sides of an "8". Nevertheless, la figura de "8" is still complete since each dancer performs one side of the "8". The dancers also give their own sensual flair to this curvilinear trajectory by linking their pañuelos in the middle of the section. This is another intimate moment: despite not touching each other, la dama and el roto are connected through their linked-up pañuelos. La dama and el roto maintain this connection as they play with distance and proximity.

Both dancers then move away from each other again to do the second part of la figura de "8". The completion of la figura de "8" is signalled by both dancers performing a zapateo, although in different, gendered ways. La dama's zapateo is careful/calculated, dainty and constrained (likely due to the dress); she keeps her feet close and performs the step underneath

her hips. In contrast, el roto's zapateo open, loose and energetic. He raises his feet to knee height and hits the floor with more force, which makes his zapateo louder. As such, there are distinct gender differences in the way that each dancer performs the step. I will elaborate on the gender dimension of movements and their qualities below.

El espiral is also nebulous in this performance: both dancers advance and retreat at their own pace—coming in and falling out of sync with each other—until they end up facing each other in the middle of the imaginary circle at the end of the music. The first advance is initiated by el roto. After his zapateo, el roto twirls his pañuelo with both hands and goes down onto his left knee—another change in posture and the lowest point of his vertical range. While he goes down on one knee, el roto whips the pañuelo towards la dama's feet. Simultaneously, la dama steps forward and catches the pañuelo's tip with the heel of her left shoe. Without bending her body, la dama swivels her left knee in and up and grabs the pañuelo with her left hand. As el roto slowly comes to standing la dama circles him, places his pañuelo over his left shoulder and goes back to her initial spot, creating distance between her and el roto.

The dance ends with the dancers closing the distance, moving closer to each other in an intimate pose: facing each other with her right hand on his face, and his right hand on her waist. This pose shows that la dama is captivated by el roto and decides to stay with him at the end. Moreover, this pose exemplifies once more how these dancers give their own spin to their performance of la cueca chora-brava. Instead of la dama leaving el roto on the dance floor alone—an act that tends to differentiate this cueca dance version from others—or exiting together—the convention in the competitive campesina-huasa and others—both dancers stay together in the middle of the circle. As such, these performers have found an alternate ending that is open-ended because the pose acts like a freeze-frame. With the recording stopping here,

there is no way to tell if the dancers will be dancing another cueca, exiting together or exiting alone.

La cueca chora-brava deviates from the codified cueca choreography because the dancers have more liberty with the gestures, postures, steps and trajectories they perform and how they perform them. La dama and el roto perform a wider range of movements and, furthermore, their movement vocabularies overlap. For example, the inclusion of the zapateo into la dama's repertoire illustrates that this character, like la china in the social cueca campesina-huasa, is allowed to perform a step that is solely a part of men's vocabulary in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Another move that la dama performs that conventionally lies in the realm of men's repertoire is holding her pañuelo over her head with both hands and twirling it, which she performs at the beginning of la figura de "8" (at 1:06 minutes). In this cueca dance performance, el roto echoes la dama by doing this movement at the end of las media lunas (at 1:37 minutes) and again at the end of the performance (from 1:44 to 1:47 minutes). Therefore, there is the possibility for a wider overlap between la dama and el roto's repertoire in la cueca chora-brava.

Despite this overlap, el roto and la dama have a range of movements that dancers of the other versions and variations do not or rarely perform; and this range tends to be connected to performances of masculinity and femininity. El roto, specifically, has a larger range of moves and steps that are assertive, quick and cheeky. The way el roto moves his pañuelo, in comparison to la dama, offers a great example of el roto's extensive range. During la figura de "8", for instance, el roto brushes the floor with his pañuelo; moves it like a lasso; uses it as a whip, by flicking it at la dama's feet; holds it with both hands over his head; caresses la dama's back and thigh with it; and twirls it. Many of these actions emphasize el roto's vigour, virility and masculinity.

Conversely, la dama rarely activates her pañuelo during this section. As in previous trajectories, she traces curves delicately around the space, her body and el roto's head with the hand that holds her pañuelo. Although el roto's pañuelo movements at times become softer or delicate, such as when he imitates a caress, he does not stay with this quality for long. This softness, furthermore, is part of a larger range of movement with the pañuelo in el roto's repertoire, as I discussed above, and not the main quality. In short, el roto dips into this quality, but he does not live in it as la dama does. In comparison to el roto's highly active pañuelo movements, then, the way la dama moves her limp pañuelo around the space takes on a stereotypically feminine quality because of the delicateness of the movement.

El roto's footwork is also quite diverse, energetic and highlights his agility. Aside from the usual escobillado and zapateo, el roto performs speedy runs on his toes, both forward and backward; disjointed, staccato toe-heel changes; small kicks; double foot stomps; quick toe taps; heel wiggles or toe swivels that remind me of a dog excitedly wagging his tail; advancing half-lunges that lead with one foot and that are more cheeky than aggressive; and a drop to one knee. Many of these steps are expansive, such as the advancing half-lunges, as well as energetically and physically loud, such as el zapateo. These expansive and energetically loud steps take up space and highlight his dynamism, spryness and vigour. On the other hand, la dama's footwork is neither as energetic nor as eclectic as el roto's footwork. Her footwork is comprised of the criss-crossing travel step; escobillado; toe taps; and zapateo. The only deviations, as I described above, are when she traces a semicircle with her right foot at the beginning of el giro inicial; and the knee swivel that allows her to grab el roto's pañuelo from her heel at the beginning of el espiral. Most of la dama's footwork is performed under her hips and, in comparison to el roto's movements, it is energetically and physically quiet. These contained and quieter steps do not take

up space and, thus, emphasize grace and self-composure. As such, the footwork the dancers perform and how they perform it inscribe and reinforce stereotypical understandings of masculinity and femininity.

La dama's repertoire also contains ways of moving that el roto does not perform or rarely performs, but the range is not as extensive. For example, la dama traces curves in space with the hand that holds her pañuelo (as I have described above); lifts her long, brunette hair (at 1:29 minutes); holds her dress while performing zapateo (at 1:35 minutes); and sways her hips as she travels around the space, which I will elaborate on next. The middle two gestures are movements that el roto could perform but does not. For instance, el roto could hold his pants as he travels around the space or caress his own hair, but these gestures never occur. These actions are relegated to women's repertoire. The bigger factor, I argue, is that these actions are associated with a stereotypical femininity and not masculinity. It is unlikely that el roto would ever pinch his pants at the thigh or caress his own hair during a performance of la cueca chora-brava.

Unlike in the social cueca campesina-huasa, in which both la china and el huaso perform hip movements, in la cueca chora-brava only la dama moves her hips. These hips movements are specifically seen when she travels around the space in the criss-crossing fashion. La dama's hip sways are further accentuated by the tight-fitted dress and high heels she wears, which highlights her curves and give her a slight lordosis, making her butt stick out. Even though el roto untucks his hips and sticks his butt out to perform his quick footwork and to be able to bend to the ground, he keeps his hips rigid and does not move them. What this suggests is that hip movements, in la cueca chora-brava, are only part of the women's repertoire—a move that la dama can use to captivate and seduce el roto.

The ways that la dama and el roto captivate and seduce each other has gendered dimension, which intersects with race, class and sexuality. For example, la dama's hip movements is akin to the mulata's "hip(g)nosis", to think with dance studies scholar and choreographer Melissa Blanco Borelli (2016). In *She Is Cuba*, Borelli (2016) theorizes the mulata's hip movements as "hip(g)nosis": "choreographed tactics of a racialized sensuality" (96) to "hip-notize audiences" (101). Borelli (2016) explains that the mulata—a racialized, working-class woman entertainer who would sell her dancing and sexual services in taxi dance halls in Cuba (94)—engaged her hips, along with other body parts and movements, "as a tactic to attain value and a certain type of positionality within the landscape of the Cuban cultural imaginary" (96). La mulata used a sensory response to music—since it was "the *danzón*, *guaracha*, and *son* music that got those *mulata* hips moving" (Borelli 2016, 104; original italics)—to create a sensual strategy, hip(g)nosis, to gain money. Hip(g)nosis, thus, reframes the mulata's hip movements as a gesture for self-empowerment, pleasure, negotiation and power exchanges.

Borelli (2016) maintains that hip(g)nosis is not inherent to the mulata, "an innate quality *mulatas* possess" (20), it is a learned corporeal practice. As a "brand", Borelli (2016) acknowledges that not all mulatas engage it; and those that do, use it with the knowledge of what the hips signify in a "history of miscegenation in the Americas" (21). The hips' connection to a gendered, racial and classed eroticism allowed a mulata to enhance her "eroticized, racialized, and gendered labor" (Borelli 2016, 78). Therefore, hip(g)nosis is a tactic available to women outside of the Cuban context; and those women that use it "must contend with its positionality within or outside that particular history" (Borelli 2016, 21). Borelli (2016), thus, demonstrates the kinds of class, racial and gendered relations that sexualize and exoticize the hips and that, in turn, allow the hips to "hip-notize audiences" (101).

As a mestiza, working-class, urban woman from las poblaciones, la dama also uses her hips for self-empowerment, pleasure and captivation. Like the mulata, la dama is the offspring of interracial intercourse and, therefore, embroiled in the same “history of miscegenation in the Americas” (Borelli 2016, 21). La dama’s hips and hip movements, then, are also linked to an economy of gendered, racial and class eroticism. The difference between the mulata and la dama’s use of hips, however, is that it is not the music that guides la dama’s hip movements; rather, it is the impetus for dancing la cueca chora-brava: sexual liberation. Thinking with Arjun Appadurai, Christian Spencer Espinosa (2017) explains how the social practice of the urban cueca dance, of which la cueca chora-brava is a part, thwarts state (spatial) control over bodies:

[la] fiesta y alegría de la cueca son una liberación (del cuerpo) en el espacio, una expresión del vecindario que se produce a sí mismo y se opone al imaginario del Estado-Nación que busca subsimirlo “a un imaginario territorial mayor”  
 + [the] celebration and joy of [the urban] cueca is a liberation (of the body) in space, an expression of the neighbourhood that re-creates itself and that is opposed to the nation-state imaginary that attempts to subsume it “into a greater territorial imaginary”. (105)<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, if el roto liberates his body by playing with verticality, which classes and racializes him, la dama liberates hers by moving her hips laterally, which also marks her. Nonetheless, she uses this marked eroticism as a seductive strategy to hip-notize and captivate el roto (and audiences).

As I mentioned above, el roto’s footwork is expansive and energetic and emphasizes his virility. I argue that this is el roto’s seductive strategy. El roto uses his footwork to attract the attention of la dama by showing off what he can do. Although his seductive strategy plays into stereotypical ideas of masculinity and virility, in la cueca chora-brava these movements are more akin to feats of strength than arrogance or cockiness. Moreover, the presence of playfulness

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<sup>19</sup> Here, the neighbourhood is the urban poblaciones and the “greater territorial imaginary” is the countryside of the Central Valley of Chile that is evoked through the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa, la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita.

transforms el roto's footwork quality: it is less commanding and more charming such as when he performs the sprightly tip toeing at the beginning of the dance. El roto, then, does not use his steps to corral la dama, he uses them to captivate her.

This is made particularly clear when considering the spatial dimension of the dancers' seductive game. La dama, for instance, sticks mainly to the periphery of the imaginary circle only entering and crossing the middle when the dancers perform the switches that are a part of the la figura de "8" and during el espiral. Given that la dama has choice in this cueca dance, sticking to the periphery could be interpreted as her standing her ground and waiting for el roto to come to her. She further teases him by not giving in to his advances so easily since she rarely leaves the periphery. El roto, however, uses the whole space during the choreography: he penetrates the circle and crosses the middle multiple times as he advances towards his partner and retreats. Although el roto certainly takes up space, he does not push la dama to the periphery: he usually goes to her and then retreats, leaving her along her own trajectory. As such, he teases la dama by advancing in quick bursts, lingering and retreating casually while simultaneously performing moves that are meant to impress her. These movements do not signal the chase of the competitive cueca campesina-huasa because the woman dancer is not trying to get away from the man when he approaches her. Instead, this kind of spatial engagement signals flirtation, testing limits and trying to get a sense of each other's inclinations.

The dancers also use their pañuelos to captivate and seduce. Subtle instances of sensuality with the pañuelos include when la dama moves her pañuelo around her head slowly as if she is moving hair out of her face (at 44 seconds); or when el roto uses his pañuelo to trace the outline of la dama's body (at 1:24 minutes). Through these gestures, the pañuelos become extensions of the arms and hands, such as when the dancers link up with their pañuelos in the

middle of la figura de “8” trajectory. These movements signal to possibilities that extend beyond just attracting attention as the flourishes do. Rather, the pañuelos are used to touch without touching, to tease and arouse. These alternate ways of moving the pañuelos and of engaging each other with them demonstrate how pañuelos can be used by the dancers to foster connection and intimacy by pushing the boundaries of proximity to enhance flirtation and seduction. This is in contradistinction to the competitive cueca campesina-huasa in which el huaso uses his pañuelo to corral and contain la china throughout the dance; and in which la china uses it to invoke delicateness and demureness. In la cueca chora-brava, then, the dancers use their pañuelos to test the limits of the relationship and sense inclinations.<sup>20</sup>

Captivation, testing limits and sensing inclinations is necessary in la cueca chora-brava because this cueca dance centres consent. As I mentioned before, la cueca chora-brava is not about (a one-sided) conquest: la dama can choose to leave the dance floor by herself at the end. Centering consent adds to the coquettishness present in this cueca dance as well as subverts the passive woman-predatory man dichotomy present in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. Moreover, by centering consent la dama and el roto do not embody the tropes of femme fatale and “fatal man”, respectively—tropes that the dancers are made to embody in tango, as political theorist, anthropologist and dance scholar Marta Savigliano (1995) asserts in *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*). In la cueca chora-brava, la dama is not here to lure el roto into a dangerous situation with her feminine wiles. El roto is not here to trap her and “play with her eroticism” (Savigliano 1995, 109). And the dancers are not here to “[play] wild eroticism to death” (Savigliano 1995, 106). La dama and el roto consent to dance together to release each

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<sup>20</sup> I have also seen dancers in la cueca chora-brava put pañuelos in their mouth as well as grabbing them with their teeth. These kinds of interactions never appear in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. In that cueca dance variation, distance is strictly maintained, touching rarely occurs and the dancers never perform anything as suggestive of sensuality and sexuality as what la dama and el roto do in la cueca chora-brava.

other from suffering as well as from the structures of a racist, classist, Catholic society through sexuality or sexual liberation. Consent allows the dancers to playfully seduce each other without the performance and the relationship turning fatal; it allows them to share their sexual inclinations or orientations (Ahmed 2006) to form a connection, an understanding of each other's preferences. Consent provides space to play with pleasure.

La cueca chora-brava does not aspire to replicate an essentialized Chilean or Latin American sexiness. Sexuality is part of the playful banter that emerges from teasing and flirtation, which the audience is allowed to witness. La cueca chora-brava engages sexuality as a creative force to enact a political stance through pleasure and sensual gestures. This cueca dance expresses the spirit of the Chilean poor by taking up an intimate eroticism before an audience—a private affair considered vulgar when in public. Because this human condition is muted in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, la cueca a la bandera and la cueca a la Carmelita, this is a political act of a “dissident Chile” (Bolívar qtd in Espinosa 2021, 46): a Chile of the poor neighbourhoods that resists conforming to and performing the ideal conservative citizen by embracing sexuality and pleasure.

In the following section, I discuss la cueca sola and show how absence in cueca dance can have powerful effects. In la cueca sola, the choreography falls away completely and only some cueca dance elements are engaged. As a protest cueca dance, la cueca sola's purpose is to bring attention to the human rights violations committed by Pinochet's dictatorship. This removal of cueca elements allows las viudas + the widows to re-member cueca dance in a way that makes present and remembers their absent compañero detenido-desaparecido + detained and disappeared (man) partner.

#### 4.6 Absence and Minimalism in la Cueca Sola

In this section, I analyse la cueca sola to illustrate how absence and minimalism in this cueca dance version uses a nebulous approach to the choreographic structure and reorientates cueca dance to tell a different story. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, la cueca sola is a protest cueca that was first performed by women on March 8, 1978, and continues to be performed today. The performance took place at the Caupolicán Theatre in Santiago, Chile, and was performed by women of La Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos-Desaparecidos + The Group of Detained and Disappeared Family Members (AFDD). The women of the AFDD created la cueca sola as a protest cueca dance to condemn and express dissent against Pinochet's human rights violations. These women danced a cueca alone to make present their absent compañero detenido-desaparecido + detained and disappeared (man) partner. By dancing alone, la viuda emerged as a character of denunciation, drawing attention to the regime's violence by evoking the brutal absence of a life partner.

In many performances of la cueca sola that I watched online, the women dancers did not perform all of the cueca dance elements.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, unlike the cueca dances I analysed above, the cueca dance elements that las viudas + the widows did perform were quite muted and

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<sup>21</sup> La cueca sola videos that I watched were:

1) "8M 2021 – Colectiva Cueca Sola Punta Arenas" posted by Cueca sola Punta Arenas Taller/Colectiva on March 8, 2021 (<https://www.facebook.com/cuecasolapuntaarenas/videos/8m-2021-colectiva-cueca-sola-punta-arenas/847848152458800>);

2) "Chilean women dance alone to protest disappeared" posted by AP Archive on November 16, 2016 (<https://youtu.be/WuvXqFTy-8o>);

3) "Cueca Sola en el Estadio Nacional" posted by Colectivo Cueca Sola on July 27, 2016 (<https://youtu.be/J2fQ4WNafDg>);

4) "Cueca Sola Punta Arenas" posted by Cueca sola Punta Arenas Taller/Colectiva on September 11, 2020 (<https://www.facebook.com/cuecasolapuntaarenas/videos/315092532891464/?extid=wspeKZLPM66nfBUz>);

5) "La Cueca Sola, bailada por doña Violeta Zúñiga" posted by Juan Jorge Faundes M. on November 14, 2014 (<https://youtu.be/3kir0sLEhps>); and,

6) "La cueca sola , una forma de mantener viva la MEMORIA" posted by Canal Capitán Cianuro Escritor on September 11, 2018 (<https://youtu.be/myD3klIFx9Q?si=hJ7oNtmyy1N5u93k>).

All videos were last accessed on February 5, 2026.

quiet, energetically and physically. The minimalism in la cueca sola emphasizes introspection, sorrow and grief to bring attention to the military junta's human rights violations and to remember those who were and still are disappeared. In this section, I will analyse the YouTube video "Cueca Sola en el Estadio Nacional" (2016) posted by Colectivo Cueca Sola on July 27, 2016 (see Figure 4.8 below for a QR code to access this video).<sup>22</sup> I will first offer some context for the video. Then, I will briefly mention the story that la cueca sola is connected to. Following this I will offer my impressions of the performance. The rest of the section will be dedicated to analysing la cueca sola.

This recording of la cueca sola was performed on March 12, 1990, following the end of Pinochet's dictatorship. Importantly, Patricio Alwyn had been democratically elected as the new President of Chile by this time. Alwyn can be seen in the video, witnessing the performance from one of the stands in the stadium, wearing a tri-colour sash of red, white and blue over his suit. I chose this performance because it demonstrates well the visual impact that la cueca sola would have had when it was first performed in 1978. Many of the other videos of la cueca sola that I watched on YouTube took place inside and in small spaces.

The strongest image that I see/sense when watching la cueca sola is that of a broken circle (see Figure 4.8). Broken ties, broken bonds, broken bones, broken families. I also sense a shadow. A haunting. The lingering question: "Where are they?" I do not know what it must have felt like to have lost someone that way, to have had your family broken up so violently. But this dance helps me remember. It is part of my history, and it is heavy. The actions of the dictatorship are still felt today and will ripple into the future.

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<sup>22</sup> The video can also be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/J2fQ4WNafDg>. The video was last accessed on February 5, 2026.

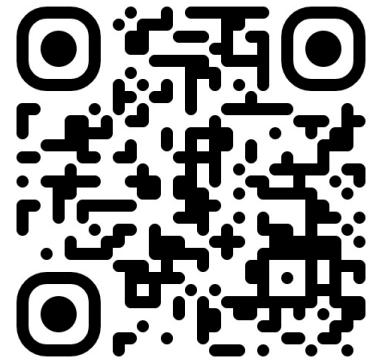


Figure 4.8: Affective drawing of “Cueca Sola en el Estadio Nacional” (2016)

In this video, the folk group of the AFDD sing and play for Gala Torres—the original composer and lyricist of la cueca sola—as she performs the dance on her own to a full stadium. Torres puts her guitar down and walks out onto the field to dance la cueca sola. Torres wears a black skirt that falls past her knees, black shoes and a white shirt with a photo of a disappeared relative pinned to her chest on the left. La viuda steps out onto the “dance floor” on her own because there is no one inviting her to dance. She pulls out a white pañuelo from her pocket, unfolds it and begins to dance by herself as the singing starts.

La viuda dancing by herself highlights the solemn, contemplative and minimalist qualities of la cueca sola—qualities that are not present in the cueca dances I have analysed above. Aside from a partner, there are other elements that are missing from this cueca dance. For example, cueca dance elements that add liveliness and energy to the dance such as palmas, vueltas, escobillado and zapateo are absent; as it is the visual engagement with a partner that plays a big role in other cueca dances. Those cueca dance elements activate the dance in an

exuberant, playful way; therefore, the minimalism in la cueca sola makes sense given that this cueca dance is about condemnation, lament, mourning, grief and loss.

Other qualities such as la viuda's upright posture, steady footwork, limp pañuelo and focused gaze also make la cueca sola feel formal and grave, almost funerary. Throughout the performance, Torres maintains her body upright and her feet are like clockwork, steadily performing a seguillida that maintains the 6/8-time rhythm by stepping on each eighth note. The seguillida is performed quite close to the ground and slightly slower than in the social cueca campesina-huasa analyzed above, which makes the travel step look like a shuffle. The groundedness of the step juxtaposed with the lifted posture contributes to the seriousness of the performance.

La viuda's hands, while actively engaged, have a similar repetitive, minimalist choreography: la viuda's right hand holds her pañuelo in front of her and high (at head height) as her left hand pinches her long, black skirt for the duration of the dance. The most mobile part of her body—aside from her feet—is her right arm, which moves the pañuelo from in front of her to her left shoulder, past the photo of the loved one, and back to the initial position. This gesture is a slow and deliberate arc-like motion. However, it is not steady; meaning that Torres does not perform the movement in time with the music and no arc-like motion is exactly alike. Significantly, la viuda's right hand does not perform wrist movements. As a result, her pañuelo does not move and, instead, hangs limp from her hand. The lifelessness of her pañuelo further add to the solemn performance.

Despite looking out towards the stadium, la viuda's focus is inward, making the dance feel introspective. Given that la cueca sola's intention is to make present the absence of a loved one, I would argue that la viuda is thinking about her compañero detenido-desaparecido.

Moreover, because the performance takes place in 1990, the year that Chile returned to a democracy, Torres is likely also reflecting on those who were made disappeared by the dictatorship, whose names appear on the giant lightboard above the stadium, honouring their lives by reminding that they are gone but not forgotten. (The way the camera clips between her and the lightboard also suggests this.) The minimalization of the gaze, its inward focus, emphasizes the contemplative and somber qualities of *la cueca sola*.

The undefined curvilinear trajectories also align with the minimalism in *la cueca sola* and imbue the dance with disorientation. Although Torres still performs her *seguillida* shuffle along curvilinear paths, the trajectories and her directionality is unclear. Specifically, there is no *giro inicial*; and *las media lunas* and *la figura de “8”* are also undefined. The latter two trajectories might be present, but it is hard to tell. The stripping down of the curvilinear trajectories makes sense because *la viuda* has no partner to change places with. The muting of the curvilinear trajectories makes it hard to predict where she will go next and gives the dance an air of uncertainty.

Despite these ambiguous traces, these incomplete trajectories, there is a sense of determination. This persistence is more akin to searching instead of the feeling of wandering around lost. Therefore, even though the curvilinear trajectories are undefined, there is intention behind Torres’s movements. *La viuda* knows what she is doing—reflecting, honouring, searching, asking “where are they?”—even if it appears confusing to an onlooker.

Once Torres completes the dance, she bows her head with her *pañuelo* held high. These two moving gestures, which are done with intention, evoke feelings of respect and remembrance and remind the audience (again) why this *cueca* is being performed. The video ends with another

woman handing Torres a guitar, which suggests that she will be returning (by herself) to sit with the folk group.

La cueca sola's minimalism once more demonstrates cueca dance's flexibility—how the dance is malleable because a version or variation does not always need to include every single cueca dance element. La cueca sola re-members cueca dance with very few elements. As I described above, la cueca sola mainly engages an upright posture, a seguillida shuffle step, one arm motion that does not make the pañuelo move and ambiguous curvilinear paths. There is a lot “missing” from this cueca dance but that is significant: by stripping cueca dance of codes, la cueca sola demonstrates otherwise ways of performing cueca dance.

Moreover, la cueca sola's minimalism brings attention to the disappeared and their story. While the dictatorship was trying to erase and forget people from the country and from history, which it lied about continuously, the women of the AFDD engaged in an inverse action: re-telling the story over and over again and evoking “unforgetting” (Stewart 1996). In *A Space on the Side of the Road*, anthropologist Kathleen Stewart (1996) forwards the term “unforgetting” to illustrate a collective “re-membered attention to events” (80). Stewart (1996) describes this process as follows: “Far from reducing remembered events to illustrations of ideas, [unforgetting] uses them to interrupt the very progress of master narrative codes and to displace the certainty of concept with a densely textured interpretive space that follows a logic of digression and accidental adjacency” (80). The author uses this term to demonstrate how personal events become collective stories that get passed on from person to person until no one remembers whose story it was to begin with.

Through unforgetting, la cueca sola makes the violence, loss and grief from the human rights violations of the dictatorship, as an event, everyone's story. La cueca sola “interrupts the

very progress of master narrative codes” (Stewart 1996, 80) by exposing the denial of the human rights violations and, later on, by remembering and re-membering this dark chapter in Chilean history. Re-membering, here, is not only the piecing together anew of cueca dance elements to create a choreography, it is also an act of imbuing the space with hauntings, with memories, that “follow a logic of digression”. The circle is broken, but there are still curvilinear paths.

Moreover, by engaging unforgetting, *la cueca sola* intervenes in a cultural amnesia that, I argue, occurs through the codification of cueca dance. *La cueca sola* illustrates that cueca dance is not connected to a singular story and, therefore, does not just perform stories about conquest and courtship, patriotism and eroticism. *La cueca sola* offers other ways of performing cueca dance. By not keeping silent and taking to the dance floor of their own volition and in solemn condemnation, the women of the AFDD thwart the Chilean “deber ser” + “dutiful ought to be” (Sotoconil 2009) enacted by the submissive and demure *china* in the competitive cueca *campesina-huasa*. More generally, the minimalism in *la cueca sola*, then, displaces the codification of cueca dance “with a densely textured interpretive space” (Stewart 1996, 80) and extends what cueca dance can do.

#### 4.7 Queering Cueca Dance

In this section, I analyse the cueca dance performed by *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse* (*Las Yeguas*) to demonstrate how the dominant codes found in the codified cueca choreography can be subverted to present an otherwise story. The subversion of the codified cueca choreography results by re-orientating the signification of cueca dance elements and stories such as by bringing them into contact with other bodies and substances. In the case of *Las Yeguas*’ performance, the additional bodies and substances I will be focussing on are the *Las*

Yeguas' queer bodies, a boundaryless map of Central and South and America, broken glass scattered over the map and blood (see Figure 4.9 below for a QR code to this intervention's webpage).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Las Yeguas is a queer collective formed by Pedro Mardones Lemebel (1952-2015) and Francisco Casas Silva. Las Yeguas were active from 1987-1997, that time period between the end of the dictatorship and the transition to democracy, which is also known as post-dictatorship in Chile. Their online archive states that Las Yeguas “took a critical stance before the art system, mistrusting its models and modes of validation, choosing instead to slip in and out of ‘performance’ as a category” (“Yeguas del Apocalipsis” 2018, n.p.). “As a result, their practice occurred outside art institutions, as they chose to privilege alternative settings and the public space of the city” (“Yeguas del Apocalipsis” 2018, n.p.).

The performance in *La Conquista de América* illustrates how Las Yeguas engaged performance as a method to activate spaces (Carvajal 2023). As history of consciousness scholars Lucian Gomoll and Lisette Olivares (2012) explain in “Inversión de la materia” + “Reinvestment in the material”, performance enabled Las Yeguas to “transform their bodies into political and public ciphers” (37). As I mentioned in Chapter 3, *La Conquista de América* was an intervention that occurred only once, on October 12, 1989, at the Chilean Commission on Human Rights in Santiago, Chile. Furthermore, in “Intervention/Resurrection”, Olivares and Gomoll (2016) state that *La Conquista de América* was meant to be “intentionally ephemeral” (168). The only archival materials that seem to remain are two photographs that can be found on the Las Yeguas' online archive as well as newspaper clipping that I found online.<sup>23</sup> My analysis,

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<sup>23</sup> A blurb about the performance, its intention and the two photos can be accessed here: <https://english.yeguasdelapocalipsis.cl/1989-the-conquest-of-america/>. This link was last accessed on January 9, 2026.

therefore, relies mainly on sources that I had available: a description of the performance by a journalist who witnessed and covered the event, Maura Brescia (1989); as well as secondary sources that reference first-hand eyewitness accounts of the event.<sup>24</sup>

I think it is possible to create a sensorial memory from written sources because the act of reading is not disconnected from the senses and from memory. As I mentioned in the Introduction, one way that I remember is through imagery. Although I never saw Las Yeguas' queer(ed) cueca dance, the descriptive accounts of the intervention helped me envision the scenario. Additionally, the two images of the performance from Las Yeguas' online archive as well as my own experiences with performance, glass, blood and cueca dance—from learning the form through YouTube videos, which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 5—filled in the scene and created a personal and partial memory of the performance. This is the memory that I carry into the analysis of the performance.

Las Yeguas' performance, in my opinion, presents a history of bloodshed in South America during the length of a cueca composition. *La Conquista de América* was condemnatory, denouncing the Pinochet dictatorship as well as “drawing a parallel between the colonial process of ‘The Conquest’ and the support that North American imperialism had provided to Latin American military governments”, events that have resulted in the massacres of people in Chile and beyond (“1989 / The Conquest of America” 2018, n.p.). Similar to la cueca sola, which Las Yeguas were citing in their performance (Gommol and Olivares 2012; Olivares and Gommol 2016), this performance was about remembering the forgotten and dispossessed within the

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<sup>24</sup> Unlike the various cueca dances described above, Las Yeguas' cueca dance traverses into the realm of performance art, extending cueca dance beyond competitive, social and staged contexts. The inclusion of the map and the broken glass add dimensions to the performance not found in other cuecas. The shards, specifically, debilitate each performer by cutting into their bare feet and creating wounds. This addition to the performance is unseen in other cueca dances and is reminiscent of the ways that other performance artists use or have used their bodies as sites for intervention, such as Serbian conceptual artist and performer Marina Abramović in *Rhythm 0* (1974) and Japanese multimedia artist Yoko Ono in *Cut Piece* (1964).

nation-state. However, Las Yeguas' performance extended the category of "disappeared" to include the poor, queer people (including those with HIV-AIDS), Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities and, I would argue, land. Therefore, *La Conquista de América* contributes to "a national history of memory practice around political disappearance" and adds to "a history of memory" of violence in the Americas (Fortuna 2018,173).



Figure 4.9: Affective drawing of *La Conquista de América* (1989)

Blood. This is what stands out the most about this performance—which I have not witnessed. I can hear the sound of glass bursting under their feet, even though I have never seen this performance. The bursting echoes in my ear. But all I see and feel is blood. Deep red, warm blood oozing from wounded feet and spilling onto the white paper on which the map is drawn. I feel the blood on my feet and fingertips. Slippery and sticky. My imagination activates and I am taken to self-created scenes and images of people being massacred in the stadiums in Chile during the dictatorship. Bodies filled with bullet holes. Bullet holes oozing blood.

As several accounts relay, the performance begins with Lemebel and Silva sitting still and silently on a bench (Brescia 1989; Carvajal 2023; Olivares and Gomoll 2016). In front of them on the floor lay the map of Central and South America with broken glass from Coca-Cola bottles scattered across it. The audience crowded around this map to watch the intervention in silence since only Lemebel and Silva could hear the cueca music from the Walkmans they had strapped to their bare chest with black tape in the form of an “X”. The performers were also bare foot and only wore long pants (Brescia 1989, 27; Carvajal 2023; Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 167; “1989/ The Conquest of America” 2018).

Brescia (1989) recalls Lemebel and Silva’s entrance:

se pararon sobre el mapa y caminaron despacio sobre él, pisando y presionando fuerte los vidrios rotos, de las botellas de Coca Cola, con las plantas de los pies desnudos. A cada paso se sentía el ruido de los vidrios que reventaban bajos sus plantas. Francisco Casas [Silva] se detubo frente la punta del Cono Sur americano, mientras Pedro Mardones [Lemebel] se devolvía pisando vigorosamente los vidrios hacia el otro costado del mapa. + they stood over the map and walked slowly over it, stepping and pressing hard on the broken glass, from the Coca Cola bottles, with the soles of their bare feet. The sound of glass bursting under their feet could be heard with each step. Francisco Casas [Silva] stopped in front of the point of the South American cone, meanwhile Pedro Mardones [Lemebel] returned to the other side of the map stepping vigorously on the glass. (27)

Based on additional accounts, Gomoll and Olivares (2012) add that “taking each other’s arm [Las Yeguas] moved onto the territory” at the beginning of the dance (43). Even though it is not mentioned when the performers began playing the cueca music, what Brescia (1989) and Gomoll and Olivares (2012) describe are the first two sections of a cueca dance—invitation and paseo: Lemebel and Silva enter the space of the map arm-in-arm (invitation), walk over it together (paseo) and Lemebel leaves Silva at the tip of South America before walking to his spot by Central America (placement, which marks the end of el paseo).

What follows this, however, is not the *las palmas* section. Brescia (1989) recounts that after the placement Las Yeguas “[alzaron] el pañuelo blanco y empezaron a bailar una cueca sobre el mapa y sobre los vidrios” + “[raised] their white pañuelos and began dancing a cueca over the map and the glass” (27; emphasis mine). Brescia’s (1989) report of the event suggests that Las Yeguas omitted this section and went right into the first displacement without performing *palmas*. However, it is also possible that this was an oversight on the part of the journalist since her description of the intervention is brief.

The journalist then gives a short account of the remaining choreography, which, for me, has resonances with the codified cueca choreography. As Brescia (1989) explains, Las Yeguas’ cueca dance was

[una] cueca con todas las figuras—el *ocho*, los semicírculos, las vueltas—que fue tomando vigor paso a paso y el mapa de América se va poniendo cada vez más rojo. El baile nacional termina con Pedro Mardones [Lemebel] hincado ante su compañero de cueca. Luego, ambos desaparecen.  
+ [a] cueca with all the trajectories—the *figure eight*, the semicircles [halfmoons], the turns—that became vigorous with each step and that turned the map of America redder and redder. The national dance ended with Pedro Mardones [Lemebel] kneeling in front of his cueca dance partner. Then, both disappear. (27; original italics)

By stating that Las Yeguas performed “all the trajectories”, Brescia’s (1989) account suggests that they performed the four displacements: el giro inicial, las media lunas, la figura de “8” and el espiral. Moreover, Brescia (1989) also notes that Lemebel ends kneeling in front of his partner—the only time the journalist mentions posture—at the end of the dance.

Unlike *la cueca sola* by the women of the AFDD, then, Las Yeguas’ cueca dance has clearly defined curvilinear trajectories. This means that this aspect of the dance resembles the codified cueca choreography more so than the choreography of *la cueca sola*. This is corroborated by Olivares and Gomoll (2016), who state that, after positioning themselves on the map, Las Yeguas “began performing the well known national choreography of *la cueca*, each

waving a white handkerchief overhead as they advanced and receded” (167; original italics). Therefore, even though Las Yeguas’ performance cites *la cueca sola* in terms of intent and content, its form, based on the accounts, resembles the codified *cueca* choreography.

Aside from waving their *pañuelos*, engaging distance and proximity and kneeling, the only other move that is mentioned is *el zapateo*. Olivares and Gomoll (2016) share an eyewitness account that speaks to this step: “Isabel Larrain claims that ‘the silence was so acute that the audience heard and felt the shards of glass entering their bare feet, especially during the climax of the dance,’ during an agitated series of steps known as *el zapateo* (the kicking series)” (167; original italics). It is after this move that Lemebel ends kneeling in front of Silva and that Las Yeguas exit together (Brescia 1989, 27).

Las Yeguas’ performance queers *cueca* dance by changing the codes of the codified *cueca* choreography. Queer bodies dancing *cueca* together, a queer proximity, disrupts the heteropatriarchy embedded in and forwarded by *cueca* dance, generally. Olivares and Gomoll (2016) explain that Lemebel and Silva “queer the normative symbolic structure that is present within the dance’s performance matrix” by “disarticulating *la cueca* from a dominant meaning system that codes the dance as hetero-normative” and by “dismantling the logic of this ideology as well” (168; original italics). Olivares and Gomoll (2016) further remark that Las Yeguas “alter the structure of [*la cueca sola*] to queer the performance” because “[instead] of performing their version alone, Las Yeguas dance *la cueca* in proximity but not in the usual gendered pairing” (169; original italics). I agree with these interpretations of the performance because there are many ways that Las Yeguas subvert the heteronormativity “that codes the dance” such as starting the performance on the bench side-by-side; walking onto the map arm-in-arm; finishing in close

proximity, such as with Lemebel kneeling in front of his “compañero de cueca” + “cueca dance partner”, as Brescia (1989) remarks; and exiting together.

I also propose that Las Yeguas “queer the normative symbolic structure” of conquest—of men over women, of el huaso over la china, of criollo settlers over Indigenous land, of American(-Canadian) imperialism over Central and South America. Las Yeguas show Chile and Central and South America’s bloody past and “denounce the massacres executed by the various dictatorships of the Southern Cone in their respective territories, alluding especially to the situation of Chile under military dictatorship” (“Yeguas del Apocalipsis” 2018, n.p.). By queering the normative symbolic structure of the dance form, cueca dance remains connected to “Chile’s most glorious deeds” (Decree 23 1979; see Appendix A: Decree 23 for the full decree); however, those “glorious deeds”, I would argue, are re-framed as violent rather than celebratory.

Las Yeguas further queer cueca dance by turning the dance form simultaneously into an act of violence and remembrance. Silva contemplates his experience during the performance and states, “Pensé en los muertos y caídos, en mucha sangre sobre América” + “I was thinking about the dead and fallen, in the quantity of blood covering America” (Brescia 1989, 27). Adding to Silva’s comment, Lemebel mentions “el sentido morboso que sentía dominando la situación durante un segundo de máxima tensión” + “the morbid sense he felt dominating the situation during a second of maximum tension” (Brescia 1989, 27). Therefore, as Olivares and Gomoll (2016) note, “*La Conquista de América* resurrects the subversive symbolic order manifested by the widows in *la cueca sola*” (168; original italics). Like the widows, “Las Yeguas intervene in the military state’s appropriation of *la cueca* as a cultural form representative of Chilean nationalism” and engage cueca dance “to symbolically account for a disappeared and abject population subjected to violent erasure by the military state and the national republic” (Olivares

and Gomoll 2016, 168; original italics). By spilling and marking the map with blood, Las Yeguas index the “violent erasure” of “abject populations” that in this case focus on queer people, individuals with HIV-AIDS, the poor and Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, who are made present by the bloody traces left on the map.

Finally, Las Yeguas “queer the normative symbolic structure” of cueca dance by creating a *mise-en-scène* that adds additional elements to their performance, particularly the map, broken glass and blood. Las Yeguas situate their cueca dance in the geography of Central and South America through the boundaryless map, extending the dance form beyond Chile and the countryside of the Central Zone. More importantly, in Las Yeguas’ performance, cueca dance elements come into contact with the broken glass, which shifts their “dominant meaning” (Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 168). The zapateo offers the best example because it is used to make a statement. In many of the cueca dances I discussed above, zapateo is performed by men to showcase their masculinity and virility and to take up space. In Las Yeguas’ performance, however, Lemebel and Silva use the force of zapateo to wound their feet so that blood spills and spreads over the map. Las Yeguas subvert the stereotypical function of zapateo and re-orientate the step to showcase the pain and brutality of heteropatriarchal and settler colonial acts of violence. I argue then that Las Yeguas use zapateo to highlight the various genocides and massacres of people in South America.

Like the women of the AFDD, Las Yeguas also put their bodies on the line but in a different way. By inflicting wounds and drawing blood, Las Yeguas add an important additional element into their performance. Las Yeguas make the audience sit in silence so that they can hear the glass breaking under their bare feet, giving an aural to the creation of wounds. This sound is coupled by the sight (and likely smell) of blood, which spills onto and is tracked over the map.

Moreover, there is the insinuation of HIV-AIDS that comes with queer bodies, whether queer individuals have it or not, since blood is a medium through which the infection is transmitted. Las Yeguas wound their bodies and draw blood through self-inflicted violence. I argue that the purpose of this is to bring attention to marginalized or abject populations.

This kind of re-structuring through subversion is embedded in the collective's practices and politics. Specifically, it comes from a recognition of erasure and their fight for visibility as part of an "abject population" themselves (Olivares and Gomoll 2016, 168). This is exemplified in another work focussed on transvestism, a queer practice that was foundational to many of Las Yeguas' interventions (Carvajal 2023).<sup>25</sup> In this work directed at transvestism, a series of photographs of transvestites was exhibited in open air, under a bridge, so that they could deteriorate over time. The decomposition of the photographs was meant to serve as a visual reminder of how homosexuals—alongside prostitutes, drug addicts, the poor and Indigenous people—are reduced to "criminals", "disease" and "waste" (Pedro Mardones Lemebel qtd in Brescia 1989, 27). Similarly, *La Conquista de America* reminds that those most affected by Spanish conquest and American-Canadian imperialism have been these same communities: those who are framed as "criminals", "disease" and "waste"; those whose lives are not "grievable" (Butler 2009).

Lemebel and Silva perform as yeguas, not huasos or rotos—those sexually (re)productive men who serve as the protagonists in many of the cueca dances discussed above. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, "yegua" means "mare" and is "a pejorative term for homosexuals in Chile, its feminization invoking the rhetoric of failed masculinity [and, I would argue, non-productive sexuality], which both the military regime and many so-called progressive political

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<sup>25</sup> See Fernanda Carvajal's (2023) *La convulsión coliza* for a complete history and analysis of Las Yeguas' works and the importance of transvestism in their interventions.

factions associate with a deviant and dangerous subjectivity” (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 37-38). By performing as yeguas, their cueca dance evokes what Latin American literature scholar Carl Fischer (2016) calls a “queer refusal to embrace normative, reproductive heterosexuality” (6). This “queer refusal” threatens institutions “such as the mercantile patriarchy, the military, the church, and political groups” all of which “enact and enforce oppressive laws” (Fischer 2016, 6). As yeguas, then, Lemebel and Silva are an afront to a heteropatriarchal Chilean nation-state.

Discussing how sexually exceptional (men) protagonists are vital for “Chilean exceptionalism”, Fischer (2016) states, “Participation in the practice of reproductive sexuality is almost always the principal factor through which the heterosexual masculinity required to be the protagonist of Chilean exceptionalism is represented and categorized in the country’s official discourse [...]. Such subjects are constructed as ‘sexually exceptional’—that is, particularly able to embody official political and economic aims, thanks to their embrace of heteronormative masculinity” (6). Lemebel and Silva do not re-present a “sexually exceptional” subject, a quality that is embodied in the characters of el huaso and, to some extent, el roto. As such, the vigour with which Las Yeguas perform is not the “gallant and unyielding” (Sotoconil 2009, 55) virility of el huaso nor the cheekiness and fierceness of the sexually liberated (albeit racialized and classed) roto. Las Yeguas’ vigour showcases the violent erasures of “abject populations” (Gomoll and Olivares 2012, 168) by “the mercantile patriarchy, the military, the church, and political groups” (Fischer 2016, 6) as well as the survivance of the subaltern.

By performing as yeguas, Lemebel and Silva refuse to stay invisible (read: disappeared) , which simultaneously makes them dangerous and puts them in danger. As Fischer (2016) states, “Subjects that threaten the country’s official discourse of exceptionalism are marginalized or even marked for death” (7). Gomoll and Olivares (2012) further explain that in Chile

homosexuals “experienced a *double-disappearance*” during the dictatorship: “they were marginalized and erased even from the official registers of disappearance” (43). This is because, as Fischer (2016) demonstrates, homosexuals threaten the reproductive logics of the militaristic, Catholic Chilean nation-state. Moreover, I propose that Silva and Lemebel’s queer bodies are antithetical to a Chilean construction of heteropatriarchal masculinity and settler colonial chauvinism even if, as Fischer (2016) acknowledges, queer bodies are necessary because “national and sexual exceptionalism depend on an implied ‘other’ to sustain themselves” (11).

In *La Conquista de América*, Las Yeguas thwart a Chilean heterosexual exceptionalism by also refusing to “embrace heteronormative masculinity”, as I discussed above, and to “embody official political and economic aims” (Fischer 2016, 6). The performance goes athwart Chile’s neoliberal orientation by revealing the disastrous effects of such “political and economic aims”. Las Yeguas’ queer(ed) cueca dance also reminds who is being negatively affected by this economic shift—the poor, Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, queer people, individuals with HIV-AIDS and land. By making themselves visible in *La Conquista de América*, Silva and Lemebel become queer dissidents that threaten the neoliberal, militaristic Chilean nation-state’s “official political and economic aims”.

Las Yeguas’ cueca dance, therefore, opposes the Chilean dictatorship’s national narratives of unity as well as the narratives of progress and development that are foundational—for the domination and assimilation of subaltern populations—to colonial, capitalist and extractivist logics. Las Yeguas’ performance re-presents the bloodshed that has resulted from the repetitive conquest of South/Latin America and the geography’s neo-colonialism through neoliberalism and American-Canadian imperialism since both the US and Canada (as well as other countries) backed, funded and invested in dictatorships in Latin America, generally, and

Chile, specifically (“Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis” 2018, n.p.; Simalchik 2023). It is well known that the military coup was funded by the CIA; and that Canada “propped up the dictatorship economically” by investing in copper mining through Noranda Inc. (Simalchik 2023, 134). These investments served the interests of capitalists and have left devastation in their wake, as signified by the blood that spills and spreads on the map in Las Yeguas’ queer(ed) cueca dance. By re-working cueca dance elements and bringing them into contact with additional props and substances, Las Yeguas re-orientate a codified cueca choreography to present a story about violence to bodies and land.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined five cueca dances to illustrate how cueca dance is flexible form. I first described a codified cueca choreography to outline the eight sections that typically make up a cueca choreography as well as the eight cueca dance elements that usually appear in cueca dance performances. The eight sections in a cueca choreography constitute: 1) invitation; 2) el paseo + the promenade; 3) palmas + syncopated clapping; 4) el giro inicial + the initial circle or turn; 5) las media lunas + the halfmoons; 6) la figura de “8” + the figure “8”; 7) el espiral + the spiral; and 8) exit. The eight cueca dance elements that serve as the building blocks of cueca dance performances are: 1) curvilinear paths; 2) dance steps; 3) postures; 4) distance and proximity; 5) pañuelo + handkerchief movements and holds; 6) clapping; 7) gaze; and 8) rhythm. I also discussed that this codified cueca choreography is a rigid version of la cueca campesina-huasa and that it has inadvertently or not come to stand in for “the” cueca dance.

I then demonstrated that cueca dances can be performed in a number of ways by comparing and contrasting the codified cueca choreography to five cueca dances: 1) the

competitive cueca campesina-huasa; 2) the social cueca campesina-huasa; 3) la cueca chora-brava; 4) la cueca sola; and 5) a queer(ed) cueca dance. I revealed that the codified cueca choreography is strictly maintained in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa because this cueca dance variation is the result of the nationalization and the subsequent codification of la cueca campesina-huasa. Nevertheless, I also showed that some cueca choreographies maintain the sequence of the eight sections, while in other cueca dance performances the sections are rearranged, removed and/or combined. The maintenance or transfiguration of the eight sections coincides with the stories that are enacted through cueca dance. Whereas the competitive cueca campesina-huasa presents a straightforward story about the conquest of el huaso-as-rooster over la china-as-hen, the other cueca dances enact stories in alternative ways, as seen in the social cueca campesina-huasa, as well as stories about sub-altern populations, such as la cueca chora-brava, la cueca sola and Las Yeguas' queer(ed) cueca dance. This suggests that cueca dance is a malleable form that need not stick to a rigid structure and that can be used to present a myriad of stories.

Moreover, I illustrated that cueca dance performers articulate cueca dance elements in a multitude of ways and that these articulations intersect with gender, race, class and sexuality. A particular cueca dance element, then, can be performed in a range of ways, generally; however, this range shrinks depending on whether it is a man- or a woman-presenting dancer performing the elements, which character they are embodying and which cueca dance is being presented. The gender of the dancer played the most prominent role in dictating the movement quality of cueca dance elements. As I discussed, the competitive cueca campesina-huasa presents el huaso and la china as inversions and, thus, propagates a gender dichotomy. This dichotomy, however, is challenged in the social cueca campesina-huasa where the quality of movement between el

huaso and la china, as well as some movement vocabulary, overlap. El roto and la dama also have repertoires that overlap, yet they perform movement in stereotypically masculine and feminine ways. Although el roto and la dama are not inversions of each other, these characters still maintain a gender binary.

Class and race mainly manifested through the characters the dancers embodied since these characters are vestiges of the Spanish Caste system. As I mentioned in this and the previous chapter, el huaso is associated with a criollo (agrarian) identity; and his history positions him as socioeconomically ambiguous, neither peasant nor landowner (Wolf 2019). Although la china is also a character from the countryside, her name suggests that she is an Indigenous woman; moreover, she is recognized as being the landowner's maid or servant (Wolf 2019). El roto and la dama, on the other hand, are historically understood to be working-class, mestizo/a, urban individuals. This class-racial dimension at times manifested through postures; particularly through upright postures, which tend to be associated with upper-class etiquette, and bent body attitudes, which are usually connected to lower-class comportment.

Sexuality appeared in the cueca dances either explicitly or implicitly. La cueca chora-brava, which is about sexual liberation and which centres consent, most explicitly engaged with sexuality: the dancers pushed the boundaries of proximity to feel each others' inclinations and sometimes even touched each other. The dancers in the social cueca campesina-huasa also played with proximity and touch, suggesting that sexuality was also present in this cueca dance variation. Conversely, sexuality was muted in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa as well as in la cueca sola. In the prior, the dancers always maintained some distance and never touched one another, except for during the paseo, at the end of el espiral and the exit. Yet, the heteronormative partnering is an implicit recognition of a heterosexual relationship. In la cueca

sola, a heterosexual relationship manifests through the absence of the man partner. In this cueca dance, la viuda conjures her disappeared partner to signal the destruction of the heteronormative family unit. The only cueca dance that does not forward a heterosexual relationship is the queer(ed) cueca dance by Las Yeguas. While not explicitly sexual, two yeguas + mares/fags dancing in queer proximity evokes homosexual relationships.

These diverse and at times divergent performances not only showcase cueca dance's flexibility but the dance form's potential for presenting a variety of stories in a number of ways. In some performances, the dancers are bound to maintain and reiterate societal conventions and social constructs embedded in the cueca dances. However, in other performances, dancers find alternative ways of moving and/or relating that add to what cueca dance can do. I was particularly inspired by la cueca sola, which used a few cueca dance elements to elicit grief, melancholy, anger and justice. I was also inspired by Las Yeguas' queer(ed) cueca dance, which added additional elements to their performance for a similar purpose. In both instances, the performers "re-orientated" (Ahmed 2006) cueca dance elements to remember otherwise stories.

Viewing a variety of cueca dance performances was important for fostering an expansive memory of cueca dance. Attending to cueca dance elements was important for cultivating a memory of cueca dance; however, the different cueca dances and the various ways that they were performed provided me with nuance. Moreover, it was important to attend to how cueca dance elements were informed by the cueca dance's stories, histories and ideologies, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Although I encountered cueca dance performances prior to cueca (dance) literature, as I explain in the next chapter, the latter contextualized how steps, postures, gestures and movements in cueca choreographies reiterate certain ways of relating based on stories,

histories and ideologies. Because context and performances co-constitute each other, both were necessary for cultivating an expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance.

I engaged with this expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance to teach and choreograph with cueca dance elements, the topic of Chapter 6. Viewing a variety of cueca dance performances illustrated to me cueca dance's multiplicity and provided me with a range of movements to work with. I brought this memory of cueca dance into these processes to remember or piece together anew cueca dance. Although I mainly imparted cueca dance elements to students and dancers, understanding how these elements were connected to a history of cueca dance, cueca dance stories and the ideologies embedded in both was important. This larger web of memory guided how I imparted elements so as to not reiterate and reinforce harmful or violent ways of relating.

In the next chapter, I outline how I cultivated a memory of cueca dance over the course of a year. As I reveal, I began with sensorial encounters with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and by vocalizing rhythms. This starting point influenced how I engaged with cueca dance videos and embodied movement, which I encountered in the second phase, as I explain. By starting with sensoriality instead of steps, I was able to foster a method for encountering cueca dance that was about sensing the form more so than replicating movement. Significantly, this method allowed me to attend to what stuck in my memory about the performances and reflect on why this was the case. This slow, mindful process encouraged an expansive memory of cueca dance.

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the research-creation methodology that I engaged to investigate and illustrate how dance is a mnemonic practice: a practice that commits to memory and re-members ways of relating through ways of moving. Research-creation allowed me to use practice-based research methods to learn (about) cueca dance: a process that simultaneously involved learning to dance cueca as well as learning about the histories and stories connected to the dance form. What emerged was a slow, sensorial research-creation methodology that involved numerous artistic activities and media to learn (about) cueca dance and to attend to how learning (about) cueca dance cultivated a memory of the form or a cueca mnemonics, which is the focus of this dissertation. Through this methodology I was able to engage a critical memory practice that paid attention to the cueca dance mnemonics that I was fostering about cueca dance while learning (about) cueca dance. Moreover, this critical memory practice allowed me interrogate the ideologies embedded in and embodied through cueca dance such as heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ways of relating through ways of moving, which I discussed in depth in Chapters 3 and 4. By learning (about) cueca dance, I was not only committing dance steps, postures, trajectories and movement phrases to memory, I was also committing to memory the ideologies that have come to inform those movements.

Cueca dance was an ideal case study for this research because it is a complex dance form with many versions and variations, as I discussed in the Introduction. Again, I used the term “version” to refer to cueca dances that are different from each other because they emerge from

specific historical moments and/or communities; “variation” speaks to cueca dances that I have grouped together based on family resemblances in terms of movement and the ideologies they forward. Cueca dance’s complexity means that it contains numerous memory systems since each cueca dance version and variation is connected to a community or a part of Chilean society. Yet, interestingly, all of these cueca dances shared similar elements, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, which permitted a general cueca dance mnemonics to emerge. Moreover, in a study about the entanglement of movement and memory, I needed a dance form that I had not yet encountered or that I had minimal recollection of. Even though I was born in Chile and moved to Canada when I was eight years old, I had no memory of cueca dance, aside from what I had heard from family members. My minimal knowledge (and memory) of cueca dance was important for being able to attend, through a critical memory practice, to how the dance form would shape my memory.

Additionally, cueca dance was an ideal dance form to investigate on my own through a research-creation methodology: unlike most partner dances, cueca dance is not dependent on touch. For most of the two-minute dance, the dancers play with distance and proximity as they perform their steps, turns and circular trajectories, which I detailed in Chapter 4. Because there is no touch-based partner work in cueca dance, it was possible for me to learn it on my own.

Learning cueca dance on my own was also important for this research because it permitted me to attend to the memory of cueca dance that I was cultivating. What emerged from this methodology was an expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance. This complex memory of cueca dance was informed by how I encountered cueca dance through the research process, which I outline below, and the cueca dance elements that I saw over and over again in the cueca dance YouTube videos I watched and that I read in the cueca literatures. As I will illustrate in Chapter 6, my initial encounters with working with cueca dance elements prioritized sensoriality

because I had become most accustomed to working with cueca dance in this way. However, the more I worked with cueca dance elements to re-member or piece together anew cueca dance, the more I was able to draw additional elements from memory. If I had learned cueca dance in community, which I was originally going to do before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I would have fostered a different memory of cueca dance. For example, I would have acquired a collective or community memory of cueca dance as well as a memory of cueca dance based on my instructor's priorities. The approach that I took in this project allowed me to begin from within and extend outward, something that would have been more challenging to do in a community context when an instructor is dictating the training.

In the first section, "Moving away from Mastering Cueca Dance: Negotiating Inclinations and Instructions", I frame my approach for learning about cueca dance through a slow, sensorial multi-modal methodology. As I recount, early on my research I chose to move away from mastering cueca dance. This pivoting opened me up and encouraged me to think up other ways of learning about the dance form that did not rely solely on the perfect replication of steps. Specifically, I move towards sensorial encounters with the dance form. These sensorial encounters helped me attend to my inclinations, the ways that I wanted to move, and instructions, the ways that I was being encouraged to move, provided in cueca dance YouTube videos, cueca music and cueca (dance) literature. Throughout the process of learning (about) cueca dance my inclinations were sometimes at odds with the instructions. These dissonances stuck in my memory and helped me cultivate an expansive memory of cueca dance.

In the following section, "My Daily Practice of Dancing, Drawing and Writing: Fieldsite and Methodology", I outline my multi-media daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing since this practice served as both the fieldsite and the specific research-creation methodology to

learn (about) cueca dance. First, I provide a brief overview of my daily practice to explain how the process of working with the different media unfolds on a daily basis. Then, I describe in detail how I engage with each of the three media to give a sense of how this daily practice served as a fieldsite or space to learn (about) cueca dance. Finally, I discuss how I cultivated what I call intuitive dancing—sensing how my body wants to move by attuning to and, at times, “re-orientating” (Ahmed 2006) my impulses and inclinations—through the dance portion of my daily practice. I spend some time fleshing out intuitive dancing because it was one of the methods that I used to learn (about) cueca dance. This section is foundational to understanding how my investigation into dance as mnemonic practice is a research-creation project as well as how my daily practice served as a fieldsite for the other methods that I used to learn (about) cueca dance.

In “Methods for Learning (about) Cueca Dance in a Year: Sensing, Watching, Listening, Reading”, the final section, I describe the four main methods that I used to learn (about) cueca dance in a year: 1) sensorial prompts and experiments with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and cueca rhythms; 2) watching cueca dance YouTube videos; 3) listening to cueca music; and 4) reading cueca literature. I begin by discussing my initial encounters with cueca dance in 2020, which served as a preliminary research phase. During this time, my colleague, mentor and dance artist Jennifer Dick guided me through sensorial encounters with pañuelos and vocalizing rhythms over Zoom, which influenced how I approached my research phase from December 21, 2021, to December 20, 2022. Then, I provide a brief overview of my year of research and explain how my research was split into four phases. As I reveal, at the beginning of each phase, I brought a new method—sensing, watching, listening and reading, respectively—into my research on cueca dance. Most of the section is spent describing each method in depth and discussing how this scaffolded methodology allowed me to bring each method into subsequent phases as well as to

fold the methods or combine them at a gentle pace to facilitate the emergence of cueca sensibilities. Folding the methods allowed me to hold space for possibilities.

## 5.2 Moving Away from Mastering Cueca Dance: Negotiating Inclinations and Instructions

In this section, I reveal that early on in my research I made the choice to move away from mastering cueca dance. Moving away from mastery allowed me to move towards other kinds of sensorial encounters with the dance form. These sensorial encounters shaped how I learned (about) cueca dance through YouTube videos, cueca music and literature on cueca (dance), which I discuss in detail below. These encounters forced me to be aware of and negotiate my inclinations—the ways that I wanted to move—and instructions provided through each modality—how I was being encouraged to move and to relate to a partner, which I elaborate on in Chapter 4. Negotiating inclinations and instructions stuck in my memory and by attending to them I cultivated an expansive memory of cueca dance.

Early on in my research, I chose to move away from mastering cueca dance. I chose to move away from “getting it right”, an intention that inadvertently sought to conquer and capture cueca dance. I moved away from mastery by focussing on curiosity and experimentation, finding my own ways of moving and thinking critically about the cueca dance movements I was taking into my body. This choice was important because I did not want to colonize myself or cueca dance; and it allowed me to cultivate an expansive memory of the dance form. This process of taking in cueca dances without embodying the ideologies was a negotiation: I was negotiating moving in ways that I preferred and committing movement to memory, inclinations and instructions. Therefore, how I wanted to perform was sometimes at odds with how the cueca dance videos on YouTube were showing and encouraged me to perform: as a man-presenting

person, for example, I was meant to embody el huaso, el roto or some other man character. This process showed me that learning a dance form can extend the sense and simultaneously restrict them because it is challenging to not get caught up in (personal and dance-related) structures. Nevertheless, even though I moved away from mastery, I was still able to learn to dance cueca demonstrating that a slow and sensorial engagement with dance is possible and generative.

In *Unthinking Mastery*, postcolonial scholar Julietta Singh (2018) states that “there is an intimate link between the mastery enacted through colonization and other forms of mastery that we often believe today to be harmless, worthwhile, even virtuous” (9). In my initial session with Jennifer Dick, which I discuss below, I entered the sensorial encounter with cueca dance with the expectation of being able to “get it right”: an expectation grounded in my ingrained perfectionism, which was fostered during my upbringing and schooling and exacerbated by my ballet training. In ballet, like in many dance forms, “getting it right” is seen as a “harmless, worthwhile, even virtuous” endeavour (9). In this initial encounter with cueca dance, however, I was unable to “get it right”.

The visceral feeling of failure—and the disappointment that followed—at not being able to “get it right” points to how I was getting caught up in and propagating “relations founded on and through domination” (Singh 2018, 6-7). This is because to “get it right”, for me, meant to “seize” and “possess” cueca dance both “correctly” and “right away”. Put differently, the expectation to “get it right” signalled an intention to capture and conquer cueca dance successfully and immediately. This is why I felt *not* “getting it right” as a failure, and a double failure at that. I was disappointed both in myself as a dancer as well as in my body’s inability to remember something that I could not remember if I ever knew.

This perceived “failure”, however, shifted my process and expectations. Singh (2018) reminds that “in failure—and critically, in recognizing, reading, and becoming vulnerable to failure—we participate in new emergences, new possibilities for nonmasterful relations” (174-175). For instance, the perceived failure allowed me to reflect and remember that I did not want to and that I did not have to “get” cueca dance. My purpose of re-encountering cueca dance was not about mastering or becoming a master at cueca dance. (I will leave that to the cueca dance competitors and the cuequeros + cueca dancers.) My interests were in learning about cueca dance through a sensorial methodology to see/sense if I could cultivate a memory of cueca dance by engaging the dance form every day.

This pivoting opened me up to experience cueca dance in a different way, not as something to be mastered but as something to lean into and learn about. By moving away from mastery and pre-conceived notions of success I was able to move towards curiosity, play and sensing, which lead to other insights. Feminist post-colonial scholar Sara Ahmed (2006) acknowledges that “[the] unreachability of some things can be affective; it can even put other worlds within reach” (153). Adding to Ahmed (2006), Singh asserts, “In failing to master, in confronting our own desires for mastery where we least expect or recognize these desires, we become vulnerable to other possibilities for living, for being together in common, for *feeling* injustice and refusing it without the need to engage it through forms of conquest” (21; original italics). I propose that this is because mastery has the potential to kill or at least inhibit the amateur, the lover (Loveless 2020), who is driven by curiosity, play, fun and a love for the thing they are doing.

“Mastery” and “self-mastery” deny “other possibilities for living” because they reduce not augment. Singh (2018) recognizes these goals as impossible tasks since “ ‘coherent’

narratives of self and mastery are always based on far more fragile materialities and psychic displacements than their narratives enable” (27). Here, Singh (2018) is suggesting that pursuit of an ideal is tied with material and mental health consequences because an ideal is an illusion, it is always out of reach. This is why I opted for the rigour of “a consistent process” by staying with the inquiry (Manning 2020)—rather than practice makes perfect, I was interested in practice makes practiced. Continuing down the road of “mastery” and “self-mastery” would have had deleterious consequences.

If I had stuck to “getting it right” I might have attained that goal, but it would have had other consequences because my “getting it right” was based on an ideal, an illusion, of perfection. I would not have come to the same insights if I had continued down that path. Rather, I would have been left feeling dejected and probably abandoned encountering cueca dance entirely. But in turning away (from “getting it right”) and grounding myself in repetition, experimentation and sensing I was able to release myself from these ideals and expectations. This kind of letting go also came with clarity about why I was doing this practice and why I wanted to learn about cueca dance. It also reminded me of what it is that dance can do, which is to foster sensibilities and otherwise ways of knowing.

Singh (2018) reminds, “In its oldest meanings, a master is someone who had bested an opponent or competitor, or someone who had achieved a level of competence at a particular skill to become a teacher of it” (9). Here, Singh (2018) connects mastery to “a level of competence”, a competency that is adjudicated by peers who too are “skilled” and “competent”. The connection between mastery and disability or rather the distancing of mastery from disability becomes apparent through ideas of “competency” which is synonymous with “capacity” and “capability”. These ideals are perhaps exacerbated in dance or in dance practices.

If I had continued down the path to “getting it right” I would have engaged in a recolonization of my body by upholding the narrative of mastery that replicates a master-slave relationship. At the very least, I would have engaged in a debilitation of my body since “[the master] must debilitate in order to be master” (Singh 2018, 10). As Singh (2018) points out, “Mastery [...] turns inward to become a form of self-maiming, one that involves the denial of the master’s own dependency on other bodies” (10). In most dance genres and especially in forms that require exaggerated ways of moving the body such as ballet, self-maiming and self-debilitation can become a part of the practice.

Additionally, when learning a dance form the master-slave relationship collapses because for the dancer who is trying to master, perfect or even become competent in a dance form the “dependency on other bodies” becomes a dependency on one’s own body. That is, dance as a “bodily practice” (Connerton 1989) is made tangible through the body; therefore, it is the body as instrument and medium that is shaped by what Sally Ann Ness (2008) calls the “inscription of gesture”: a literal “inward embodiment of movement terms” that are “ ‘inscribed’ into a dancer’s body once the body’s connective tissues themselves bear the evidence of that practice” (11-12). Thus, the pursuit of mastering a dance practice such as cueca dance is simultaneously a mastery of the form and the body: to master a dance form is to (become) master (of) your body, which is a kind of enslavement and colonization. I was not interested in that.

This bodily mastery can lead to a transformation of the body, at best, and debilitation, at worst. As Singh (2018) states, “[New] materialisms name mastery as a deleterious aim” (20). The consequences of this in dance are felt in the body. As Ness (2008) acknowledges, “In the mastery of the technique, dancers learn to ‘come to terms’ within their bodies so as to perform the form’s action vocabulary articulately and consistently” (11). Ness (2008) insinuates that in

many forms the mastery of the dance requires that a dancer be able to master the terms of the genre by moving in those specific ways: it is a mastery of the dance language through the body so that the movement is replicable. In order to be able to perform “articulately and consistently” (Ness 2008, 11) a dancer might even have to give up other ways of moving. Rather than “masterful consumption” (Singh 2018, 12), I released myself from having to dominate cueca dance and opted for a different experience with the form, different ways of encountering cueca dance with and through my body. This pivoting fostered “other possibilities for living” (Singh 2018, 21), other relationships with my body and to other objects/subjects, that (slowly) still lead to an articulation of cueca dance.

Although I encountered cueca dance on my own, the research process took up a method that is found in social dance practices: continuously observing people dancing and attempting the form in a social setting. While I did not have a physical community or group with which to learn cueca, I found that my “community” became the myriad modalities with which I engaged cueca dance: playing with the pañuelos and the rhythms, watching YouTube videos, listening to cueca music and reading texts. These modalities offered guidance in my embodiment of the dance that had material effects. By attending to my process of learning (about) cueca dance, to what stuck in memory, I was able to listen with my body and negotiate leaning into inclinations and extending beyond the instructions that these modalities carried.

Once my interest in “getting it right” dissolved, I was less concerned about perfect replication and became more invested in playful repetition. Singh (2018) proposes, “To survive mastery, we must begin to deconstruct our own movements (intellectual, activist, corporeal) that remain entangled with the violent erasures of other lives, and of things we declare insensate”

(173-174).<sup>1</sup> Playful repetition, which could be likened to Singh's (2018) "practice of vulnerable engagement", allowed me to "deconstruct my own movements". I became critical about the ways of relating through movement that I was watching and that were sticking to my memory. By intervening in an organic process, through a critical memory practice, I was able to cultivate an expansive memory of cueca dance.

### 5.3 My Daily Practice of Dancing, Drawing and Writing: Fieldsite and Methodology

In this section, I discuss my multi-media daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing, which served as both the fieldsite and the research-creation methodology to learn (about) cueca dance. I begin by offering a brief overview of my daily practice and how the process unfolds. Then, I describe how I engage with each of the three media.<sup>2</sup> Finally, I explain how I cultivated "intuitive dancing"—sensing how my body wants to move by attuning to and, at times, "re-orientating" (Ahmed 2006) my impulses and inclinations—through the dance portion of my daily practice. Intuitive dancing was one of the methods that I used to learn (about) cueca dance. This section, therefore, is foundational to understanding how my investigation into dance as mnemonic practice is a research-creation project as well as how my daily practice served as a

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<sup>1</sup> Through the research process, I came to recognize the pañuelos and rhythms as participants and even partners in cueca dance. They had a life of their own and showed me ways that they wanted to move. Cleo, my calico cat, was also my partner throughout the process. She too had personal intentions and would involve herself in ways that felt right for her. Most of the time, she would sit in the middle of the imaginary circle, sometimes on the ruffled pañuelo that I designated as hers, watching me and, in her way, partnering me or at least participating. A theorization of non-human partners/participants in cueca dance is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For a dissertation that investigates the kinesthetic exchanges between human and non-human bodies, particularly animals, see Jonathan Osborn's (2019) "Between Species: Choreographing Human and Nonhuman Bodies".

<sup>2</sup> Although I discuss mainly the three media—dancing, drawing and writing—my multi-media practice does not emerge in isolation from my lived experience. It is always in relation to the world around me. Therefore, music, silence, a camera (sometimes), space, time, my cat/s, mood, imagination, memory, perceptions, worries, ideas, dance techniques/vocabularies, my spasms, schoolwork and research have all entered into my daily practice in constellations over the years.

fieldsite for the various methods that I used to learn (about) cueca dance, which I discuss further in the following section.

I began my daily practice on June 21, 2017.<sup>3</sup> It was originally meant to be a year-long commitment, but as the year came to a close, I decided to continue the practice, and it is still ongoing. However, how I engage with the daily practice and the media has changed over the years. For example, for a long time the process would unfold in the same way, going from dancing to drawing to writing. This is the process that I engaged during my research. More recently, I have experimented with different arrangements, but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, in total, my daily practice takes anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour. This long (time- and year-wise), iterative process has allowed me to delve deeply into each medium and to foster a creative and critical process and space into which I can bring questions, ideas, memories, imaginings and more. As I discuss below, this durational, repetitive process has also allowed me to foster a movement intuition that has helped me interrogate the ways of moving and ways of relating that are performed through dance.

### 5.3.1 Dancing

In this sub-section, I describe how the dance portion of my daily practice unfolds. I begin my daily practice with dancing (see Figure 5.10). First, I clear a space.<sup>4</sup> After the space is cleared, I sometimes set up a camera to record the movement. The camera was important for me during the first year of this practice because I wanted a visual record. However, once that year was done, I

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<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Natasha Myers for suggesting that I try this out after sharing with me the year-long “adanceaday” project.

<sup>4</sup> When I began my daily practice, I would dance in a small corner of my bedroom. At some point during the first year that space became too small, which is when I began to dance in my living room. However, over the course of this practice, my living room has also begun to feel small.

began to release myself from using the camera and needing a record of my dancing. This was liberating and allowed for other ways of moving to emerge.

Next, I decide on the soundscape for my movement. Sometimes I dance to instrumental or ambient music or sound scores. Sometimes I dance in silence (which is never soundless) or to the sounds of the city. If I am using a camera, I press record once I have decided on the soundscape. Oftentimes, I press record and then begin the music. Then, I enter the space.

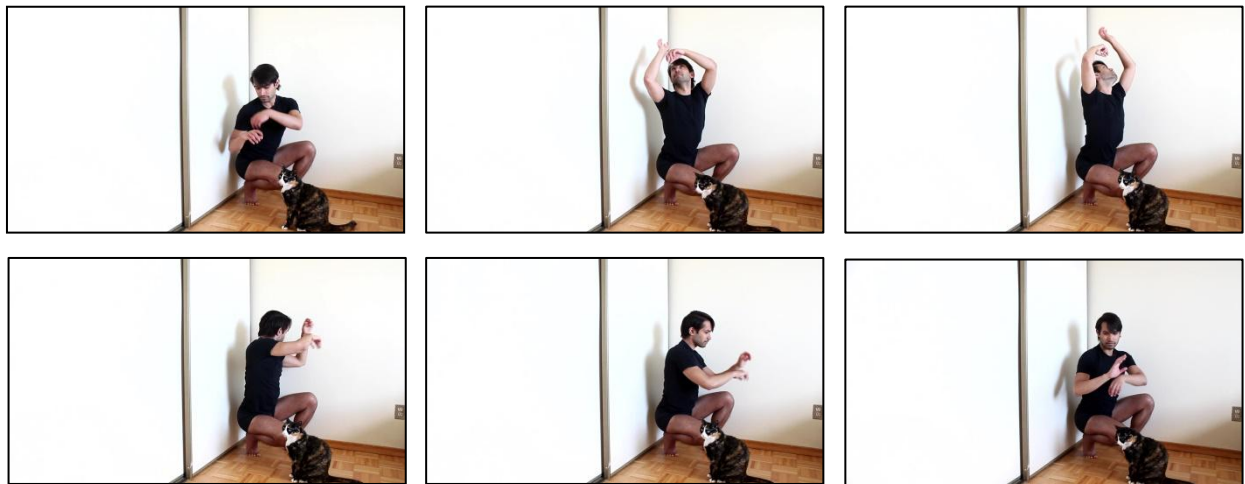


Figure 5.10: Dance stills from June 21, 2017 – Day 1 (the first day of my daily practice)

Over time, entering the space has become part of the “performance” but when I first began it was not. I would walk into the space, take a few breaths and sense the movement arising from within. I would wait and let my desire to move move me. Over time I have become more impulsive. I force myself to switch into “performance mode” at the press of the record button (if I am using a camera) or once I step into the space, allowing what follows to dictate the dance, engaging with whatever arises. Over the years, pleasure, curiosity and play have had significant roles in how the dance unfolds. Once the dance portion of my practice is done, I put the camera

away (if I am engaging this technology), go to the table and bring out my drawing journal and pencil crayons.

### 5.3.2 Drawing

In this sub-section, I offer a brief overview of the drawing portion of my daily practice and relate how I engage with colours. Drawing is the next medium that I engage in this daily practice. Even though drawing comes after the dancing, the drawings, doodles and/or marks that I create are neither records nor representations of the dances (see Figure 5.11 below). Rather, they are after-effects, the tinglings and inclinations left in my body after I finish dancing. Sometimes there is a connection between the drawings and the dancing. Sometimes there is dissonance.

Drawing is not in isolation from the dancing, but it is a practice in and of itself. First, I sense with which colour or colours I want to draw. Then, I experiment with ways of drawing—scribbles, shadings, scratches and more—to intuitively allow the pencil crayons to create on the page. I feel through memories when I draw, similarly to when I dance, but also differently because other things manifest. While I can “kinesthetically attune” (Myers 2017) to myself dancing through space, I cannot see what I am doing. With drawing, that is not the case: as I sense through the moment, I can see the page becoming more and more marked as the drawing emerges. Again, there are both connections and dissonances between drawing and the dancing.

The addition of colour further complicates the relationship between the movement and drawing aspects of this practice. Because I draw with pencil crayons, some colours have begun to take on significance. For instance, at some point over the years I began to associate a deep yellow or a yellow-ish brown that is almost gold-ish in colour with myself. My favourite colour is gold, so this makes sense. However, what is interesting about this is that this means that on

certain days, after dancing, I have felt that the movement relates deeply to me because I have felt compelled to draw in that hue. Along a similar vein, other colours have also taken on specific connections throughout the years.

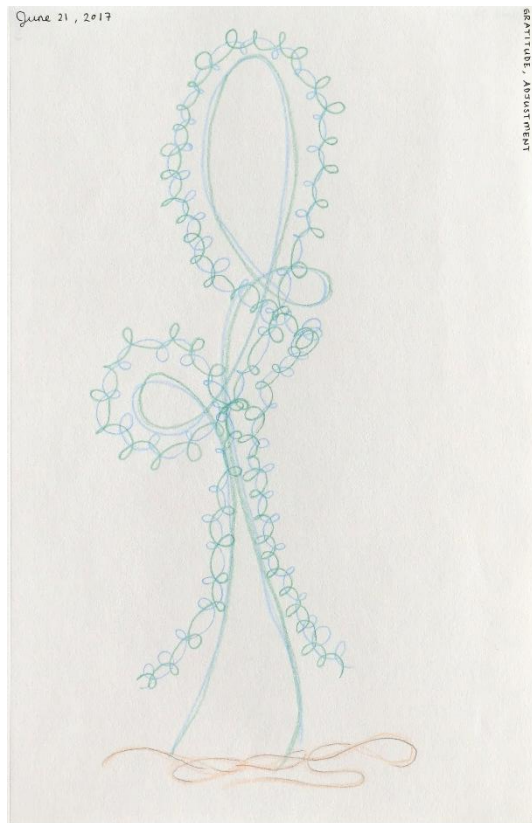


Figure 5.11: Drawing from June 21, 2017 – Day 1

A similar relationship was fostered between two different reds and cueca dance because of the “red + rojo” visual art project that I was working on while doing my research. This project was inspired by a memory from my first or second week at school in Canada: my ESL teacher offered me a red wax crayon to colour an apple red and I became disoriented because this colour did not look like “rojo”, the Spanish word for red. The rojo that I had encountered in Chile was

more orangey than the Canadian red, which has a pinker undertone. Although this project was meant to be a part of this dissertation, it became a “para-site”. Natasha Myers (2020), thinking with George Marcus, describes para-sites as the “experimental sites that take shape ‘alongside’ fieldwork, feeding off of and feeding into ethnographic research and writing” (101). During my year of research, I created seventy-seven drawings in red and rojo pencil crayons and/or chalk pastels, which I put up on my living room wall. This practice created an association between red and rojo and cueca dance. Therefore, even though there are very few drawings in my sketchbook that index cueca dance during my year of research, the ones that do are in red and rojo (see Figure 5.16 below).

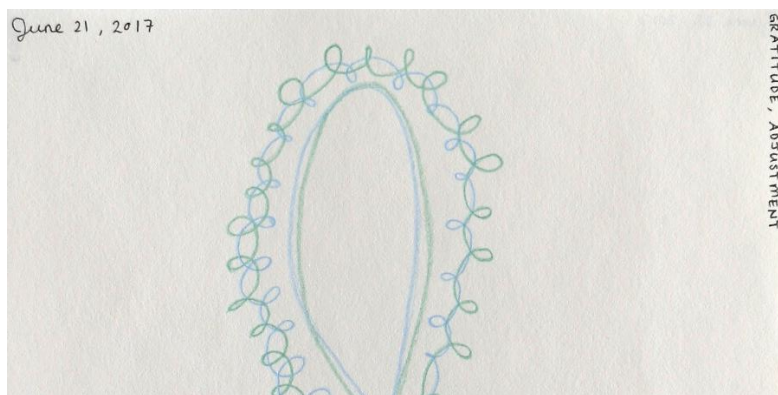
Moreover, over time I have inadvertently fostered a synesthetic connection between movement and colour or the stimulation of colour while moving. At some point during my daily practice, I began to see/sense colours while moving. The use of colours during the practice of drawing started to bleed into the dance portion of my daily practice. I would then use these synaesthetic experiences as departure points for my drawings; meaning that I would draw with the colours that I had seen/sensed during the dancing. The development of a movement-colour synesthesia is one of the ways in which dancing and drawing have informed each other.

### 5.3.3 Writing

In this sub-section, I outline the writing portion of my daily practice and how it has transformed over the years. As I explain, I first began with words, lists and short phrases. However, when I finished my first year of the daily practice, I started to write poems and short reflections. I offer examples of both.

Once I sense that the drawing is complete, I put my pencil crayons away and I turn to writing. I pull out my Pigma Micron 01 pen and get ready to write on the same page as the drawing. In this phase, I try to let writing emerge without thinking about structure or making sense, which is a challenging task. Sometimes, rarely even, I get into a flow and the words spill onto the page. When I am in a flow, fragments of stories, poems, directives, thoughts, questions, nonsense, Spanish, made up languages and more appear on the page.

In the first year of this practice, I concentrated mainly on words (see Figure 5.12 below). I tried to sense the words that wanted to be written down, which was difficult because there was often a cacophony in my head. If I was lucky, the words would emerge while dancing or drawing or after the drawing had been created. Although I wanted the words to emerge from the process as the drawings and dancing did, I would often get stuck figuring out what it was that the words “should” be. I was inclined to find words that would speak to and with the movement and/or images but then I became concerned that the words would speak *for* the other media.



GRATITUDE, ADJUSTMENT

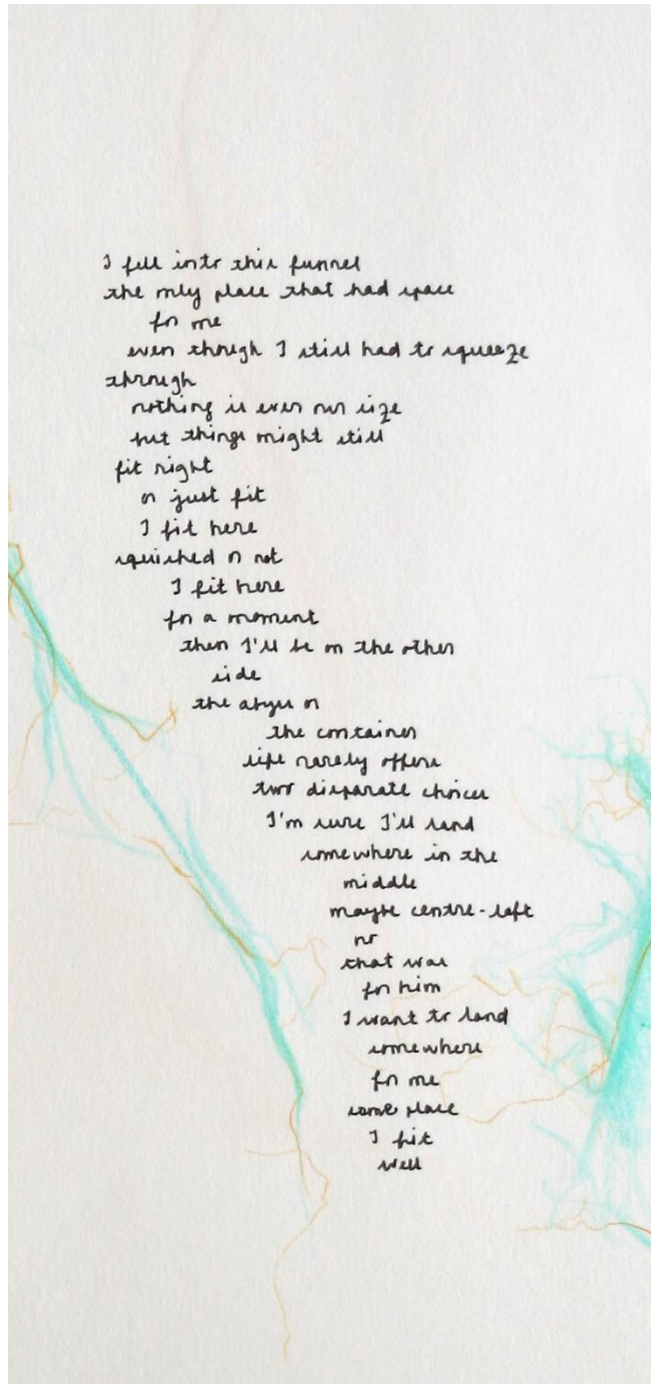
Figure 5.12: Writing from June 21, 2017 – Day 1

The words and writing were meant to be another form of expressing the moment(s) and/or movement(s), but they began to have the effect of “captioning”. Art critic and art theorist Rosalind Krauss (1977b) asserts that captioning is a practice “of bowing to the implied necessity to add a surfeit of written information to the depleted power of the [drawn] sign” (67). This was particularly true for the drawings that I created during the first year of this daily practice. During that time, I would write words, lists and, at most, short phrases along the margin of the page. Because of this, the words seem to “add a surfeit of written information” to the marks on the page and, thus, frame the marks. Once I completed the first year, however, I moved away from writing on the margins. Instead, I would write near or next to the drawing and the fragments started to take the shape of poems (see Figure 5.13 below).

Reflecting on this process now, I can admit that writing has been the most challenging activity because it has been hard for me to let go of expectations, whatever those might be. There is something about writing that is sticky even when I am in a flow. There is a specificity and focus that writing and words seem to require, which could be due to how we are conditioned by school and society to care about grammar, spelling and structure. I would often struggle to “find” the words and sometimes to find the “appropriate” words. I would get stuck. I sometimes still get stuck. The difference now, however, is that if I take a moment and breathe, I hear the words or some words and that is where I begin.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> After my first year I started to experiment with sounds too. Therefore, there are some entries in which I would just write sounds in the way that I was hearing them. This was fun, kept me engaged and perhaps even helped me foster a different relationship to language.



I fell into this funnel  
 the only place that had space  
 for me  
 even though I still had to squeeze  
 through  
 nothing is ever our size  
 but things might still  
 fit right  
 or just fit  
 I fit here  
 squished or not  
 I fit here  
 for a moment  
 then I'll be on the other  
 side  
 the abyss or  
 the container  
 life rarely offers  
 two disparate choices  
 I'm sure I'll land  
 somewhere in the  
 middle  
 maybe centre-left  
 no  
 that was  
 for him  
 I want to land  
 somewhere  
 for me  
 some place  
 I fit  
 well

Figure 5.13: Writing from June 21, 2022 – Day 1827

#### 5.3.4 Fostering “Intuitive Dancing”

In this sub-section, I define “intuitive dancing”, a sensibility and way of working with dance that I developed through my daily practice. I reveal how intuitive dancing helped me understand the effects of training, music, rhythms, ways of relating and memory on my body as well as interrogate my impulses. I also recount that iteration became important for encouraging new tendencies by experimenting with otherwise ways of moving.

One of the sensibilities that I have cultivated through this daily practice is what I call intuitive dancing: sensing how my body wants to move by attuning to and, at times, “re-orientating” (Ahmed 2006) my impulses and inclinations.<sup>6</sup> This process emerged from dancing in silence or to city sounds as well as from dancing to music, albeit in different ways, since both situations allowed me to become aware of and question my impulses. For example, when I would dance in silence or to city sounds, I noticed that the background noises did not interfere much with how I moved because these noises did not consciously provoke my body to move in particular ways. Silence allowed me to tune into my body and notice impulses: the ways my body wanted to move. By attuning to and feeling my impulses and inclinations, I was able to move away from some of the ways that I had been taught to move.

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<sup>6</sup> My “intuitive dancing” method does not stem from Authentic Movement, a dance practice developed by Mary Starks Whitehouse in the 1950s and 60s (Voris 2019, 2). Although my “intuitive dancing” shares similarities with Authentic Movement, it is not part of the genealogy because I have not been trained in this practice. In fact, because I have been trained and taken in numerous dance forms, I use the term to refer more to fostering a movement intuition that is informed by but not beholden to diverse and divergent ways of moving. Additionally, my intuitive dancing method is not based on the Creative Articulations Process (CAP), developed by Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow (2014), which draws from philosopher and psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin’s *Focusing* model as well as Authentic Movement (13). Where CAP and my intuitive dancing method intersect is in the recognition of intuition as a process that guides dance-making. Bacon and Midgelow (2014) state that CAP specifically “seeks to draw upon and retain what might be described as tacit knowledge [...] occurring through emergent, embodied and intuitive processes” (10). As such, intuition is foundational to CAP because this process alongside others guides the emergence of tacit knowledge.

Dancing to music further highlighted my impulses and inclinations because music had a strong effect on the ways that I wanted, needed or felt an impulse to move. Early on in my daily practice, I would find myself wanting to perform ballet lines and vocabulary when listening to classical music. I questioned where this inclination came from and realized that my ballet training had been deeply connected to classical music.<sup>7</sup> By paying close attention to these impulses, I slowly began to shift how I encountered and engaged classical compositions. This kind of awareness allowed me to question how I wanted to move and pushed me to move differently. By “orientating” my movement towards a different direction, I was able to foster a different set of “tendencies”, to think with Sara Ahmed (2006). Over time, this method helped me to move in ways that felt good to me without reinforcing the ways that I had become disciplined through dance training such as ballet.

In a way, I was engaging what anthropologist Natasha Myers (2017) calls “kinesthetic attunement”. In “Becoming Sensor in Sentient Worlds”, Myers (2017) uses the term “kinesthetic attunement” to describe a process of shifting the sensorium from colonial logics and disciplining by attuning to the rhythms of non-human beings such as plants as well as atmospherics, sensations, smells, noises, temporalities and more that are present in the environment. This practice stems from the “Becoming Sensor” research-creation project in Toronto’s High Park oak savannah to bring to the forefront the “*un-gridable ecology*” (Myers 2017, 118; original italics) of non-human sentient worlds. Although our projects are different, the intentions are similar in the sense that the purpose of the dance portion of my daily practice is to attune to and interrogate

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<sup>7</sup> I specifically had a hard time not using ballet vocabulary when dancing to classical music. Part of my intuitive dance method also involved detangling the music-dance “knottings” (Loveless 2020) that I had been trained to engage. This was important for me, not to disconnect music and dance, but to understand how certain types of music had become deeply connected to particular movements in my body. The point was to become conscientious of these connections so that I might move into and out of them with purpose in the future.

the ways that I want to move in a moment to cultivate an intuition for otherwise ways of moving. As such, the term “kinesthetic attunement” resonates with me because it is a “mode of inquiry” (Myers 2020, 227) that cultivates otherwise ways of knowing by “disrupting disciplinary thought [and movement] styles” (Myers 2020, 232).

Iteration became important for shifting my tendencies and for developing intuitive dancing. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the reiteration of movement shapes bodies. Both Ahmed (2006) and Sally Ann Ness (2018) demonstrate how the reiteration of movement histories and dance traditions, respectively, have phenomenological and physical effects on bodies. This became apparent to me through my daily practice, which not only highlighted how I had been shaped by the dance training(s) that I had received up until that point but also how I could learn to move differently by repeatedly moving away from that training.

After years of this iterative practice of moving away from my impulses and inclinations, I have become more capable of slipping in and out of my trained tendencies and of finding otherwise ways of moving. When I listen to music, sometimes I let it affect my movement completely. Sometimes, I try to feel the music and allow it to guide my movement in specific ways. And still other times, I move against the music by finding other trajectories to foster otherwise ways of moving. What is still challenging, however, is moving to a different rhythm or rhythmic structure than what the music holds. This is because rhythm is a force that is difficult, if not impossible, for me not to feel and move along to. What is fun in those instances is sensing alternative ways of moving within those rhythmic structures. Nevertheless, fostering intuitive dancing has made me adaptable, allowing me to go with or move away from my impulses.

Memory has also played an important part in developing intuitive dancing. By recognizing my “tendencies” (Ahmed 2006), I have been able to direct my movements along

different paths. This has allowed me to experiment with and develop different ways of moving as well as create memories for “moving otherwise” (Fortuna 2018). These experiments have been important for “directing” (Maracle 2015) memory towards the future goal of expanding how I move and to further develop my intuitive dancing.

Another way that memory has been significant in intuitive dancing is by allowing movement memories to guide me. For this, I am inspired by *Moving Memories*, a choreographic tool that dance researcher and choreographer Sashar Zarif (2017) uses; and with whom I have been training and dancing since 2019. The purpose of *Moving Memories* is to dive into your memories and arrive somewhere else. The process requires recognizing that a memory might change, flow, and move during and after engaging with it (Zarif 2017, 128). What is pertinent about this process is that working with memory/ies is a practice of the now that is also mutable. Working with memory in this way is akin to “re-membering” (Maracle 2015; Pandolfo 1997) or piecing together anew in a moment: it is a contemporary and changing practice since we never re/visit memory/ies in the same way.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, fostering intuitive dancing has also meant leaning into dance memories as well as memories of movements—gestures, postures, trajectories, etc.—that I want to try. I will elaborate on this method below when I discuss watching cueca dance YouTube videos as part of my research.

My daily iterative practice became the framework for my research on cueca dance. During my year of research I maintained my multi-media daily practice; and I used the dance portion of my daily practice as a time and space to encounter cueca dance on a daily basis, as I

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<sup>8</sup> I followed this technique closely in the “red + rojo” visual arts project. While creating drawings in red and rojo, I returned to the same memory seventy-seven times. In the process, I noticed that in re-encountering that memory of disorientation I felt at seeing a red crayon, which looked nothing like the rojo that I drawn with in Chile the memory opened up and led me “somewhere else” (Zarif 2017): to a different understanding of myself as a 1.5-generation immigrant. Gloria Anzaldúa’s “borderlands” told me about the kinds of negotiations that living in-between entails; “red + rojo” showed me my personal (sensorial) negotiations.

will describe below. I also use the structure of iteration to include, slowly, the various methods that I used for my research: watching YouTube videos of cueca dancing, listening to cueca music and reading cueca literature. In the sections that follow, I offer tables to help visualize how I incorporated each method into my year of research and, where applicable, my daily practice. Beginning around the spring equinox in 2022, I began watching cueca dance videos on YouTube every Monday and for the rest of the week I would sense what movements would stick in my memory during the dance portion of my daily practice. Then, around the summer solstice in 2022 I began listening and dancing to cueca music every day during the dance portion of my daily practice to sense how my body wanted to move and, specifically, include cueca dance movements. Finally, around the fall equinox in 2022 I incorporated cueca literature to provide historical and contextual information for cueca dance. During the dance portion of my daily practice, I would also sense what information was emerging from the literature and let that inform my movement. I kept each of these methods up from the time I started them until the end of my year research. As such, a scaffolded, iterative process for encountering cueca dance slowly became an important part of my research. This multi-modal process stemmed from my multi-media daily practice and simultaneously existed alongside and within the dance portion of my daily practice.

#### 5.4 Methods for Learning (about) Cueca Dance in a Year: Sensing, Watching, Listening, Reading

In this section, I describe the four main methods that I used to learn (about) cueca dance in a year: 1) sensorial prompts and experiments with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and cueca rhythms; 2) watching cueca dance YouTube videos; 3) listening to cueca music; and 4) reading cueca literature. As a reminder, learning (about) cueca dance refers to the process of simultaneously

learning to dance the form and learning about the histories and stories of the form. Before I delve into the methods, I first discuss my initial encounters with cueca dance in 2020, which served as a preliminary research phase. During this time, my colleague and mentor, dance artist and scholar Jennifer Dick guided me through sensorial encounters with cueca dance over Zoom, which influenced how I approached my research phase from December 21, 2021, to December 20, 2022. Next, I provide a brief overview of my year of research and outline the four phases into which it was split. As I reveal, at the beginning of each phase, which coincided more or less with the solstices and equinoxes, I brought a new method into my research on cueca dance. In the subsections that follow, I elaborate on each of the four methods and explain how sensing, watching, listening and reading helped me learn (about) cueca dance. This scaffolded methodology allowed me to slowly stagger the methods, to bring each method into subsequent phases and to layer the methods in a way that facilitated the emergence of cueca dance sensibilities.

Moreover, my year of research also worked with reiteration since I engaged with each method on a daily basis. This iterative process required what political philosopher and artist Erin Manning (2020) calls “a ‘slow’ commitment” (qtd in Loveless 2020, 219). The dance portion of my daily practice was useful for the “slow” commitment of learning (about) cueca dance in a year because it became a temporal space and means to encounter and process cueca dance gradually over time. This “slow” commitment allowed me to take note of the sensorial shifts that were occurring during my daily encounters with cueca dance since, as the year went by, I began to notice the emergence of cueca dance sensibilities, which I discuss below. Moreover, through the rigour of “a consistent process” and “staying true to the complexity of the problem as it unfolds”, as Manning (2020) advocates (qtd in Loveless 2020, 238-239), I became articulate at

dancing cueca by the end of the year, without dominating it or having it dominate me, while also being critically attentive to the form.

#### 5.4.1 Initial Encounters with Cueca Dance

In this sub-section, I outline my preliminary research phase on cueca dance, which occurred during the second half of the year in 2020. With the help of my friend and colleague Jennifer Dick, we developed a way of encountering cueca dance through sensorial prompts. As I discuss below, sensoriality became the foundation of my research phase.

My initial encounters with cueca dance started in June 2020 and lasted until December 2020 and served as a preliminary research phase. I set out to learn (about) cueca dance at this time in preparation for a module for a fully online course—BIG DANCE small space—that Dr. Bridget Cauthery and Professor Susan Cash were creating for the fall of 2020. At this point in time, I had minimal knowledge of cueca (dance) and I had not yet engaged with the form in a direct way. I was unsure about how to approach the module; and I also did not feel ready to dive into learning cueca dance steps, postures, gestures and trajectories. I first wanted to experiment with cueca dance and feel how these elements might sit in my body and within my ways of moving. I wanted to experiment because I had questions about my connection to cueca dance. Specifically, I wondered: what did my body remember about cueca dance? Where did this memory reside in my body and/or in my movement? And, how might I engage with cueca dance in a way that was aligned with my values and the goals of my daily practice, to open up ways of moving?

For guidance, I turned to my colleague and mentor, dance artist Jennifer Dick. Dick is versed in somatic-sensorial work from years of dance training and performance and was happy to

facilitate sensorial encounters with cueca dance over Zoom. Because I used similar strategies during my year of research, I will detail these sensorial encounters with cueca dance below. For now, I want to mention that in these earlier sessions Dick prompted me to acquaint myself with the pañuelo(s) + handkerchief(s) through the senses and to vocalize sounds and rhythms. I specifically used two pañuelos that were gifted to me by my aunt from Chile who knew that I was researching cueca dance (see Figures 5.14 and 5.15 below). Dick also encouraged me to tune into sensations and memories that would arise from the dancing and vocalizing and to let those sensations and/or memories inform my movement and sounding. I also brought these prompts into my daily practice (with Dick's encouragement) and continued to work with and dig into these sensorial experiments. As such, my initial encounters with cueca dance focused on the senses and not on steps.



Figure 5.14: Pañuelo with ruffles and embroidery



Figure 5.15: Pañuelo without ruffles and with stamped image

This process also helped me attend to “tracking and tracing”, as Dick (2020) calls it—a practice in which one is simultaneously aware of the emerging movement (tracking) as well as creating an embodied, sensorial memory of said movement to return there again in the future (tracing). Tracking and tracing is akin to “kinesthetic attunement” (Myers 2017) because it is also a kinesthetic mode of inquiry that shapes and extends the sensorium. As I mentioned above, kinesthetic attunement is meant to de-tune the sensorium from colonial logics by attuning to the rhythms of non-human beings to foster otherwise ways of knowing (Myers 2017). Where tracking and tracing might differ from kinesthetic attunement is in the intention to sense inwardly (into inner environments rather than surrounding environments) to inquire about where movement impulses and personal rhythms come from. These ways of learning (about) cueca dance created the foundation of my research phase.

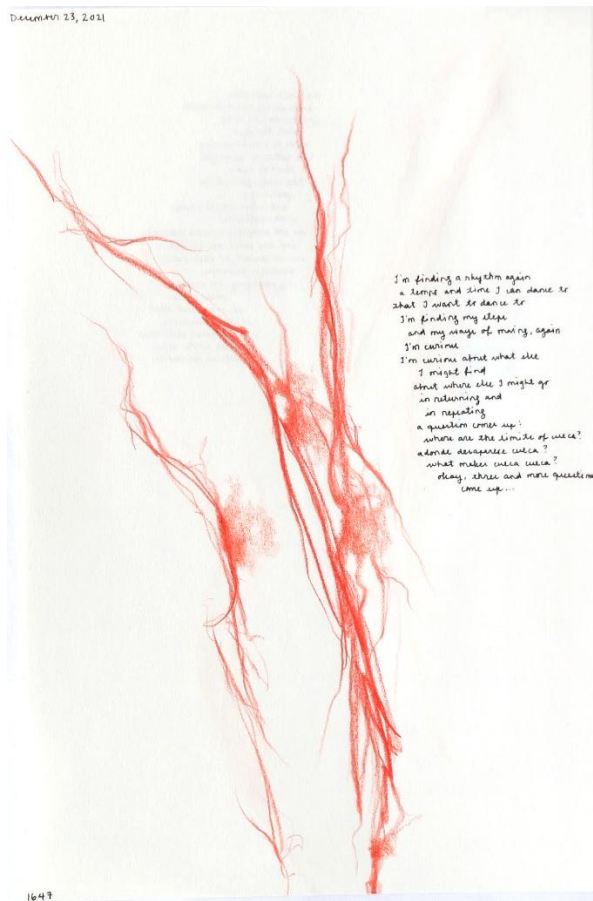
#### 5.4.2 Brief Overview of Research Phase

In this sub-section, I provide a brief outline of my research phase, which lasted for one year. My research phase began on December 21, 2021, and technically ended on December 20, 2022.

Because research is never really “finished”, some projects, ideas and lines of inquiry spilled into the following year. Nevertheless, this year of research revolved around learning (about) cueca dance and was split into four phases, which began around each solstice and equinox: 1) sensorial encounters with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and rhythms (winter solstice 2021); 2) watching YouTube videos of people teaching cueca dance as well as cueca dance performances (spring equinox 2022); 3) listening and dancing to cueca music (summer solstice 2022); and 4) reading cueca literature (fall equinox 2022). Because I began my multi-media daily practice and my research on solstices (June 21, 2017, and December 21, 2021, respectively), the solstices and equinoxes became good parameters to work with during my year of research. I leaned into these key markers of seasonal cycles to transition into and introduce the different media that I engaged during my research.

The process for learning (about) cueca dance involved iteration to cultivate a memory of cueca dance. I repeatedly encountered cueca dance every day for a full year during the dancing portion of my daily practice. I focused on encountering cueca dance mainly during the dancing portion of my daily practice and, therefore, there was only one day when I was inspired to draw and/or write about my experience with cueca dance (see Figure 5.16 below and compare it with Figure 5.14 above, which does not reference cueca dance). As I folded more methods into my research, I started to bring movements that I had watched on YouTube and/or information from the readings into the dancing portion of my daily practice. Instead of picking a particular

movement and/or piece of information to attend to during the dancing portion, I would sense what would stick in my memory and would work with that, as I will elaborate below.



I'm finding a rhythm again  
a tempo and time I can dance to  
that I want to dance to  
I'm finding my steps  
and my ways of moving, again  
I'm curious  
I'm curious about what else  
I might find  
about where else I might go  
in returning and  
in repeating  
a question comes up:  
where are the limits of cueca?  
adonde desaparece cueca?  
what makes cueca cueca?  
okay, there and more questions  
come up...

Figure 5.16: Drawing and writing from December 23, 2021 – Day 1647

### 5.4.3 Sensorial Encounters with Pañuelos and Rhythms

In this sub-section, I elaborate on the first phase of my year of research: sensorial encounters with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and rhythms. As I explain, the purpose of this phase was to play with the pañuelos and to vocalize rhythms. The purpose of playing with pañuelos was to find a

range of ways of moving them as well as to attend to how I wanted to move them. Vocalizing rhythms was a way of acquiring an embodied sense of patterns. Allowing the rhythms to move played a role in acquiring that sensibility (please see Table 5.6 below for how I incorporated sensorial encounters into my daily practice).

On December 21, 2021, I entered (or re-entered) into learning (about) cueca dance through sensorial encounters with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and rhythms. As I mentioned above, during my work with Jennifer Dick in 2020, Dick guided me through encounters with cueca dance by offering sensorial prompts. For example, Dick would prompt me to engage with the pañuelos through various sensorial constellations of textures, smells, tastes, colours, sounds, vocalization, imagination, movement, and memory; and to pay close attention to what memories and experiences they conjured. Dick's prompts also included playing with the pañuelos in both conventional and unconventional ways. Conventional ways included moving the pañuelos in ways that I imagined cueca dancers did such as waving them above their heads. Whereas unconventional ways would have involved holding a pañuelo under my chin or covering my face with one of them and trying to keep it there while I moved around the space.

Furthermore, Jennifer Dick also encouraged me to dance with both pañuelos at the same time by holding one in each hand, something that does not occur in cueca choreographies. Dick also directed me to tune into how my body responded to the pañuelos by switching the hand that they were held in. By engaging with the pañuelos in this way, I was able to get an embodied sense of the difference of each pañuelo in terms of weight and size; as well as become acutely aware of how those characteristics interacted with my dexterities. For example, I noticed that I could move the pañuelo that was crafted with heavier fabric and that had ruffles more easily in my left hand, my less dexterous hand. Conversely, I was able to move the more diaphanous

pañuelo better in my right hand. Over time, and with a lot of practice, I became articulate at moving the pañuelos well with both hands.

#### Sensorial Encounters with Pañuelos and Rhythms

| Time of Day             | Monday to Sunday                                                                            |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morning:<br>10am-12pm   |                                                                                             |
| Afternoon:<br>1-5pm     |                                                                                             |
| Early Evening:<br>5-7pm | Dancing: with a focus on playing with pañuelos and vocalizing rhythms<br>Drawing<br>Writing |

Table 5.6: Research Phase 1 – Winter Solstice 2021 to Spring Equinox 2022

These sensorial prompts also allowed me to tune in to how the pañuelos wanted to move. By sensing the pañuelos’ ways of moving, I was able to let them guide the movement and not impose on them my (or cueca dance’s) ways of moving and relating. Although this practice does, in a way, relate to object-oriented ontologies—how objects have their own ways of being in the world and can direct us to engage with them in their ways—what I want to highlight is the potential of “kinesthetic attunement” (Myers 2017) as a mode of inquiry for tuning in to the rhythms of non-humans. Therefore, the sensorial encounters with the pañuelos cultivated a particular “kinesthetic attunement” to their ways of moving and ways of relating that affected how I interacted with them.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> By beginning with sensoriality, I entered into an otherwise relationship with cueca dance and with the pañuelos. Rather than seeing the pañuelos as props or objects to control, I recognized them as partners in a collaborative process. The pañuelos guided me through learning (about) cueca and even affected how I moved, like a partner would. Unfortunately, this discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The sessions with Dick during the summer of 2020 informed how I interacted with the pañuelos when I officially began my research in December 2021. During the winter season, I began, again, with sensoriality and experimented with moving the pañuelos in diverse ways, which helped me remember the ways that they wanted to move. I also found my own ways of holding and moving the pañuelos during that first phase. For instance, I became accustomed to and really enjoyed holding the pañuelos like fans (with my four fingers pressing on the fleshy part of my palms) and making them fan out by moving my wrist in steady circular motions. I also liked pinching the pañuelos (with my thumb and index and middle fingers) in the middle of the fabric and allowing them to spread out like a flower in full bloom through a similar wrist action. These pañuelo movements became part of my personal cueca dance vocabulary.

During our time together, Dick also prompted me to vocalize. Part of this work included sounding and sitting with the vowels, in their Castellano + Spanish phonetic sounds, to acquire an embodied and sensorial understanding of them. I remember that through this work, which too became a part of the dance portion of my daily practice at this time, I came to attribute colours to each of the vowels: “a” (ah) was connected to red; “e” (eh) to a light green; “i” (ee) to a bright, almost neon yellow; “o” (oh) to a deep blue; and “u” (oo) to a very deep purple that was almost as dark as black. These colourful associations added to my sensorial experiments with these phonemes.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> By this point in time, I had worked with vocal coaches Anaïs Maviel (in Noémie Lafrance and Ayelen Liberona’s “Dérives” site-specific performance at the Bentway) and Ximena Huizi (in Aria Evans | Political Movement’s heart2heart dance piece). From them, I had acquired an understanding of where these vibrations sit in and emerge from the body: “a” in the chest; “e” behind the ears; “i” at the crown of the head; “o” in the navel; “u” below the genitals. Huizi had also taught me to visualize the direction of energy necessary to create each phoneme. With regards to “e”, for example, Huizi had me imagine the sound emerging from behind my ears and moving out of the back of my head while vocalizing. On the other hand, I had to visualize “i” as sitting on the crown of my head, emerging from this position and moving upwards to the sky. This knowledge, coupled with the colours that I had attributed to these sounds, allowed me to connect with these sounds in a sensorial way when vocalizing. Alongside these experiences, I was also used to vocalizing and sounding because I had been working with choreographer and dance researcher Sashar Zarif, who asks dancers to vocalize in rehearsals and performances; and, I had been

Moreover, working with the Spanish vowels, as well as the various experiences that I had had with singing and vocalizing up to that point, helped me with sounding rhythms. Initially, I would just vocalize the rhythm that I felt was emerging while moving or translate my movement into sound. For example, swaying from side to side would provoke a rhythm in 4/4 time since each step counted as a beat. Additionally, there were instances when the pañuelos' movements would be the impetus for the rhythm and, therefore, they would guide my vocalization. Eventually, I became quite coordinated at sounding while moving: I was able to vocalize rhythms that emerged from my breath, which guided the movement I was doing in that moment.

Becoming practiced at sensing and vocalizing rhythms allowed me to slowly move into vocalizing cueca dance's two time signatures: 3/4-time and 6/8-time. I still remember how much I struggled to vocalize these rhythms when I first encountered them. They felt foreign in my body and to my senses, and I did not know quite how to vocalize them, much less move to them. My initial encounters with 3/4-time and 6/8-time were disorienting and discouraging because I felt out of sync with the rhythms. This was, in part, because the way that I approached sounding them was lifeless: I was vocalizing each beat in an even manner. Slowly, this changed. As I practiced vocalizing the time signatures more and more, I realized that I had no (embodied) memory of these rhythms, which is why they felt foreign. Therefore, reiteration became important for acquainting myself with these time signatures.

Furthermore, by repeatedly sounding these time signatures, I came to understand why they were initially challenging for me to embody and sense: 1) 3/4- and 6/8-time were

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attending Native Child and Family Services' (NCFS) online drum circles during the pandemic. The drum circles were hosted by Cree-Dene singer-songwriter, educator and music therapist Sherryl Sewepagaham, who taught us Indigenous songs. In both instances, we often worked with songs composed of vocables: sung phonemes that are not connected to a specific language but that evoke feeling. By the time I started my preliminary research, I was quite versed at vocalizing patterns and melodies that did not require words. These coaches and projects helped me acquire a nuanced understanding of sounds, which I continued to dig into with Dick's support.

(obviously) quite different from 4/4 time, a common time signature in Euro-Western music and pop songs to which I have become accustomed; 2) although 3/4-time and 6/8-time are the basis of a waltz, which I had encountered before, I was also not used to vocalising this music genre; and 3) 6/8-time is polyrhythmic, containing at least two rhythms in its structure, which I did not realize at the time. By noticing my shortcomings, I was able to come up with a structured sensorial process for learning 3/4- and 6/8-time.

The first thing I did was refresh my memory on foundational music theory. This involved doing some quick research into each time signature as well as finding visuals to help me see the difference between 4/4-, 3/4- and 6/8-time (see Figure 5.17; bolded notes illustrate the counts that are usually emphasized in these time signatures). I was reminded that 4/4-time means that there are four quarter notes in a measure and that each quarter note counts as a beat. The top number (in this case 4) refers to how many beats are in the bar or measure; and the bottom number (in this case also 4) refers to which note is assigned a beat, which in 4/4-time is the quarter note. This means that in 3/4-time, there are three beats in a measure and the quarter note gets a beat. Whereas in 6/8-time, there are six beats in a measure and the eighth note is the one that gets the beat. Music theory, therefore, helped me understand this basic difference between 3/4- and 6/8-time.



Figure 5.17: 4/4-, 3/4- and 6/8-time signatures

However, it was the pañuelos that allowed me to acquire a sense for these rhythms. Through geometrical trajectories performed with a pañuelo—requiring a kind of hand-eye-ear coordination—I was able to “kinesthetically attune” (Myers 2017) to the differences between 4/4-, 3/4- and 6/8-time signatures. For instance, drawing a square in the air with a pañuelo made 4/4-time visible or offered a visual aid for this time signature because each side of the square represented one beat. This is how I managed to identify that I was oftentimes sounding and/or moving to 4/4-time.

Using this method for the other time signatures helped me to embody and sense them better. Removing one side of the square transform the shape into a triangle, which indexed a 3/4-time structure because each side of the triangle marked a beat or quarter note. However, 6/8-time was a bit more challenging to visualize. Particularly because tracing a hexagon in the air did not make sense for 6/8-time, which is a polyrhythmic time signature that contains two foundational rhythmic structures.

On sheet music, 6/8-time is often drawn as two sets of three eighth notes, which means that the first beat of each group is emphasized. The one in the 1-2-3 cluster and the four in the 4-5-6 cluster are accented; and this can be counted as ONE-two-three FOUR-five-six. Counted in this way, 6/8-time feels like a waltz. However, because the one and the four are emphasized, another rhythm emerges: a swing. This is felt when you only count the accented beats: ONE–FOUR–, ONE–FOUR–, ONE–FOUR–, etc. And this swinging rhythm can also be counted as ONE–TWO–, ONE–TWO–, ONE–TWO–, etc. As such, 6/8 carries two rhythms: one that acknowledges the six eighth notes; and one that collapses them into two notes that are three beats long (represented as dotted quarter notes in sheet music). It is this polyrhythmic aspect that is one of the major differences between 3/4-time and 6/8-time.

To visually move from 3/4-time to 6/8-time you need to count 3/4-time as you would 6/8-time—ONE-two-three FOUR-five-six—and, simultaneously, begin to speed up the pañuelo's tracing of the triangle. As the movement becomes faster, the triangular trajectory becomes harder to maintain. This is when the pañuelo's movement must shift from tracing a triangle to moving like a pendulum from side to side. I found it easiest to transition once I began to feel that I could not keep up with the 3/4-time triangle and felt compelled to fall out of this trajectory and fall into 6/8-time on one of the accented beats (i.e. ONE or FOUR).

Therefore, the main reason that it does not make sense to draw a hexagon in the air for 6/8-time is because what needs to be embodied and sensed is the multiple rhythms that are present in 6/8-time. What needs to be understood in an embodied and sensorial way is *how* 6/8-time is polyrhythmic. This feeling is cultivated by being able to switch from vocalising and visualising the six eighth notes (ONE-two-three FOUR-five-six) to the two notes that are three beats long (ONE– TWO–). Swinging the pañuelo in a pendulum-like fashion allows for the beats to be counted and felt in both ways. Additionally, this trajectory makes present the fall/catch or release/suspension that is felt in this time signature. A hexagon would not offer this kind of embodied and sensorial information about 6/8-time.

The more that I practiced going from 4/4- to 3/4- to 6/8-time with the pañuelos the more I became acquainted with each rhythm and began to have a feel for them. The pañuelos thus helped me to gain embodied and sensorial understandings of these rhythms because they facilitated my encounters with the three time signatures. In this way, the pañuelos and vocalizing were crucial practices for my initial, experimental encounters with cueca dance and cueca rhythms.

When I returned to the rhythms during the research phase, on December 21, 2021, the feeling was quite different. There was an ease that had not been there at the very beginning. Something had stuck in my memory from my sessions with Dick and from my own experiments during the dance portion of my daily practice in 2020. It was clear that I was beginning in a different place, which allowed me to experiment further with sounding the rhythms while dancing to them. For example, rather than getting stuck walking the rhythms around the space, so that my body could get used to them, I was able to engage my intuitive dancing method while vocalising them. This granted me the opportunity to, at times, contort my body and/or move through the vocalisations. Because I was not concerned with keeping the rhythmic structure in my legs, I could focus on how I could stretch my body by engaging intuitive movements through these rhythms. During the research phase, then, it felt easier to engage intuitive dancing while sounding the rhythms than when I first encountered them.

Moreover, even though I kept falling into moving in 4/4-time, it was easier to transition from this time signature to 3/4- and 6/8-time. When this became effortless to do, I began playing with the time signatures, switching between the three at random (or as random as one can get while also dancing). The point was to continue getting acquainted with the rhythms through reiteration: by returning to them over and over again through different experiments during the dance portion of my daily practice. Through this process, I learned how much shorter 3/4-time is compared to 4/4-time—it is as if time speeds up because there is one less beat in the measure. There is a similar feeling with 6/8-time because one is counting eighth notes instead of quarter notes. The paradox is that you can “slow” time down by counting in twos (i.e. ONE– TWO–, etc.) in 6/8-time. Therefore, I really enjoyed this time signature because I could speed up or slow

my dancing by changing the way I was vocalising the counts. By sounding and moving to the different rhythms I became accustomed to their nuances.

This first phase was important for cultivating a memory of cueca dance because it prepared me for subsequent encounters with cueca dance. Because I began with sensoriality, I became practiced at approaching cueca dance in this way. Moreover, using my intuitive dancing method I was able to lean into what I was seeing while also sensing how I wanted to move. The skills and sensibilities that I fostered during this first period became useful when encountering other media. This served me especially well during the period when I began watching cueca YouTube videos as well as when I introduced cueca music, both of which I discuss below.

#### 5.4.4 Watching Cueca Dance YouTube Videos

In this sub-section, I outline the second phase of my year of research: watching YouTube videos on cueca dance. As I elaborate, I first began watching “how to” dance cueca videos and then moved on to observing a variety cueca dance performances posted on the platform. As I mentioned in the Introduction, I only examine five cueca dances in this dissertation.

Nevertheless, these cueca dance performances provided me with a range of movements to try out and illustrated to me cueca dance’s flexibility, which I discussed in Chapter 4 (please see Table 5.7 below for how I incorporated YouTube videos into my research and how I attended to cueca dance movements during my daily practice).

Around the spring equinox in 2022, I began to bring YouTube videos into my research. Every Monday, I would watch one or two videos and make notes based on kinesthetic impressions. I kept this practice up until the end of my research phase—a weekly iterative practice within a daily iterative practice. I would often watch the videos at least thrice—once to

get a general sense, and then twice more to observe each dancer, since cueca dance is performed in pairs—but oftentimes more.<sup>11</sup> To focus on the movement and sense how it was that the dancers were moving, I would watch the video on mute at least once.<sup>12</sup> In the end, I ended up watching around eighty cueca dance videos, at least three times each (see the Bibliography for list of cueca dance videos).

#### Sensorial Encounters and YouTube Videos

| Time of Day             | Monday                                                                                                                                                                    | Tuesday to Sunday |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Morning:<br>10am-12pm   | Watching 1-3 YouTube videos                                                                                                                                               |                   |
| Afternoon:<br>1-5pm     |                                                                                                                                                                           |                   |
| Early Evening:<br>5-7pm | Dancing: with a focus on attending to what would stick to my memory from the YouTube videos as well as playing with pañuelos and vocalizing rhythms<br>Drawing<br>Writing |                   |

Table 5.7: Research Phase 2 – Spring Equinox 2022 to Summer Solstice 2022

One of my delimitations was that I was not tracking detailed changes of each cueca dance over time. However, I used triangulation to cluster the different cueca dances that I encountered on YouTube. This process involved paying attention to how the individuals posting the videos on YouTube labelled the cueca dance in the video; watching many videos with a similar label to get a sense of the range of ways of performing a particular cueca dance; and making connections

<sup>11</sup> There were some videos that I watched countless times. This was particularly true once I started writing up my dissertation because I became concerned with analyzing ways of moving and ways of relating between the dancers. Therefore, I returned to some videos multiple times to get a better sense of the movement.

<sup>12</sup> From past experience, I have come to realize that music not only informs my movement, it also has the potential to inform how I perceive movement. For this reason, watching the video on mute was a way to support a more kinetic kinesthetic impression.

with what I found on YouTube to the literature on cueca (dance). This process allowed me to notice the commonalities between the different cueca dances and to make sure that the videos were aligned with what I was encountering in the literature.

At first, the videos that I looked up were educational “how to” tutorials that broke down cueca choreography into parts both with regards to steps and trajectories not unlike how I describe a codified cueca choreography in the Chapter 4. It was from these videos that I was able to ascertain the cueca dance elements that serve as the building blocks of cueca dances. The “how to” dance cueca videos offered great overviews of cueca dance; however, they lacked a sense of performance. For this reason, I started to incorporate videos of people performing cueca dance. These videos were more interesting to me because of the qualities and personal touches that each dancer would bring to their interpretation of cueca dance, some of which I describe in Chapter 4. I focused on these qualities in my kinesthetic impressions: notes on the broad strokes of the performance, the demeanour of the dancers and how they related to each other. Sometimes, my kinesthetic impression went into detail about specific steps or movements.

As I searched YouTube for more clips, I encountered different kinds of cueca dances, which I mention in Chapters 3 and 4. This allowed me to refine my search and look for specific cueca dances by adding their names to the search bar. For example, instead of searching for “cueca”, generally, I would look for “cueca *campesina*” or “cueca *urbana*” or “cueca *brava*”. By refining my search, it quickly became apparent which cueca dance versions and variations had become popularized through social performances and competitions since these were the ones that were being uploaded to the platform and appeared first on the search screen. I watched the videos at the top of the list; but I also scrolled down the list. This allowed me to find diverse performances of different cueca dances. For instance, I was able to find numerous variations of

la cueca chora-brava, a type of urban cueca dance that has become quite prominent since the end of the dictatorship.

Although watching YouTube videos was meant to give me insights into cueca dance movements, the aspect of this phase that I was most concerned about was noticing what would stick in my memory from the “how to” or performance videos I watched each week. During the dance portion of my daily practice, from the spring equinox onward, I would attune to which movement(s) I was curious about and wanted to try based on what had stuck in my memory. Importantly, I did not want to try everything that I remembered and what I remembered could change on any given day. During this process, I was generally less concerned with getting the steps right and more focused on paying attention to the movements that my memory was pulling on and conjuring. This allowed me to be curious about and experiment with steps during the dance portion of my daily practice. Because I was still vocalizing during this time, I would also try to pair steps and pañuelo movements with cueca rhythms and/or other rhythmic compositions.

Over the course of the season, there were a couple of times that I explicitly copied specific movements. At one point, I even decided to learn a specific choreography by imagining the cueca dance video as a kind music video since this was a way of learning choreography that I had engaged in my youth, as I reminisce about in the Prologue. As such, I approached the choreography of the cueca dance video in the same way that I would have approached the choreography of a music video: learning the steps chronologically. This was an interesting experiment that ultimately failed for many reasons. First, I did not yet have the coordination to simultaneously perform cueca dance steps and pañuelo movements in specific ways. Second, I had not yet encountered cueca music, which has a different feel than vocalizing rhythms—

something that became quite apparent once I began listening to cueca music during the third phase of my research. Third, the video's cueca dance movements and the music that had been overlayed over the dancing were slightly out of sync. This created a bit of confusion when trying to perform the steps in time to the music. Finally, I did not give myself enough time to learn the choreography. The failure of the experiment forced me to move away from copying steps and to continue down the path of sensoriality, of allowing cueca dance gestures, postures, steps and trajectories to come into my daily practice through memory.

Watching cueca dance videos on YouTube, noticing what movements would stick in my memory and attempting those movements allowed me to learn cueca dance at my own pace and to experiment with cueca movements. Moreover, this phase played a significant role in learning (about) cueca dance because, through this process, I was able to create a trove of movement memories from which to draw from in subsequent phases. Even though by the end of the season I was not actually able to dance a cueca dance, I was beginning to get a sense of the dance form. These cueca dance sensibilities came in handy when I started to listen to cueca music in the research phase that followed because that is when I really started to feel how the pieces—the cueca dance gestures, postures, steps and trajectories—fit together. Watching cueca dance videos, attending to what stuck in memory and trying out a range of movements helped me cultivate a memory of cueca dance.

It was during this phase that many of the dance memories I presented in the Prologue “flashed up” (Stewart 1996). Watching dancers in cueca dance performances sparked memories from my own dance history. The social dance aspect reminded me of the square dancing that I had learned in elementary school and junior high. Men dancers reminded me of how I had been made to dance as a man in ballet, competitive hip hop and ballroom. The ways that men related

with women reminded me of how I was made to partner ballerinas as well as women dancers in ballroom. Although partnering in these two forms is quite different, as a man I had to be supportive and strong. And, the women's hip movements reminded me that sometimes I like to try out and embody women's vocabularies. These dance memories encouraged me to observe and analyse cueca dance performances closely, which I discussed in the previous chapter.

#### 5.4.5 Listening (and Dancing) to Cueca Music

In this sub-section, I detail the third phase of my year of research: listening to cueca music during the dance portion of my daily practice. Including cueca music had a disorienting effect at first because I was not used to these compositions. Over the course of a season, I developed an ear for this music and slowly started to marry cueca dance with cueca music, as I elaborate on below (please see Table 5.8 below for how I incorporated listening to cueca music into my research and daily practice).

Shortly after the summer solstice in 2022, I incorporated cueca music into the dance portion of my daily practice. Initially, the music was confusing and overwhelming: it was faster than the pace of my vocalizations and I could not hear the time signatures. It seemed like there were more notes in the music; and perhaps it felt this way due to the layering of 3/4-time over 6/8-time: a musical composition that creates both polyphony and polyrhythm. These are aspects of cueca music that differentiate it from waltz and that could be considered part of an “Africanist aesthetic” (Gottschild 2001), specifically the polyrhythm. What this revealed to me was that dancing to vocalized rhythms and dancing to cueca music, which overlays both the 3/4- and 6/8-time patterns, were different sensorial experiences and required different sensibilities. Because I

did not have a sensibility for the music, which was much more complex and playful, the compositions felt disorienting at first.

#### Sensorial Encounters, YouTube Videos and Cueca Music

| Time of Day             | Monday                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Tuesday to Sunday |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Morning:<br>10am-12pm   | Watching 1-3 YouTube videos                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   |
| Afternoon:<br>1-5pm     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                   |
| Early Evening:<br>5-7pm | Dancing: with a focus on feeling the cueca music as well as attending to what would stick to my memory from the YouTube videos; eventually I moved towards dancing to cueca music with cueca movements<br>Drawing<br>Writing |                   |

Table 5.8: Research Phase 3 – Summer Solstice 2022 to Fall Equinox 2022

As such, my aim during this phase shifted: instead of trying to dance to the music, my goal became “feeling the music”, as my mom often says: a process of becoming affected by the music and letting it move your body.<sup>13</sup> I became more interested in attuning to cueca music’s melodies and rhythms and letting them move me. This bodily listening or “kinesthetic attunement” (Myers 2017) to the music became important for “feeling the music” and acquiring

<sup>13</sup> Although the term “musicality” is often used in dance settings, I feel that it differs slightly from “feeling the music”. Even though both reference how music is interpreted, musicality tends to refer to something that someone has—“that dancer has great musicality”. Whereas “feeling the music” is something that someone does. Again, both terms attune to music; however, “musicality” tends to suggest an “innate” sensibility towards music and might not account for the process of becoming musical. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary defines “musicality” as: “The quality or character of being musical; accomplishment or aptitude in music; musical sensibility” (2025; <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=musicality>). Not only are “being” and “becoming” different, as phenomenologists and affect theorists argue, there is also a value judgment placed on being musical as the definition shows. Musicality is an “accomplishment or aptitude” and is, therefore, appreciated and admired as an aesthetic (cap)ability. For these reasons, I gravitate to “feeling the music”, which is a process of becoming affected by melodies, rhythms and soundscapes and letting them move you. I even argue that it is by learning to feel the music that one may acquire a “musical sensibility”.

a “feel” for cueca compositions. Without a “feel” for cueca music I would not have been able to bring it and its structure into proximity with my cueca movements.<sup>14</sup>

To foster a “feel” for cueca music, I listened to cueca compositions while engaging intuitive dancing during the dance portion of my daily practice. As I mentioned above, intuitive dancing is a practice that I have fostered through my daily practice that allows me to feel my impulses and move with or away from them. What was interesting in this instance is that because I did not have a sense for cueca music, I was not inclined to dance to it with cueca dance steps. This is not to say that there was no desire to figure out how to dance to the music with cueca dance moves. There were instances when I tried to force cueca dance steps into the music. However, it was easy to let that go and move away from those impulses because I did not have a memory of how cueca dancing and cueca music fit. Not having this sensibility made it easy to let the music pass through my body and move with different impulses such as by slowing my movement down and/or find otherwise ways of moving that were not related to cueca dance. By allowing my body to move in intuitive ways that were as far away as possible from cueca dance movements I started to acquaint myself with cueca compositions and foster a “feel” for the music.

Fostering a “feel” for cueca music was a slow process that led to being able to “feel the (cueca) music” with cueca dance steps. Again, this required listening with my body or a “kinesthetic attunement” (Myers 2017) to the music. During the dance portion of my daily practice, I would listen and dance to three cueca songs, which lasted around seven minutes in

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<sup>14</sup> In many of the instructional cueca dance videos I watched, there was little to no bridging between the cueca dance steps and the music; almost as if the steps were more important than the music or as if learning how to dance was not about learning how to feel the music. I did not notice this at the time, but, when I did, it made me wonder if the online instructors forget that, because cueca dancing and cueca music are interconnected, both sensibilities must be acquired simultaneously. Specially because cueca choreography is dependent the structure of cueca music.

total. Even though this does not seem like a lot of time, doing this every day helped me acquire a sense for cueca music, which I previously did not have. Once I understood the musical compositions in an embodied, sensorial way, I started bringing cueca dance movements into my daily practice. I engaged memory in a similar way that I had done when I started watching cueca YouTube videos: I sensed the movements that memory was conjuring during my daily practice and tried them out. By the end of the summer, not only did cueca music make sense, I could also “feel the (cueca) music” with cueca dance movements. In other words, I began to acquire a sense for how cueca dance movements fit into cueca music.

Even though I began with intuitive dancing during this phase, by the end of the summer I let go of the experimental movements I was engaging to feel the music, replacing them with cueca dance gestures, postures, steps and trajectories. Importantly, these cueca dance movements were a combination of my ways of moving, which I had fostered in previous phases, and the cueca ways of moving I had observed in the YouTube videos. Those previous phases and experiments were, therefore, instrumental for acquiring a sense of cueca music and for helping me marry cueca dance steps with cueca compositions. Because I was still in my year of research, I kept dancing to cueca music with cueca dance movements during the dance portion of my daily practice. Maintaining this reiterative practice until December 20, 2022, helped me become more articulate at cueca dance and to cultivate a memory of cueca dance informed by movements and music. I brought this memory of cueca dance into cueca literature, the last phase of my research, which I delve into next.

#### 5.4.6 Reading Cueca Literature with Cueca Dance Sensibilities

In this sub-section, I discuss the final phase of my year of research: encountering and reading cueca (dance) literature comprised mainly of secondary sources with a couple of primary sources. In this phase, I read both about cueca, the tripartite art form, and about cueca dance. As I mention, reading cueca (dance) literature occurred outside of my daily practice, but I brought ideas, history/ies, stories, information and more from the literature into my daily practice. The dance portion became a space to attend to what information stuck in my memory and to mull it over while dancing to cueca music (please see Table 5.9 below for how I incorporated cueca literature into my research and daily practice).

YouTube Videos, Cueca Music and Cueca Literature

| Time of Day             | Monday                                                                                                                                                                                                | Tuesday to Sunday                |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Morning:<br>10am-12pm   | Watching 1-3 YouTube videos                                                                                                                                                                           | Reading cueca (dance) literature |
| Afternoon:<br>1-5pm     | Reading cueca (dance) literature                                                                                                                                                                      |                                  |
| Early Evening:<br>5-7pm | Dancing: with a focus on attending to what would stick to my memory from the cueca (dance) literature and YouTube videos as well as dancing to cueca music with cueca movements<br>Drawing<br>Writing |                                  |

Table 5.9: Research Phase 4 – Fall Equinox 2022 to Winter Solstice 2022

On the fall equinox of 2022, I began introducing cueca literature to my weekly routines. Since the start of my doctoral studies, I had been creating a list of readings on cueca, generally. I used this list of cueca literature to learn about the cueca stories and histories of the various versions of the dance form that I had watched on YouTube, which I elaborate on in Chapter 3.

As I engaged each reading, I brought the cueca dance sensibilities and the memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated during the previous three phases of my research to my literary encounters with cueca. Importantly, the literature also helped me continue to foster my cueca dance sensibilities, as I explain below.

I approached reading cueca (dance) literature intuitively, in the same way that I had undertaken learning (about) cueca dance in the previous phases. For example, I would sense which article, chapter or book was calling my attention and I would read that one. I continued with this practice until the end of my research phase and into the following year when I began writing up my dissertation. Reading cueca (dance) literature intuitively allowed me to fold this activity into the sensorial process that I had been fostering throughout the year.

Although I was trying to strengthen my sensing practice, it is possible that I might have missed a genealogy of thought about cueca dance by not reading the cueca (dance) literature chronologically or from the lens of history. Along a similar vein, by not reading thematically, it is possible that I missed a deep understanding of a particular cueca dance. Reading intuitively, however, highlighted for me the patterns within the official history of cueca dance: I came to notice that this official history as recounted by ethno/musicologists and folklorists inadvertently or not centres and privileges *la cueca campesina-huasa* and leaves out many cueca dance versions and variations. In other words, when ethno/musicologists and folklorists discuss “the cueca (dance)” they are specifically talking about *la cueca campesina-huasa*. As such, *la cueca campesina-huasa* comes to stand in for all cueca dances as “the” cueca dance. Because I was not doing a historiography of cueca dance, reading intuitively helped attend to how the official history of cueca dance is partial and incomplete, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3.

In a similar way to watching the cueca dance videos on YouTube, reading about cueca (dance) occurred outside of my daily practice. However, I allowed the information I read to come into the dance portion. I would read about cueca during the day and when it was time to dance, I would feel with my memory to sense what was emerging from the reading(s). This meant that I was negotiating memories that were being conjured from watching cueca dance videos as well as from the readings while moving to cueca music. This permitted me to bring cueca readings into conversation with the cueca practices that were already underway. The dance portion of my daily practice became instrumental for processing all of this information on cueca (dance) from different media in a sensorial manner.

Because my previous encounters with cueca dance had centred sensoriality, I carried these sensorial attunements into the cueca readings. Even though I had read cueca histories and stories before, they resonated or clicked in an embodied and sensorial way. Specifically, these histories and stories, as well as descriptions of cueca dancing, would come alive in my imagination by drawing on the memories of my previous experiences. These sensorial encounters with literature provoked my imagination to conjure images and scenes to help me process in a sensorial way what was being related. In this way, reading also involved a sensorial engagement that helped me read closely (with my senses) what was being revealed and forwarded by the literature.<sup>15</sup>

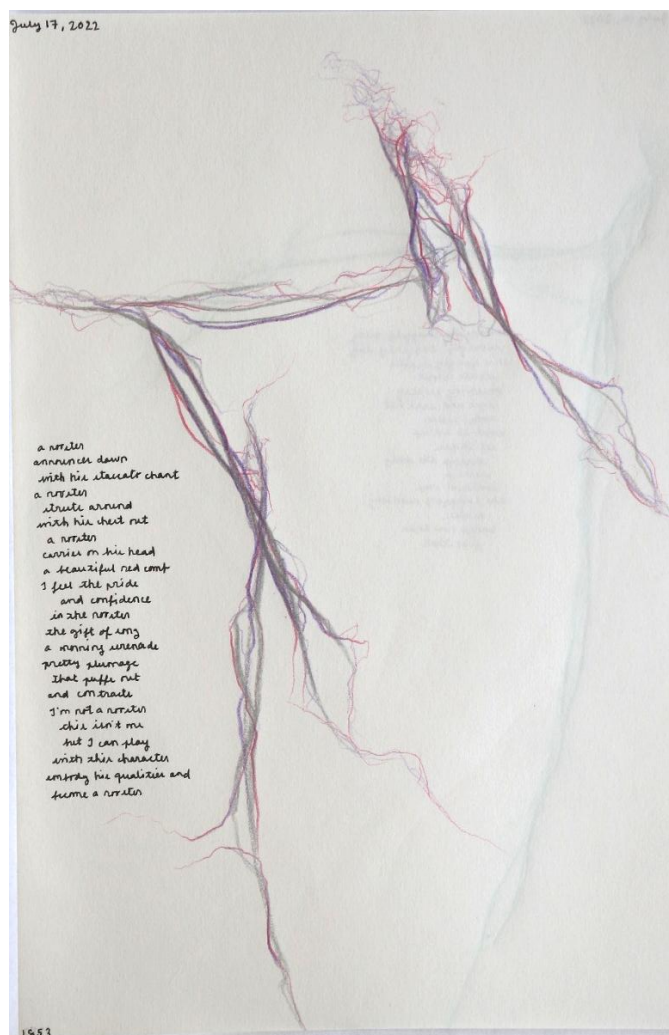
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<sup>15</sup> These experiences with texts have been one of the most challenging things to make sense of from the performance studies perspective that Diana Taylor (2003) forwards. The author refuses to “read” embodied, non-verbal performances as “texts” or “narratives”, which create a distancing effect. Taylor (2003) explains, “Instead of privileging *texts* and *narratives*, we could also look at scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes” because they “[demand] that we also pay attention to *milieux* and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language” (28; original italics). I understand Taylor’s (2003) insistence of drawing attention to the non-discursive realm of performance by offering words such as “scenarios” as a move away from the discursive turn. However, the author does not offer a way to think about texts and narratives from a non-discursive perspective. Part of the meaning-making that occurs through texts and narratives involves memory and imagination, drawing from experiences and working with both to fill in the gaps. Are not memory and imagination “corporeal behaviours” that are also “not reducible to language”? Can we

Starting with sensoriality rather than steps, therefore, created a very different foundation for making sense of the cueca histories and stories presented in cueca literature. A clear example of this is when I encountered one of the most prominent stories connected to cueca dance: that it is a mating ritual between a rooster and a hen (Knudsen 2001; Olivares and Gomoll 2016; Torres 2008; Wolf 2019), as I discussed in Chapter 3. This story had been sitting in my memory for a while and one day, during my daily practice, I was moved to embody and sense the rooster. I began to move like a chicken: moving my head forward and back, while taking steps that were bigger than my regular strides across the space that I was dancing in. There was a moment of suspension and landing between each step because of how big the steps were. This made the landing reverberate up my spine which coincided with the pecking motion that I was doing with my head. I kept my knees bent to allow for this reverberation, which also lowered my centre of gravity. I could feel that the impetus for moving forward was coming from my pelvis or just below it and was also encouraged by the head motion. It was a movement that required a lot of coordination because it was not how I moved in the world. The point is that this movement allowed me to sense that there was more to the story of the rooster chasing the hen. By moving differently, I could sense other possible ways of relating for the rooster instead of this character just being an aggressor towards the hen. This experience helped me feel how the story of the rooster and the hen was limited and, more significantly, how the movement of this character becomes constrained to forward and/or coincide with a particular story (see Figure 5.18 below).

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not also conjure non-discursive scenarios from written documents? I do not yet understand where the role of memory and imagination fit into this performance paradigm because reading writing, for me, also provokes me to imagine and re-member (movement) scenarios. This makes me wonder if imagination and memory offer non-discursive mediations of texts and written documents, especially if the latter is conceived as a sense organ, as C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Lee Maracle (2015) forward.



a rooster  
announces dawn  
with his staccato chant  
a rooster  
struts around  
with his chest out  
a rooster  
carries on his head  
a beautiful red comb  
I feel the pride  
and confidence  
in the rooster  
the gift of song  
a morning serenade  
pretty plumage  
that puffs out  
and contracts  
I'm not a rooster  
this isn't me  
but I can play  
with this character  
embody his qualities and  
become a rooster

Figure 5.18: Drawing and writing from July 17, 2022 – Day 1853

The literature also provided me with important insights into cueca music, specifically; insights that I had not received from watching cueca dance videos on YouTube nor by listening and dancing to cueca music. This is in part because most cueca literature is either from an ethno/musicologist perspective or from folklore studies, both of which focus more on the music component of the tripartite practice. For instance, the *Cancionero de la Cueva Chilena + Songbook of the Chilean Cueca* by folklorist and cueca scholar Santiago Figueroa Torres (2008) illustrates how to strum a guitar in 6/8-time. The examples that Torres (2008) offers demonstrate

how complex cueca songs are: the examples shows which notes are accented, that eighth notes can be split into sixteenth notes and that the guitarist can hit the guitar like a drum on certain notes. This helped me understand why it was challenging to hear the rhythms while listening to cueca music: not only are 3/4-time and 6/8-time overlayed, these time signatures also serve as departure points for nuanced musical compositions that contain multiple rhythmic structures. For this reason, cueca music sounds nothing like a waltz, as I mentioned above and, therefore, does not “feel” like a waltz.

Another example of how the literature offered more information on cueca music and dance relates to the clapping that dancers do during the musical intro of a cueca composition, which I discussed in Chapter 4. In “Dancing cueca ‘with your coat on’ ”, musicologist Jan Sverre Knudsen (2001) briefly discusses that the palmas + clapping is done to a pulse-like rhythm. The rhythm is created by clapping on counts one, three, four and six in a 6/8-time signature measure (see Figure 4.3). Something clicked when I re-read Knudsen’s (2001) article after having learned (about) cueca dance sensorially for the better part of the year. Even though I had read Knudsen’s (2001) article during my preliminary research phase, I had not made the connection that the heartbeat is another rhythm that is embedded within 6/8 time, once more illustrating how this time signature is polyrhythmic. Moreover, the cueca dance steps made sense in a different way because each of them, as I discuss in Chapter 4, is done to this heartbeat rhythm. Therefore, I had not understood the fact that this pulse-like rhythm is a guiding force in cueca music and dance. This information also helped me hear cueca music differently since it helped me attune my ear to the heartbeat in the cueca compositions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Coincidentally, during this part of my research phase, I had watched the documentary *RUMBLE: The Indians Who Rocked the World* by Catherine Bainbridge (2017) and attended the play *My Sister’s Rage* by Yolanda Bonnell (2022). In both instances, people used the hand drum to make the heartbeat sound. As I experienced these situations, I remembered that singer-songwriter Sherryl Sewepagaham, during the drum circles that I attended through Native

The cueca (dance) literature, therefore, filled my gaps in knowledge about cueca dance and offered me other avenues of inquiry. Figueroa Torres (2008) and Knudsen (2001), as well as other authors, provided me with additional experiments to try out during my daily practice. Although I was not planning on learning the guitar, I adapted Figueroa Torres's (2008) examples of rhythmic variations for sounding and vocalized these rhythms during my daily practice. Along a similar vein, I started to bring in the pulse-like rhythm into my vocalisations and dancing. By giving me additional rhythms to play and experiment with, the cueca (dance) literature helped me to continue to foster my cueca dance sensibilities. As such, I never lost the sensorial process that I had cultivated in previous phases, it transformed in a way that accommodated written materials.

The cueca (dance) literature added to my memory of cueca dance. This phase brought to my attention that text or the discursive is the fourth unspoken aspect of the tripartite practice. Whereas the previous phases cultivated a performance memory of cueca dance, the literature contextualized the movements, as I explained in Chapters 3 and 4, and illustrated how tightly knotted cueca dance performances are to a history of cueca dance, the cueca dance stories and the ideologies both forward. This phase helped me understand how the textual, the discursive, informs and frames performance; and, perhaps, why dancers have a hard time stepping away from the roles they must perform through the characters they embody. As ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2009) asserts, the “discursive canon” of cueca has constructed a collective memory of cueca that connects the tripartite practice to an imagined and ideal

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Child and Family Services (NCFS), had talked about how the heartbeat rhythm underlies many Indigenous songs because: 1) the heart is the first sound we hear in our mother's womb; and 2) drumming the heartbeat also connects us to the earth. Sewepagaham never mentioned that the heartbeat rhythm is part of 6/8-time signature, which makes sense because the latter is a Euro-Western structure. Nevertheless, I speculate that this heartbeat rhythm is likely influenced by Indigenous drumming practices. Cueca literature acknowledges Indigenous influence, but never states what this influence is or could be.

chilenidad + Chileannes of the countryside. As I elaborated in Chapter 3, this “discursive canon” forwards that cueca as mestiza through a Hispanic-Chilean lineage to foster and fortify a Chilean nation and national identity. Reading cueca (dance) literature was pertinent to cultivating an expansive memory of cueca dance: remembering and re-membering the past is necessary to move on, differently.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the research-creation methodology that I engaged to cultivate a memory of cueca dance. I revealed that this approach was informed by moving away from a mastery of the dance form. The latter opened me up to other possibilities for encountering and learning (about) cueca dance: the simultaneous process of learning to dance cueca and learning about its history and stories. This non-masterful research-creation methodology also required engaging a critical memory practice to attend to the way that cueca dance was affecting me. Noticing how I was being shaped by cueca dance was generative for cultivating an expansive memory of the form.

As I discussed, I used my daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing as a framework for cultivating a memory of cueca dance. I engaged an iterative and multi-modal framework to learn (about) cueca dance and cultivate a memory of the dance form. I briefly mentioned my preliminary research into cueca dance with my colleague and mentor Jennifer Dick, which informed how I entered into the research phase. I also revealed that my year of research, which lasted from December 21, 2021, to December 20, 2022, was split into four phases, each corresponding to a particular method. These phases began at or around the solstices and equinoxes and spanned at least a season but, more often than not, lasted the rest of the year.

Furthermore, each season, I brought a different media into my research and, therefore, learning (about) cueca dance unfolded in the following manner: 1) experimenting with pañuelos + handkerchiefs and cueca rhythms through sensorial prompts (beginning on the winter solstice in 2021); 2) watching YouTube videos on cueca dance (beginning around the spring equinox in 2022); 3) listening to cueca music (beginning around the summer solstice in 2022); and 4) reading cueca literature (beginning on the fall equinox in 2022).

This scaffolded approach allowed me to encounter cueca dance in an unconventional way by beginning with sensoriality instead of steps. Additionally, by starting with sensing or sensorial experiments I was able to stay longer in this method than in others, like reading; as well as bring and fold the practice of sensing into subsequent phases. This method shaped how I watched the cueca dance videos on YouTube and what I noticed was sticking in my memory. Sensoriality also informed how I approached listening to cueca music, which was initially disorienting, as I have explained above. By shifting my attention to “feeling the music”—allowing the music to affect me and move me—I was able to engage intuitive dancing to acquire a sense for the cueca compositions. This allowed me to bring cueca movements into proximity to cueca music until they finally converged. This process did not happen overnight and, in fact, reading about cueca (dance) helped me to understand how cueca dance steps fit into the music. Specifically, learning about the pulse rhythm through different sources helped me to hear the heartbeat in cueca compositions, which shifted how I engaged with the music. By the end of my year of research, I had cultivated a sensibility for cueca dance and was even able to dance a cueca (see Figure 5.19 and use QR code to access video recording).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The video can also be accessed here: [https://youtu.be/eo01wJzAIqs?si=Vc08\\_CFDdvaqApmP](https://youtu.be/eo01wJzAIqs?si=Vc08_CFDdvaqApmP).

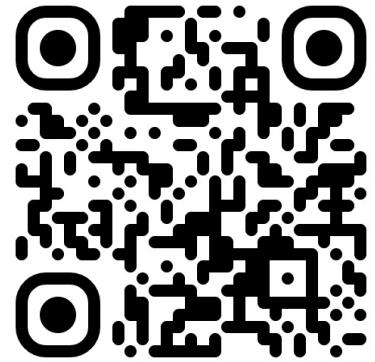


Figure 5.19: Dance still from December 20, 2022 (the last day of my research)

Although learning to dance a cueca had not really been the point of the research—meaning that I was “orientating” (Ahmed 2006) myself in this direction without holding onto the goal of being able to dance cueca—I was surprised when, one day, I found myself dancing to cueca music with cueca movements. The experience felt akin to learning a new language only in the sense that when learning to speak a different language, one day, the fog lifts and you understand the words clearly and can respond back. I am not trying to draw connections between discursive and non-discursive practices, but this is the only way that I can describe this feeling of suddenly being able to dance a cueca. This confirmed what Sally Ann Ness (2008) and Sara Ahmed (2006) argue: that the reiteration of movement shapes bodies. I became cognizant that my body had been shaped by cueca dance gestures, postures, steps and trajectories because I was performing these movements to a cueca song without thinking about it.

Moreover, through this slow, scaffolded research-creation process I cultivated a memory of cueca dance. Not only was I able to dance a cueca, I was also able to differentiate between cueca dances and connect movements to histories, stories and ideologies, as I demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4. All of these threads are significant for weaving a memory of cueca dance. The

history of cueca dance, the stories associated with the form, how cueca dance elements are articulated in performances and the ideologies all serve to re-member cueca dance or piece cueca dance together anew in different contexts and times. This is how dance is a mnemonic practice.

The next chapter illustrates how I engaged with my memory of cueca dance to re-member cueca dance differently. I discuss the cueca dance elements that I used to co-create a choreography. I highlight how shifts and pivots in the choreographic process forced me to attend to different aspects of this memory. In other words, cueca dance elements that had been important to me during my year of research, such as sensorial engagements with pañuelos and rhythms, were not always conducive to choreographing. To weave a choreography, I needed cueca dance elements that the dancers could engage and create with. This process illuminated for me the expansive memory of cueca dance that I cultivated during my year of research.

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss how I re-membered or pieced together anew cueca dance. I engaged this process to activate my memory of cueca dance that I cultivated during my year of research and further investigate how dance is a mnemonic practice: a practice that commits to memory ways of relating through ways of moving that are then re-membered during a performance. As I illustrate, re-membering, at first, was more akin to re-arranging, but over time the process became more like drawing from memory (Maracle 2015; Pandolfo 1997), the sensorial practice that I describe in Chapter 2.

I engaged with “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003) as a method to re-member cueca dance. As I explained in Chapter 2, an “act of transfer” is a bodily practice that transmits embodied ways of knowing within communities (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003). In this case, acts of transfer involved teaching and choreographing because these bodily practices impart embodied memory from the teacher/choreographer to participants/performers. I purposefully set out to teach and choreograph with cueca dance elements, near the end of my year of research, as a way to help me understand how my memory had been shaped by the form; or, to put it differently, to activate and reveal to myself my memory of cueca dance.

Teaching and choreographing, then, became activities with which to think about movement’s connection to memory. These acts of transfer allowed me to ask additional questions that were pertinent to my research on dance as mnemonic practice such as: What memory did I cultivate about cueca dance by learning about cueca dance? How can I re-member

cueca dance elements to tell a different story? How do I maintain a tether to the dance form while also trying to experiment with cueca dance elements? How do I negotiate educating students and dancers on the violent histories and stories and problematic ideologies embedded in cueca dance while imparting cueca dance elements without reinforcing those histories, stories and ideologies? How can I work with cueca dance elements in ways that move away from cueca dance conventions and that align with my values on equity and inclusion, perspectives and practices that have become important to me? Teaching and choreographing with cueca dance elements meant grappling with all of these tensions, which highlighted for me the expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated during my year of research.

In the first section, “Teaching Cueca Dance Elements”, I outline a hybrid cueca dance workshop that I facilitated for students at York University and SUNY Buffalo in November 2022. I describe the scaffolded approach that I engaged to impart cueca dance elements to the students. In this instance, I offered the students discreet elements and worked towards a short choreography to give them a sense of the dance form, particularly how the pulse-rhythm in cueca guides the footwork and the movement. This workshop provides one example of activating my memory of cueca dance. The rest of the chapter focusses on the choreographic process of *Copucha + Gup Shup* and the diverse ways that I re-membered cueca dance elements.

“Overview of *Copucha + Gup Shup*”, the following section, discusses the impetus of the choreography as well as delves into the choreographic process and product. As I reveal, *Copucha + Gup Shup* is an interdisciplinary contemporary dance piece co-choreographed with colleague, friend and PhD candidate Arpita Bajpeyi as well as in collaboration with the dancers of the York Dance Ensemble (YDE), the pre-professional dance company in the Department of Theatre and Dance at York University. The piece was created with cueca dance and kathak elements

interpreted through the Euro-Western trained bodies of the YDE dancers, with the purposes of dislodging our dance forms from nationalist narratives and presenting alternative stories. Our choreographic process began in early September 2022 and ended in early February 2023, overlapping with the last phase of my research. This provided us with just over four months to teach and choreograph with our respective dance forms. The final product also involved projections by visual artist, friend and PhD candidate Nava Waxman and live music by colleague and musician Leo Orlov. These artists' contributions helped create a context for our multi-dance form contemporary dance piece. This ambitious project provided me with another avenue for bringing to my awareness my memory of cueca dance.

The third section, “Re-membering Cueca Dance Elements”, focusses on the different ways that I worked with cueca dance elements. I first discuss a workshop that I facilitated for the YDE dancers, which concentrated on sensoriality rather than steps. This workshop stands in stark contrast to the hybrid workshop that I led for students at York University and SUNY Buffalo. Although sensoriality had potential as a choreographic method, it activated my research process more so than my memory of cueca dance, as I explain. As such, I pivoted my engagement with cueca dance elements by allowing myself to draw from memory. The rest of the section discusses three specific sections of *Copucha + Gup Shup*—“Community”, “Anticueca” and “Roosters”—to illustrate the different ways that I re-membered cueca dance elements in each one. The “Roosters” section specifically attends to importance of presenting otherwise stories for “directing” memory (Maracle 2015).

## 6.2 Teaching Cueca Dance Elements

In this section, I describe how I facilitated a workshop on cueca dance by presenting cueca dance elements in a cumulative manner. On November 15, 2022, while nearing the end of my year of research, I led a hybrid, 45-minute cueca dance workshop for students from York University and SUNY Buffalo as part of International Education Week. To guide this short encounter with cueca dance that was fun and educational I focussed the workshop on cueca dance elements that I felt were most important. These included: 1) cueca rhythms, particularly the pulse rhythm; 2) bringing the pulse rhythm into the body through clapping and then footwork; 3) learning cueca footwork such as the travel step, escobillado + brush step and zapateo + stomp step; and 4) coordinating pañuelo + handkerchief movements with footwork. As I discuss, I scaffolded these elements, adding more complex ways of engaging with the pulse rhythm as I progressed through the workshop.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, when watching YouTube videos of cueca dance, the instructors in the “how to” videos either presumed that the viewer had a cueca music sensibility when teaching cueca dance steps and/or ignored the importance of cueca music in learning cueca dance. I did not want to begin from this assumption or ignore the interconnectedness of cueca music and cueca dance. Therefore, I began the workshop with music theory and offered different ways of interacting with the cueca rhythms: visually on the black board; visually and kinesthetically with the pañuelos; and then kinesthetically and aurally with clapping and footwork.

First, I showed the participants the difference between 4/4-, 3/4- and 6/8-time by writing the music notations of these time signatures on a black board (see Figure 5.17). Then, I had them translate these time signatures into movement with the pañuelos—tracing a square, then a

triangle and finally swinging the pañuelo from side to side—exactly as I had done when learning about cueca rhythms, which I described in Chapter 5. This gave the students an embodied and sensorial understanding of the time signatures as well as a sense for how the cueca rhythms differ from 4/4-time. This music lesson offered important context for explaining cueca music’s use of polyrhythm; and it also helped illustrate how 6/8-time is a polyrhythmic pattern—information that is important for developing a rhythmic sensibility for cueca dance.

Next, I shared with the students the heartbeat or pulse rhythm that emerges from 6/8 time and that is the guiding force in cueca dance (see Figure 6.20 below). Helping the students attune to the pulse rhythm was important because this is the heart of cueca dance. Even though the rest of the workshop involved me introducing discreet cueca dance elements, they all coincided with the pulse rhythm so that they could get an embodied, felt sense of this significant aspect of cueca. I relayed that the pulse rhythm emerges from sounding beats 1, 3, 4 and 6, in 6/8-time; and, specifically, by pairing counts 3 and 4 or 6 and 1 in such a way that the rhythm sounds like a heartbeat. I explained that most of the footwork is performed to this rhythm because it is the guiding force of cueca dance. Even when cueca dancers create complex footwork that departs from the pulse rhythm, the heartbeat still undergirds their dancing. To help the students sense and embody the heartbeat rhythm, I had them clap it with their hands first and then, I had them translate it to their feet.

Standing in place, I had the students perform a hop and tap movement with their feet. For example, I had them hop onto their right foot and tap their left foot beside their right foot. Then, we repeated that same hop and tap movement on the other side: hopping onto the left foot and tapping with the right foot. I had the students pair this movement with the heartbeat rhythm so that the hop and tap were in sync with counts 3 and 4 or 6 and 1. When they got the hang of this,

I increased the pace. The hop and tap movement became the foundation for the cueca dance steps that I shared next: the travel step, escobillado and zapateo.

The travel step begins similarly to the hop and tap step. Moving towards the right, for example, the performer hops onto their right foot; however, instead of tapping their left foot beside the right foot, the dancer moves it over their right foot and puts their weight on the left foot. This weight shift frees up the right foot so that the performer can continue traveling to the right. A similar strategy is done while moving to the left: hop on the left foot and cross the right foot over the left and repeat. In short, the travel step can be reframed as a hop and cross.

Escobillado follows from the hop and cross movement. Where it differs from the travel step is that the dancer does not put their weight on the active foot. For instance, after hopping onto the right foot and crossing the left foot over the right, the dancer moves their left foot in an arc-like motion towards the back instead of placing it on the ground—this is the brush part of the brush step. This difference means that the dancer maintains their weight on the right foot and does not transfer their weight onto the left foot. This keeps the left foot free, which the dancer hops onto next to perform the brushing motion with the right foot. Because the brushing motion has to occur within one beat, the movement is quick and, as such, a bit challenging to sync up with the pulse rhythm right away.

Zapateo, on the other hand, is easier to sync up with the heartbeat rhythm. This step resembles the hop and tap, except that it is done with more force and vigour. The dancer hops onto their right foot and then stomps the left foot beside the right foot. Then, the performer can hop onto the left foot and stomp with the right. The more complicated version of this step, which I had the students try, is the zapateo with a double stomp. What is challenging about this move is that a performer, for instance, hops onto the right foot and, while landing onto the right foot, the

dancer simultaneously stomps with their left foot and then stomps again with their left foot. As such, the dancer must coordinate landing on one foot while stomping with the other twice: once on the landing (or first) beat and once again on the second beat so that the movement coincides with the heartbeat rhythm.

Alongside the cueca dance steps, I also had the students interact with their pañuelos. First, I had the students use their pañuelos to learn about and feel the different time signatures—4/4-, 3/4- and 6/8-time—as I mentioned above. Then, I showed the students a couple of ways of holding and moving their pañuelos. The first was a pinch hold in the middle of the pañuelo—executed with the thumb and index and middle fingers. This hold was coupled with a rotating motion initiated by the wrist. The second hold involved grabbing the pañuelo in both hands and placing it above their head. It was important for the students to learn how to move their pañuelos during the workshop to get a feel for how the pañuelo is activated during cueca dancing.

Additionally, I paired these holds with two different steps to give the students a sense of the coordination that is necessary to dance cueca. I connected the hold with the circular wrist movement to the hop and tap step, a combination that often appears in cueca dancing. I paired the over-head hold to the zapateo + stomping because these movements are also performed together in cueca dance. Although it was challenging for the students to sync up the pañuelo holds and movements with the footwork, these pairings were meant to illustrate to them as well as give them a sense of the complex and rhythmic ways that different body parts are simultaneously engaged in cueca dance.

Finally, using the footwork that I taught the students, I created a movement sequence that we performed to music. The sequence began with two travel steps to the right, followed by three escobillados that alternated feet. Then, we performed two travel steps to the left and three

escobillados. We repeated this phrase, but the second time around, instead of performing escobillados, we did three zapateos. I gave them the option of doing the single stomp or the double stomp. This footwork sequence was also performed with pañuelo movements. I invited the students to engage with their pañuelos in their own ways—bringing in the pañuelo holds and movements if they wanted—and, therefore, did not choreograph this part of the movement sequence for them. After trying this sequence a few times to allow them to embody the choreography, we danced it to cueca music.

Offering the students discreet cueca dance elements was a way to help them attend to the pulse rhythm in cueca dance. Although I presented them with specific cueca dance steps, the point was to get them used to feeling this pulse rhythm in their bodies, a rhythm that is not always present in Euro-Western contemporary dance training and performance, specially in the way that it shows up in cueca. I wanted the students to become curious about cueca dance and to play with the dance form beyond the workshop through the pulse rhythm. Ultimately, I wanted the students to get a sense of cueca dance and not to embody “the” cueca dance.

Imparting specific cueca dance elements to non-cueca dancers through a workshop highlighted for me aspects of my memory of cueca dance. The process illuminated for me certain cueca dance elements that I believed were important for learning about and dancing cueca: cueca rhythms, the pulse rhythm, clapping, steps and pañuelo movements and holds. These cueca dance elements were not all that I remembered about cueca dance, but they did offer a starting point for sensing my memory of cueca dance.

The rest of the chapter focusses on choreographing with cueca dance elements. As I reveal, this process began by re-membering cueca dance through re-arrangement, much like the workshop. Over time, however, re-membering cueca dance became a sensorial practice of

“drawing the best threads forward” (Maracle 2015, 17) with which to choreograph. Nonetheless, both teaching and choreographing with cueca dance elements played a significant role in bringing to my awareness how my memory had been cultivated and shaped by what I had learned about cueca dance.

### 6.3 Overview of *Copucha + Gup Shup*

In this section, I offer an overview of *Copucha + Gup Shup*. I discuss the impetus of the choreography, the choreographic process and the final product. *Copucha + Gup Shup* was a collaborative effort between Arpita Bajpeyi, thirteen dancers from the York Dance Ensemble (YDE)—the pre-professional dance company in the Department of Theatre and Dance at York University—and myself. As I discuss, Bajpeyi and I brought cueca dance and kathak elements into conversation to create an interdisciplinary, multi-“ethnic” (Kealiinohomoku 2001) contemporary dance piece.

I first explain the impetus for creating *Copucha + Gup Shup*. I reveal that for Bajpeyi and I choreographing with kathak and cueca dance elements was a way of interrogating our dance forms. I, specifically, wanted to engage with cueca dance elements to present different stories than the ones I had encountered through my research. I was also interested in activating my memory of cueca dance to reveal to myself the memory of the dance form that I had cultivated during my year of research.

Then, I outline the overarching choreographic process of *Copucha + Gup Shup*, which lasted just over four months. I present the four parameters that guided the creation of the piece. Then, I elaborate on the ways that Bajpeyi and I imparted kathak and cueca dance elements such as by oscillating between our dance forms; by having the dancers imitate and experiment with

the elements; and by scaffolding how we offered the elements. Next, I describe the three methods that we used to choreograph the piece: collaboration, structured choreography and structured improvisation. I end the sub-section by highlighting the seven sections of the choreography and the order in which they were choreographed.

Finally, I discuss that the theme of the piece centred on community. This theme was informed by “gossip” and “rumour”, the namesakes of the title of the choreography, as counter-practices that lead to a sense of belonging. I also mention the inclusion of projections and live music. These media helped create a world for our contemporary dance piece.

### 6.3.1 Choreographic Intentions

In this sub-section, I explain that Bajpeyi and I wanted to create *Copucha + Gup Shup* as a way to interrogate our dance forms. For me, one way of questioning cueca dance was to present different stories with cueca dance elements.

The impetus for creating *Copucha + Gup Shup* emerged from Bajpeyi’s and my shared desire to interrogate the traditional structures of our respective forms. We did not want the dance piece to disregard the cultural and historical contexts from within which the dance forms emerged. However, neither of us was interested or invested in replicating our dance forms in traditional ways. Therefore, we both aimed to dislodge our forms from their nationalist, gendered, racist, classist and heteronormative holds. We imagined creating a choreography that honoured both kathak and cueca dance’s intimate pasts—the courtesan’s salon and social dance spaces—and that released each genre from its nationalist reshaping by presenting a different story: a story about community that served as a container to choreograph otherwise ways of moving and ways of relating.

*Copucha + Gup Shup* served the purpose of experimenting with our respective dance forms, kathak and cueca dance, by putting them in conversation. The goal of the piece was to “re-orientate” (Ahmed 2006) cueca dance and kathak elements to present a story about community. Specifically, we wanted to play with kathak and cueca dance rather than re-create the traditional structures of those forms on stage. Our aim inspired me to work with cueca elements—aspects of cueca that could be offered to the dancers as choreographic prompts—including, but not limited to, engaging pañuelos + handkerchiefs, sounding rhythms and performing specific cueca postures and steps such as zapateo + stomping. Working with cueca elements allowed me to choreograph with cueca dance elements without replicating and reinforcing particular cueca choreographies.

I was also interested in engaging with cueca dance to tell different stories. Alternative ways of relating are already present in the cueca dance repertoire because there are many diverse and divergent variations of the form. Specifically, I was inspired by two protest cueca performances that emerged during the Pinochet dictatorship: *la cueca sola* performed in 1978 by the women of La Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos Desaparecidos + The Group of Detained and Disappeared Family Members (AFDD) and a queer(ed) cueca dance performed in 1989 by the queer collective Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis + The Mares of the Apocalypse (Las Yeguas). In *la cueca sola*, women of the AFDD took to the dance floor alone and danced a cueca sola to protest the military government’s human rights violations by making present the absence of family members who had been disappeared, which I discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. Las Yeguas’ queer(ed) cueca dance, also described in Chapters 3 and 4, similarly invoked those who are made absent in their protest cueca. Las Yeguas’ performance was titled *La Conquista de América + The Conquest of America* and contested simultaneously Spanish colonization as well

as American(-Canadian) imperialism in and neo-colonization of South America. In their performance, Las Yeguas danced a cueca together and pushed la cueca sola's envelope further by making visible the casualties of (neo-)colonization: Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, the poor, queer individuals (with or without HIV-AIDS) and land. Both cueca dances re-member cueca dance differently by engaging otherwise ways of moving and relating to present alternative stories.

Therefore, I was not interested in universalising cueca dance nor replicating heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies that favour (white) men and ways of relating that subordinate and violate certain individuals such as women, Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and queer individuals. Rather, I was curious about how I could engage cueca dance elements to create otherwise ways of moving and relating that could be in conversation with the myriad cueca dance versions and variations as well as kathak. Particularly, I became concerned with how this could be done while maintaining a tether to the culture from within which cueca dance has emerged. Although I demonstrate some ways of keeping that connection active in this chapter, this is one a line of inquiry that deserves further research through a research-creation approach.

Choreographing on and for the YDE meant that we also had to abide by the goals and expectations of the Artistic Director. We were not creating only for ourselves but also for the YDE Showcase. As such, the goals and expectations of the choreography were also connected to the fact that Bajpeyi and I had to create a product, a dance piece for the YDE Showcase. Because we were creating a choreography, we also had to be cognizant of the dancers and how we wanted to collaborate and create with them. This forced me to pivot from my goals and expectations of my research prior. Therefore, I had to proceed at a different pace than I had during my research

and this allowed me to focus on another aspect of my research: revealing to myself the memory that I cultivated about cueca dance. This was a different goal than learning about cueca dance. However, it was connected to my research into dance as a mnemonic practice. Imparting cueca dance elements to dancers (and the students in the workshop) allowed me to understand what I had learned about cueca dance. These acts of transfer were significant to my research because choreographing and teaching with cueca dance elements highlighted for me my memory of cueca dance.

### 6.3.2 Choreographic Process

In this sub-section, I detail the choreographic process of *Copucha + Gup Shup*, specifically elaborating on how Bajpeyi and I imparted and choreographed with kathak and cueca dance elements. I also describe the various methods we used to impart cueca dance and kathak elements and create *Copucha + Gup Shup*. The various ways of working with cueca dance elements helped me pay attention to which cueca dance elements were significant for choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* and this highlighted for me the memory of cueca dance I had cultivated.

*Copucha + Gup Shup* was an ambitious choreographic project that worked with cueca dance and kathak elements. Arpita Bajpeyi and I imagined our roles in this process as that of facilitators and interpreters, co-choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* in collaboration with thirteen dancers from the YDE, who were trained mainly in Euro-Western contemporary dance. My ballet training, which began at Howe Sound Dance Academy in Squamish, B.C., and continued with John Ottman at York University and Katharine Garrett at the Extension Room in downtown Toronto (to learn pointe work for my Master's research on men on pointe), allowed

me to bridge the dancers' ways of moving with cueca dance and, at times, kathak by using language that was familiar to them.

*Copucha + Gup Shup* was created in approximately fifteen rehearsals including two workshop days. As part of our choreographic process, Bajpeyi and I both held separate workshops that introduced the YDE dancers to our respective dance forms by imparting movement sequences. My workshop was aimed more at sensing and playing with pañuelos and vocalizing rhythms, which I describe in more detail below. Bajpeyi and I, then, began actually choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* around mid-September in 2022 and completed the piece in mid-February in 2023, just before the YDE Showcase. The dancers had a break in December, which made the timeline of choreographic process around or just over 4 months. During this time, we had rehearsals with the dancers once a week and on occasion, twice a week. Each rehearsal was three-hours long.

An important aspect of our choreographic process was open dialogue between ourselves and the YDE dancers. At the beginning of every rehearsal Bajpeyi and I would have a check-in with the dancers during which we would encourage them to bring their whole selves into the space. Bajpeyi and I did not want to replicate the practice of asking dancers (or students) to leave their “baggage” at the door as way to coerce people into being “professional”. In dance, this is oftentimes used to focus the dancers on the task at hand; however, through our practices and experiences, Bajpeyi and I noticed that allowing dancers to bring that “baggage” into the space permits them to engage differently and be present because they are not putting on a façade. The check-ins allowed dancers to reveal how they were doing in that moment and to use their “baggage” to fuel their curiosity in the choreographic process. The check-ins helped all of us to be sympathetic and attentive to each others' needs, creating a safe environment to be whomever

we were that day. Ironically, by allowing the dancers to bring their whole selves, they were much more willing to push themselves and to try new things during the rehearsal or, in other words, they were better able to act “professionally”. Significantly, the conversations at the beginning of each rehearsal cultivated an environment of trust, open-ness and care that permitted us to have important and meaningful conversations throughout the choreographic process. This practice fostered the sense of community that became the heart of the piece, which I elaborate on below.

Because Bajpeyi and I choreographed *Copucha + Gup Shup* with two distinct dance forms, we worked within four parameters. Together, we decided that: 1) the piece would be in 6/8 time because of this rhythm’s connection to cueca dance; 2) the phrases would end on a “one” beat because this practice is part of kathak; 3) we would work with cueca dance and kathak elements rather than teach the students cueca dance and kathak repertoires (in which we included stories such as the story of the rooster and the hen for cueca dance); and 4) we would proceed with care because we knew that many, if not all, of the YDE dancers had never encountered these dance forms before much less performed them. With regards to the fourth parameter, Bajpeyi and I were not interested in the YDE dancers performing our respective dance forms perfectly or with mastery, which postcolonial scholar Julietta Singh (2018) argues has colonial implications. We were much more invested in creating a space and situation in which the dancers could enjoy the process. This attempt was demonstrative of how we both approached and interrogated our individual movement practices.

6/8-time was foundational for the choreographic process. Although this rhythm was connected to cueca dance, it was not difficult to adapt kathak elements to 6/8-time, since this dance form works with a variety of rhythmic structures. We worked with six specific patterns derived from this time signature: 1) pulse (see Figure 6.20); 2) extended pulse (see Figure 6.21);

3) guitar rhythm A (see Figure 6.22); 4) guitar rhythm B (see Figure 6.23); 5) ascending rhythm (see Figure 6.24); and 6) fives rhythm (see Figure 6.25). Pulse and extended pulse served as baseline rhythms for both cueca dance and kathak movements. The guitar rhythms, which I borrowed from the *Cancionero de la cueca chilena + Songbook of the Chilean cueca* by folklorist Santiago Figueroa Torres (2008), were paired with cueca dance movements. The remaining two patterns, ascending rhythm and fives rhythm, were used for kathak movements. These rhythms were the bedrock of our choreography.



Figure 6.20: Pulse Rhythm with counts



Figure 6.21: Extended Pulse Rhythm with counts



Figure 6.22: Guitar Rhythm A with counts



Figure 6.23: Guitar Rhythm B with counts

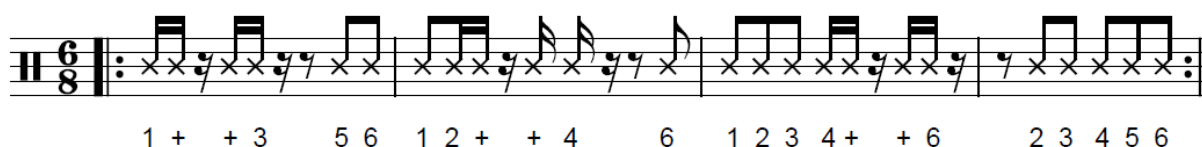


Figure 6.24: Ascending Rhythm with counts



Figure 6.25: Fives Rhythm with counts

Our choreographic process oscillated between cueca dance and kathak elements. This was in part because Bajpeyi and I would alternate leading rehearsals; and the person not leading would support the facilitator. On days that Bajpeyi led the rehearsal, the dancers would be given kathak elements or phrases informed by kathak repertoires. Conversely, on days that I led the rehearsal I would offer the dancers cueca dance elements and work with those. In some instances, we would have the dancers warm up with one of our dance forms and then choreograph with elements from the other in order to keep the dancers exposed to both dance genres throughout the process. Oscillating between the dance forms also prepared the dancers to

move between cueca dance and kathak. This method helped them sense their own points of connection between the dance forms; and the rhythms mentioned above further enabled the dancers to oscillate between kathak and cueca dance elements.

Consequently, this oscillation became a part of the piece. Not only did the dancers have to move between cueca dance and kathak rhythms and movements in distinct sections; the piece itself also moved between the forms. The two sections that are solely informed by our respective forms are the “Tukkuda”, which was only crafted with kathak elements, and the “Anticueca”, which was created using solely cueca dance elements. These sections appeared in the middle of the choreography and were connected by a transition section, the “Thaat”, which overlayed kathak movements over cueca dance rhythms.

To impart our respective dance forms’ elements, Bajpeyi and I used imitation and experimentation. Imitation, a way of learning dance in social contexts, required that Bajpeyi and I bring steps, postures, gestures and phrases into the space for the dancers to try out. We used imitation at various points during our choreographic process and in different ways. At the beginning of some rehearsals, we would offer movement sequences to the dancers as part of a warm-up and have them imitate our movement in whatever ways felt good for them. Later on in the choreographic process, we were stricter with the dancers’ imitations. At this point in time, the purpose of imitation was to create juxtaposition between our dance forms more so than to have the dancers embody the movement perfectly. For example, we wanted the dancers to embody an upright posture with a slight bend in knees for kathak to allow for spirals and diagonal arm gestures; conversely, we wanted a bent body attitude with bent knees and an untucked pelvis for cueca dance. Aspects of cueca dance that I was rigid about the YDE dancers imitating also revealed to me my memory of cueca dance.

Experimentation, on the other hand, gave the dancers room to interpret the dance element we were offering them and was a caring and careful way to bring the dancers into proximity with our dance forms. Experimentation also permitted Bajpeyi and I to find different ways of facilitating and interpreting as well as to interrogate our dance forms' structures and dislodge them from their nationalist hold, one of our goals as I mentioned earlier. There were two levels of experimentation happening in the choreographic process. Bajpeyi and I were experimenting by giving the YDE dancers kathak and cueca dance elements in a scaffolded way to allow them to become acquainted with our dance forms slowly as well as to give them space to embody and interpret the elements. Alongside this process, the dancers also experimented with our respective dance forms by piecing elements together with minimal instruction. These experimentations were based on prompts such as "create a movement phrase with kathak and/or cueca dance elements to this rhythmic composition". These kinds of experiments occurred in most of the sections to some degree, and I will discuss this in more detail below.

Moreover, Bajpeyi and I introduced kathak and cueca dance elements in a scaffolded way to bring the dancers' bodies and senses into proximity with cueca dance and kathak. Scaffolding elements rather than being didactic served the choreography best because it allowed the YDE dancers to have time to experiment with kathak and cueca dance elements. At the beginning of the choreographic process, I was less concerned with them replicating my cueca dance movements in an exact manner. Instead, I wanted them to find their own ways of articulating cueca dance elements, ways that felt right for their bodies. This inclination was definitely fostered during my year of research as well as my personal move away from mastery. As I discussed in the previous chapter, I became much more invested in a slow rigour. I was more interested, therefore, in having the dancers play with cueca dance elements and get a personal

sense of cueca dance over imparting a codified cueca choreography or confining and prescribing their cueca ways of moving. Scaffolding cueca dance and kathak elements permitted Bajpeyi, me and the dancers to spend time finding the cueca dance and kathak elements that suited the choreography.

For example, on November 9, 2022, Bajpeyi and I began the rehearsal by doing a short warm-up during using cueca dance movements. This rehearsal was saved for working with kathak but as a way to keep cueca dance in the dancers' bodies, Bajpeyi and I decided to have the dancers warm up with cueca dance vocabulary. I had the dancers form a circle around me and, while listening to cueca music, I instructed the dancers to imitate my cueca dance movements to the best of their ability. I made the choice to stand in the middle of the circle so that everyone could see what I was doing.<sup>1</sup> I also made sure to change directions every so often so that people could see various sides of my body while imitating my movements. We did this warm-up for two songs and then we moved on to kathak. These short encounters with cueca dance vocabularies on days we were choreographing with kathak helped to maintain the scaffolded approach of teaching cueca dance elements as well as to keep cueca dance in the dancers' bodies.

The cueca dance elements I imparted and choreographed with were the ones that I found in most of the five cueca dances that I observed and that I described in Chapter 4: 1) curvilinear paths; 2) dance steps; 3) postures; 4) distance and proximity; 5) pañuelo + handkerchief movements and holds; 6) clapping; 7) gaze; and 8) rhythm, particularly the pulse rhythm which is derived from 6/8 time. Dance steps that I offered the dancers included the travel step to the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a different approach than in ballet, for example, where the instructor stands in front of the studio with a wall of mirrors behind them. The dancers, in this instance, are in parallel lines across the studio that are usually perpendicular to the instructor and wall of mirrors. The dancers receive directions from the front of the room, where the instructor stands, and can use the mirrors to observe themselves and adjust their movements.

pulse rhythm, seguillida (an alternative travel step), escobillado + brushing step and zapateo + stomping step. These cueca dance elements and the pulse rhythm, specifically, served as guides through which to teach the YDE dancers (about) cueca dance—imparting cueca dance histories and stories alongside cueca dance movements. Working with cueca dance elements allowed me and the YDE dancers to work with cueca dance without getting stuck in cueca choreographic structures such as a codified cueca choreography, for example.<sup>2</sup>

*Copucha + Gup Shup* was choreographed by using three distinct methods: collaboration, structured choreography and structured improvisation. Collaboration required giving the YDE dancers cueca dance or kathak elements and asking them to come up with a movement phrase informed by those elements. Elements that were offered to the dancers mainly included steps, postures, gestures and rhythms. Sometimes, we offered a short movement phrase that combined several elements. For example, there were instances that I offered the dancers a travelling zapateo, a stomping step performed to the pulse-like rhythm that advanced into and retreated out of the imaginary circle. I had seen this step performed by many dancers in the cueca dance YouTube videos. Collaborative choreography was used for the “Community” section, which I discuss in detail below.

Structured choreography involved creating and putting sequences of movement, if not whole sections, on the dancers that Bajpeyi and I came up with. “Putting on the dancers” refers to giving the dancers already created choreography that they must embody and perform. This is the least collaborative process, since the choreographer is the one in charge of creating the sequences and/or sections. However, as I reveal below, some dancers preferred structured choreography over collaborative choreography. These dancers preferred to embody a dance

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<sup>2</sup> I provide a detailed description of the codified cueca choreography in Chapter 4.

sequence and/or section over coming up with the movement themselves. The “Anticueca” section is an example of structured choreography and I elaborate on the creation of this section below.

Structured improvisation sits somewhere in between collaborative choreography and structured choreography. Structured improvisation is a score that provides room for improvisation and can shift from performance to performance, more so than the other two ways of setting choreography. Structured improvisation can be created in collaboration with dancers or put on the dancers. As such, it can have a collaborative process or not. In *Copucha + Gup Shup*, Bajpeyi and I sometimes collaborated with the dancers to create a structured improvisation and sometimes we created the score ourselves. The “Roosters” section was created through structured improvisation. How the section was supposed to unfold was set, however, the dancers were allowed to make choices with regards to movement and who they invited to dance, as I detail below. As such, different pairings emerged from performance to performance.

Each of our choreographic methods asked us to impart elements to the dancers in different ways. Collaborative choreography and structured improvisation allowed us to give the dancers fragments that they could piece together on their own. The way that they put the elements together sometimes did not resonate with me, as I discuss below, and this helped me attend to my memory of cueca dance. Structured choreography, on the other hand, required that Bajpeyi and I piece elements together. This way of choreographing also brought to my awareness my memory of cueca dance.

Although Bajpeyi and I knew that we wanted *Copucha + Gup Shup* to consist of seven sections, we did not choreograph the piece from beginning to end. Part of the reason was that I was unavailable for the first couple of rehearsals, which meant that Bajpeyi was the only one

working with the YDE dancers. As such, the sections that we created first ended up becoming the middle of the piece; and the sections we created near the end of the choreographic process became the beginning and end. Quite by accident, then, we choreographed *Copucha + Gup Shup* from the middle of the piece outward, in the following order: 1) Tukkuda; 2) Community; 3) Anticueca; 4) Roosters; 5) Thaat or Transition;<sup>3</sup> 6) Rhythms or Entrance; and 7) Rhythms Revisited or Finale. Once we had each of the seven sections, we connected them by either adding transitions or by re-working movement phrases to allow one section to flow into the next. Of the seven sections, only “Tukkuda” and “Anticueca” consisted purely of kathak and cueca dance elements, respectively. The rest of the sections always had a mix of both dance forms. The final order of the piece went as follows: 1) Rhythms or Entrance; 2) Community; 3) Tukkuda; 4) Thaat or Transition; 5) Anticueca; 6) Roosters; and 7) Rhythms Revisited or Finale.

### 6.3.3 Choreographic Product

In this sub-section, I discuss the theme of *Copucha + Gup Shup*, community, as well as the inclusion of projections and live music. Bajpeyi and I leaned on “gossip” and “rumour” as metaphors to think about counter-practices that lead to a sense of belonging, dialogue and transformation. To create a context for the piece, we worked with friend, visual artist and PhD candidate Nava Waxman to create a projection from abstract pictures of the dancers in their costumes; and we invited colleague and musician Leo Orlov to play live music to add to the atmosphere of the performance. At the end of this sub-section, I have included a QR code and link to the video of the performance.

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<sup>3</sup> The “Thaat” or “Transition” section was loosely based on a kathak thaata, which is a scene that appears usually at the beginning of a kathak solo performance and follow a repeating rhythmic pattern in vilambit—the slowest tempo in kathak.

The theme of the piece was a sense of community. Bajpeyi and I did not want to create a choreography that presented solely a utopic idea of community. Our idea of community centred on experiencing both polyphony and cacophony. We understood that we had to sit with the tensions of our distinct forms as well as the tensions that might arise from putting our forms in conversation. This perspective and approach allowed us to conceptualize community as a space of dialogue and transformation that had to consider the dancers and their involvement. We understood that community would emerge from inviting the dancers into our forms and encouraging them to experiment, question and reflect. Therefore, we leaned on the metaphors of “gossip” and “rumour” to evoke a cacophonous and polyphonic sense of community.

“Copucha” and “gup shup” mean “gossip” or “rumour” in Spanish and Urdu—activities that bring people together. We used these activities as a metaphor to think about how a sense of community is fostered by counter-practices that interrogate the “legitimate”. As dance studies scholar Melissa Blanco Borelli (2016) asserts, “Rumor functions as a powerful device of informational exchange, in that it can circulate quickly and be quite persistent” (5). Moreover, Borelli (2016) illuminates that “[rumor] and storytelling are important aspects of theoretical recovery for Afro-Latina corporealities because they present alternative forms of knowledge production that are crucial to understanding how these bodies make meaning for themselves and ultimately have value” (22). As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Indigenous and Afro-descendent influences have been erased from cueca dance, music and song; yet, rumours and stories still remain that reveal these communities have been significant for the development of cueca, generally. The mestiza theory suggests that this is true, but, as I mentioned, mestizaje also functioned as a kind of palimpsest, a way of whitewashing the tripartite practice and aligning cueca with a criollo identity. I do not explicitly address Indigenous and Afro-descendent

inspirations in *Copucha + Gup Shup*; however, by not aligning myself with heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies and practices I “present alternative forms of knowledge production” or stories that remind that cueca (dance) contains much more than its history conveys. As Borelli (2016) argues, rumour “stands to disrupt the (hi)stories on which the nation has constructed itself” (23).

Early on in the process, Bajpeyi and I imagined the YDE dancers acquiring the skills to move from one form to another in the way that contagion moves through people. With this idea of contagion in mind, we landed on the terms rumour and gossip because these practices travel through people, transform and subvert as well as add to “truth”. We liked the idea of gossip and rumour as counter-practices to the institutionalized comportment that is present in our respective dance forms. Thinking with gossip and rumour gave us permission to move beyond the traditionalism and conservatism that is dictated by our dance forms and experiment with otherwise ways of moving and ways of relating. I engage with the feminist definition of the term “otherwise” to refer to practices, knowledges and worlds that are always already present but made peripheral, marginalized or disappeared (Justice 2018; Maynard and Simpson 2022; Myers 2020) and that offer alternatives to state-sanctioned and/or dominant ways of moving (Fortuna 2018).

To round out the world of the piece we included projections and live music. We worked with visual artist Nava Waxman, who created a projection loop from time-lapse photographs of the dancers in their colourful costumes (see Figure 6.26 for a QR code to the projection loop).<sup>4</sup> The projection began with a red field that slowly transitioned into red traces on a black field. The red traces slowly transitioned to colourful traces, which were informed by the costumes that the

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<sup>4</sup> The projection loop can also be accessed at this link: <https://youtu.be/UYvDzGzDNmw?si=nJS98hRb7M33k9L6>

dancers wore. As the piece progressed the images shifted from abstract to figurative. The final third of the projection included impressionist-like images of the dancers in different movement formations (see Figures 6.27-6.29 for images of the different kinds of traces).



Figure 6.26: Image still from projection



Figure 6.27: Example of red trace

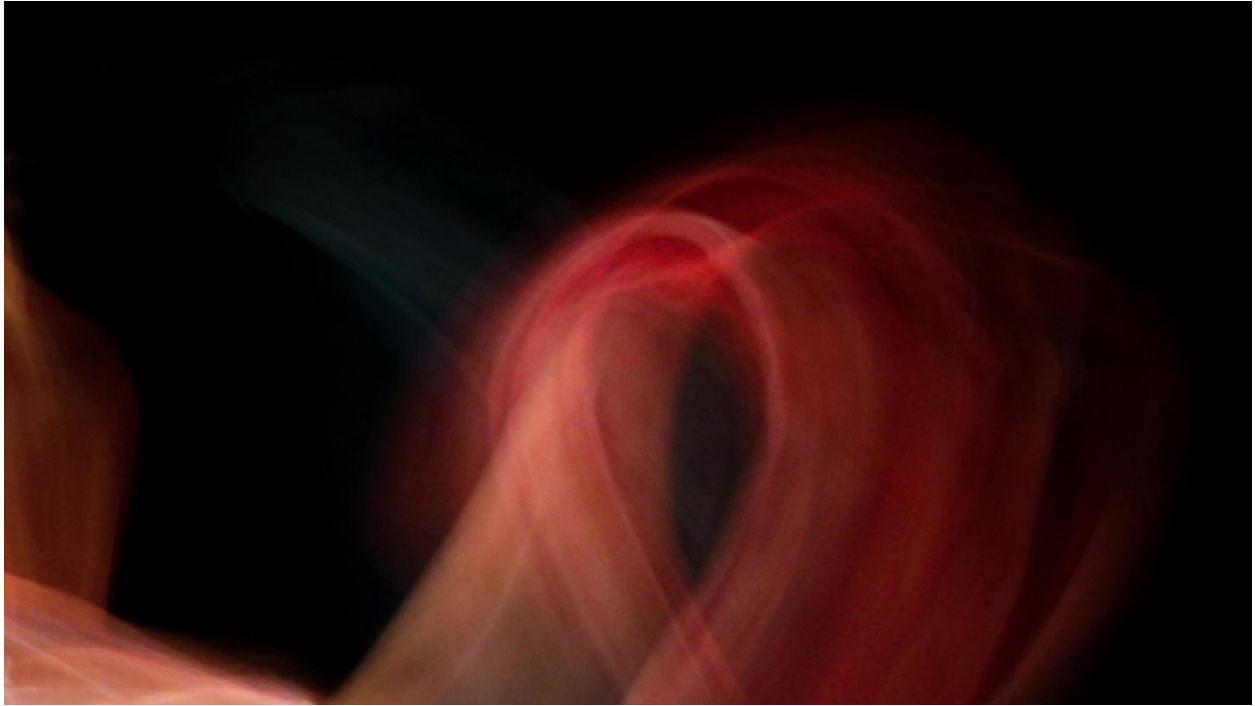


Figure 6.28: Example of colourful trace



Figure 6.29: Example of figurative trace

My personal choices for the visual design of the projection were informed by my daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing; particularly, the movement-colour synaesthesia that has emerged through this daily practice as well as the trace-like drawings that I make. As I explain in Chapter 5, a synaesthetic connection between movement and colour has emerged through my daily practice. Because drawing comes after dancing in my daily practice, over time, I began to sense colours while dancing, which I would then use to create the drawings. This practice (inside my daily practice) strengthened the movement-colour synaesthesia. Therefore, the movement from the choreography activated my synaesthesia, which sparked ideas for the colour palette of the costumes as well as the choice to begin the projection with a red field. The inspiration for the latter came from another research-creation project that I had been doing alongside my research titled “red + rojo” (“rojo” is the Spanish word for “red”). Through this visual art project, I began to make associations between red/rojo and cueca dance.<sup>5</sup> The choice of engaging with movement traces specifically, was also informed by my daily practice. Over the years, my drawings have become more and more trace-like and overlaid. This shift in my drawings inspired me to bring images of movement traces as accompaniment to the choreography.

Generally, however, the design of the projection was an intuitive process that emerged in collaboration and through many conversations with Bajpeyi and Waxman. Bajpeyi and I wanted a projection that would echo what we were doing in our choreographic process, working with elements; that would highlight the process of re-memembering or piecing together anew our forms;

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<sup>5</sup> The visual art project “red + rojo” takes up a memory following my immigration: the disorientation I felt by the colour red because it did not look like rojo, the colour that I had been taught was “red” in Chile was. During and after my year of research, I created 77 drawings with red and rojo pencil crayons and/or chalk pastels on photocopies of a pañuelo with a stamped image of rojo lapagerias. On these drawings I also wrote short reflections or poems that returned to and swirled out of this memory. I was glad to bring red/rojo and their association to cueca dance into the choreography through the projection.

and that would further serve to dislodge our forms from nationalism, traditionalism and conservatism. Through conversation, we realized that we both wanted to work with abstract images such as movement traces to present in a different way the dance elements we were working with in our choreography without it becoming representational. I mentioned to Bajpeyi my impulse to begin with the red field and it resonated. Moreover, it was Bajpeyi's idea to transition from the red field to the colourful traces by having red traces that were big and quite abstract in between these two sections of the projection.

When we had an idea of what we were looking for, Bajpeyi and I decided to bring in and work with Waxman, whose artistic practice is based on movement traces.<sup>6</sup> We first met with Waxman and discussed our vision; and Waxman offered input on creating a projection that transitioned from the red field to red traces to colourful traces to colourful impressionist-like images. We scheduled times for Waxman to come to our rehearsals to get a sense of our choreography so that she could imagine what movements would be suitable for photographing. Finally, we scheduled a rehearsal in a black-box theatre at York University so that Waxman could photograph the YDE dancers moving in their costumes both under a regular (non-colourful) wash to highlight the colour of their costumes and also under a red wash to get the red traces. Once we had the images, Waxman created a sequence based on our discussions but also intuitively and presented it to Bajpeyi and I. From that draft, the three of us worked together to refine the projection, which, again, was an intuitive process: we each brought our sense of which photographs should be taken away, added or moved to another part of the sequence as well as a sense for the timing of the transition of the photographs. Nevertheless, Bajpeyi and I always

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<sup>6</sup> By this point in time—November 2022—Waxman and I had worked together on several projects for three years. I was well acquainted with Waxman's work and had seen a projection of movement traces at Nuit Blanche that October. When Bajpeyi and I began discussing what we wanted to have as a projection, Waxman's art piece came to mind, which I showed to Bajpeyi. We both agreed that this felt right for the piece.

leaned on Waxman's expertise on time-lapse photography and artistic practice of creating projections from movement traces.

To add to the atmosphere of the piece, Bajpeyi and I both wanted to have a musician play acoustic guitar live on stage. Live music is a performance aspect that is present in both cueca (the tripartite practice) and kathak. This is one of those few similarities between kathak and cueca dance and we wanted to honour it. As such, we asked Leo Orlov, a musician in the Department of Dance, who plays the acoustic guitar skillfully, to be a part of the piece. Similar to the projection, we wanted the music to support the choreography and to echo the music traditions that are connected to our distinct dance forms. Bajpeyi and I were interested in weaving a Hindustani raga melody titled *Mishra* with aspects of *Anticueca No. 5*, a composition from Chilean singer-songwriter Violeta Parra. We met with Orlov to discuss what we were imagining and to receive input about what was possible. With Orlov's suggestions, we decided to move between the two melodies throughout the choreography. Although the shifts in music were meant to coincide with kathak and cueca dance, we also allowed Orlov to improvise with the two compositions and experiment with when they would come into the choreography. The only sections that had strict musical parameters were "Tukkuda", during which Orlov played aspects of *Mishra*, and "Anticueca", during which Orlov played Parra's *Anticueca No. 1*—I will elaborate on the choice for this composition below.

Waxman's projections and Orlov's live music contributed to the mise-en-scène of the piece (see Figure 6.30 for a QR code to the video of the performance).<sup>7</sup> As I mentioned above, the abstract movement traces in the projection referenced the choreography without representing it, helping the kathak and cueca dance movements in the choreography to extend beyond

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<sup>7</sup> The video of the performance can also be accessed at this link: <https://youtu.be/kL0hN2LUcPg?si=ZlZlYtiKb67581rY>

tradition and conventions. Additionally, because the images in the projection were, for the most part, bright and saturated, they gave the choreography a warm and celebratory feel, which connected well with the theme of community. The live acoustic guitar situated the choreography within the folk-like sonic environment associated with the instrument also contributing to the theme of community. However, weaving *Mishra* and *Anticueca No. 5* dislodged the choreography from a particular background and helped to create a different space and place for putting kathak and cueca dance in conversation and for re-membering the two dance forms. Moreover, the oscillation between the two melodies supported the ways that the dancers moved between kathak and cueca dance and engaged rumour and gossip as metaphors.

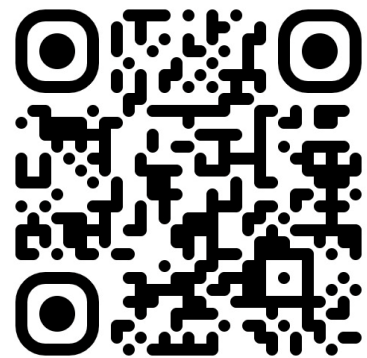


Figure 6.30: Dance still of *Copucha + Gup Shup*

#### 6.4 Re-membering Cueca Dance Elements

In this section, I describe how I re-membered cueca dance elements through “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003), specifically through teaching and choreography. First, I discuss a workshop that I facilitated for the YDE dancers. As I demonstrate, this workshop focussed on

sensoriality rather than steps, working with pañuelos and vocalizing rhythms. This way of working activated my research process more so than my memory of cueca dance, which is why I decided to pivot to other methods for the choreographic process. “Community”, “Anticueca” and “Roosters” each takes up a choreographic method described above.

The rest of the chapter delves deeper into each of these sub-sections to illustrate the different ways that I re-membered cueca dance elements. “Community” was choreographed collaboratively with the YDE dancers by offering the dancers cueca dance and kathak elements and having them come up with movement phrases. The process of re-membering, then, felt more akin to re-arrangement or collage in this section because the movement phrases were out of my hands. “Anticueca” used structured choreography that I created on myself and put on the dancers. In this instance, I re-membered cueca dance elements on my own, drawing elements from my memory. As I reveal, this presented challenges for putting the choreography on the dancers because this act of re-membering had not been a collective endeavour. “Roosters” was created as a structured improvisational score with the YDE dancers. This allowed the dancers to draw from memory cueca dance and kathak movements during the section. Moreover, this section was “orientated” (Ahmed 2006) towards presenting an otherwise story about a rooster character—one of friendly competition instead of conquest which involved showing off moves rather than chasing and capturing one another. I will not address the way in which the rooster is evoked in kathak, but I will speak to how, for me, transforming the rooster character and presenting a different story “directed” (Maracle 2015) my memory of cueca dance towards a different goal, allowing me to re-member cueca dance elements mindfully.

In the sub-sections that elaborate on “Community”, “Anticueca” and “Roosters” I offer a movement summary first; then I delve into the choreographic process to illustrate how I re-

membered cueca dance elements. I suggest watching the sections once before reading the movement description. Please see Figure 6.30 to access the video on YouTube. You can find the “Community” section at 2:08 minutes; the “Anticueca” section at 7:56 minutes; and the “Roosters” section at 10:13 minutes. (The description section below the video has time links for each section.) Teaching and choreographing with cueca dance elements offered me the opportunity to activate my memory and reveal to myself my memory of cueca dance.

#### 6.4.1 Teaching with Sensoriality

In this section, I discuss the workshop that I did with the dancers of the YDE as part of the choreographic process. This workshop stands in stark contrast with the workshop that I facilitated for the students at York University and SUNY Buffalo, which I discussed above. Instead of imparting steps, I began with sensorial encounters with pañuelos and with vocalization. While this approach showed a lot of potential as a choreographic method, I realized that I was activating my research process and not my memory of cueca dance. As such, I pivoted by deciding to work more closely with cueca dance elements to re-member cueca dance.

The first encounter that the YDE dancers had with cueca dance occurred on September 23, 2022. On this date, I led a workshop that mainly focused on playing with pañuelos and on vocalization. The structure of the workshop was split into three parts that built on each other: 1) introductions and a grounding breathing exercise; 2) playing and experimenting with pañuelos; 3) vocalizing with rhythms that emerged from breathing; and 4) performing a pañuelo movement phrase to a rhythmic vocalization.

I began the workshop with introductions and by inviting the YDE dancers to bring their whole selves into the room and to channel any personal challenges or anything immediate in

their body into the workshop. I let them know that they could ask questions at any time during the workshop and that they could feel free to explore beyond the limits of what I was going to be offering them. Following this, we dove into a grounding exercise that involved breathing deeply and tuning into their breath. I even suggested that they use yawning to get air into their bodies and to ground themselves in the moment. Then, I asked them to walk around the studio as a way to enter the space. Specifically, I instructed them to pay attention to the rhythm of their heart and to walk at that pace as a way to allow them to sense their bodies.

Once the warm-up was done, I handed each dancer a pañuelo. I told the dancers that I wanted them to get acquainted with their pañuelo through sensing and play. I facilitated their encounters with their pañuelos by offering the dancers different sensorial prompts as departure points. For example, I instructed them to use their sense of smell and touch to attune to the scent of the fabric as well as its texture. I asked them if they could make their pañuelo make noise and showed them a whipping motion that could do this, which they imitated. I encouraged them to also find their own ways of making their pañuelos make noise. I directed them to find both conventional and unconventional ways of engaging with their pañuelos such as dabbing or cleaning one's skin and putting the pañuelo over one's face. These were some ways that the dancers initially played and experimented with their pañuelos.

After they had some time to become acquainted with their pañuelos, the play continued but it was directed towards generating movement phrases. I asked the dancers to find at least seven ways of moving and/or interacting with their pañuelos. Once they had their movements, we did a short show-and-tell during which each student presented a pañuelo gesture or movement that was unconventional. I remember one dancer using the pañuelo as a small mat on which to do yoga, which stuck with me because I found the image of the dancer doing a balance

pose on a tiny square of fabric quite comical. Following the show-and-tell, I asked the dancers to create a movement phrase from the pañuelo movements that resonated the most with them. The dancers were instructed to embody this phrase and remember it for the next part of the workshop.

During the final part of the workshop, I had the dancers return to walking and breathing in order to find and vocalize a rhythm. We began with a quick vocal warm-up to get their voices ready to vocalize. During the warm-up I offered vocables or phonemes that they could use in their vocalization such as “da”, “ba”, “ma” and “pa”, for example. Once the vocal warm-up was done, I instructed the dancers to take some time to walk in silence around the space and tune in to their breathing. Once they were attuned to their breathing, I had them sense if there was a rhythmic pattern emerging. If there was, I encouraged them to vocalize it using the vocables that I had offered. I also mentioned that if no pattern was emerging, then they could jump onto someone else’s rhythm. Surprisingly, all of the dancers vocalized their own rhythms, which suggested to me how willing they were to experiment with voice work.

As they were walking around the space and vocalizing, I directed the dancers to stop in place and to marry their vocalizations with the pañuelo movement phrases they had created. The result was a beautiful polyphonic moving tableau: each dancer had a distinct movement phrase that was accompanied by a unique sonic pattern. Because the dancers were moving in place, the various levels of the impromptu choreography became quite prominent: some were moving on or close to the floor, some were moving up high and some were moving in between. The divergent rhythms created a layered sonic environment that added to the movement and the scene and gave the group a sense of community: each dancer felt like they were an individual who was part of a whole much like a movement or singing choir. The workshop culminated in another show-and-

tell during which the dancers performed their pañuelo movement phrases to their vocalizations one by one.

During the workshop, I also spoke to the dancers about gender in cueca dance. I showed them the two pañuelos that my aunt had gifted me and spoke about how the one with ruffles would likely be used by a woman dancer. This allowed me to illustrate how objects become gendered based on cultural associations. The pañuelo example also permitted me to discuss cueca dance's underlying heteronormativity and to elaborate on how gender manifests through movement. I mentioned that movement gets mapped differently on different bodies because of (cultural) gender assumptions. For example, I mentioned that delicate movements are oftentimes associated with women's movement vocabulary versus strong, assertive movements, which are oftentimes relegated to men's repertoire. I reminded them that we need to pay attention to gender because it is easy to replicate it in dance. Moreover, I encouraged them to play with gender as we proceeded with the choreography. This discussion also reminded me that I did not want to propagate and reinforce gendered expressions of cueca dance—nor the various heteropatriarchal and settler colonial stories found in the form, as I elaborated on in Chapters 3 and 4—in the choreography we were creating.

This workshop activated my process for learning about cueca dance more so than the memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated. I was beginning in the same way that I had started my year of research and not from what I had committed to memory. Therefore, even though working with sensoriality showed promise as a choreographic method, I moved away from this approach towards working with cueca dance steps, postures and movements in subsequent rehearsals to activate my memory of cueca dance. I figured that engaging cueca dance elements more directly would better bring to my awareness my memory of cueca dance. I pivoted to a

more direct but scaffolded approach to imparting cueca dance elements, as I elaborated on earlier, which encouraged me to draw from my memory. In the next three sub-sections, I offer examples of different ways of working with cueca dance elements to re-member cueca dance.

#### 6.4.2 Choreographing the “Community” Section

In this sub-section, I discuss how I engaged with cueca dance elements to co-choreograph the “Community” section. “Community” was the first section that Bajpeyi and I choreographed together and the second section to be created in the choreographic process.<sup>8</sup> This section was finished before the end of the Fall semester in 2022. The “Community” section was created in collaboration with the dancers who were given instructions and rhythms for choreographing their movement phrases. What I highlight is that the process of re-membering was more akin to re-arranging in this instance because I was not yet accustomed to sensing with my memory of cueca dance.

Within the piece, this section sits between the “Entrance” or “Rhythms” section and the “Tukkuda” section. At the end of the “Rhythms” section, the dancers end up in a semi-circle formation that faces the audience and that spans from downstage right to downstage left. The dancers are all clapping the pulse rhythm (see Figure 6.20) at the tempo set by the musician, Leo Orlov, who enters with them as the “Rhythms” section draws to a close. The pulse rhythm’s tempo is set by Orlov so that it coincides with the tempo of the music that Orlov begins to play when the first group of dancers start their movement phrases. In this section, Orlov oscillates between themes from Chilean singer-songwriter Violeta Parra’s *Anticueca No. 5* and a

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<sup>8</sup> The first section that was choreographed was “Tukkuda”, which Bajpeyi collaboratively created with the YDE dancers.

Hindustani raga melody titled *Mishra*. Orlov's fluctuation is meant to accompany and index the way the dancers switch between cueca dance and kathak elements throughout the "Community" section.

"Community" consists of four clusters of dancers that take "to the floor", so to speak, in a successive manner. As the section unfolds, the size of the groups grow and the semi-circle slowly fractures until it disappears. "Community" begins with three dancers performing cueca dance-inspired movements downstage right. The dancers finish their phrase on a "one" beat, which is when three different dancers break from the semi-circle and begin performing their choreography. This second group begins upstage left—diagonally across from the first group—and travels along this diagonal towards the downstage right corner. A dancer from the first group and a dancer witnessing from the semi-circle join the second group as they transition from cueca dance-inspired movements to kathak-inspired phrases. These five dancers finish their phrase together before the group disbands.

As the second group is completing their trajectory, a third group of three dancers breaks from the semi-circle and begins their choreography. The third group begins downstage left and, moving in a clockwise direction, travels along a curvilinear trajectory towards upstage right. Similar to the second group, the third group is joined by a couple of dancers halfway through their trajectory. Unlike the second group, the third group begins with kathak movements and then switches to cueca dance phrases. Moreover, halfway through the trajectory, a fourth group joins the third group inside the semi-circle. The fourth group, which begins their choreography upstage right, also travels along a curvilinear trajectory moving in a clockwise direction. The fourth group spirals towards the centre of the stage and ends up facing the third group which is now upstage right. The "Community" section ends with Orlov playing fragments of *Mishra* as

the dancers from the fourth group join the rest of the dancers at upstage right. This is where the thirteen dancers will begin their next section: “Tukkuda”.

“Community” was created in collaboration with the dancers. Bajpeyi and I gave the dancers instructions and prompts so that they could each choreograph movement phrases. Specifically, we directed the dancers to come up with movement phrases inspired by two cueca rhythms: 1) the pulse rhythm (see Figure 6.20); and 2) the extended pulse rhythm (see Figure 6.21). We also offered the dancers the opportunity to engage with cueca dance or kathak steps and gestures or not—steps and gestures they had learned in previous rehearsals. We also gave the dancers the opportunity to bring their Euro-Western contemporary dance vocabulary into the construction of their movement phrases. This allowed the dancers to mix and match movements.

The foundation of this section was creating movement phrases from two 6/8-time rhythms: pulse and extended pulse. I introduced the pulse rhythm first because it is steady, like a heartbeat. The rhythm is created by sounding four out of the six beats in a bar; particularly, beats 3 and 4 and beats 6 and 1 (see Figure 6.20). Vocalizing (and textualizing) this rhythm sounds (and looks) something like this: “da-dum (3-4) da-dum (6-1) da-dum (3-4) da-dum (6-1)” and so on. Because rhythm is kept in the feet in cueca dance, most cueca dance footwork or steps are based on this rhythm. As I explained earlier when discussing the hybrid workshop that I facilitated for students at York University and SUNY Buffalo, the travel step uses two beats to move along the curvilinear trajectory of the circle. You step out on one beat and then cross your other leg in front of the first one on the second beat. However, there are many more ways that the pulse rhythm can be evoked through footwork.

After the dancers played with the pulse rhythm for a little while, I introduced the extended pulse rhythm, which is a little more complicated. Figure 6.21 illustrates that after three

sets of two, or after three pulses, a pattern of five consecutive notes follows. Vocalizing this rhythm sounds like this: “da-dum (3-4) da-dum (6-1) da-dum (3-4) da-dum-da-da-dum (6-1-2-3-4)”. Two sets of this rhythm completes the cycle because it ends on beat “one”.<sup>9</sup> The extra note (beat two in the sequence of five) that is sounded in the extended pulse momentarily disrupts the heartbeat rhythm and offers the dancers the opportunity to move through the musical phrase. Although this took a little longer for the dancers to embody and sense, some of them still used it in the creation of their movement phrases.

Once each dancer had a movement phrase informed by these rhythms, they were put into groups of three and asked to combine their phrases to create a group choreography. I gave them the option to either connect their movement phrases or to pull from each other’s movement sequences. Most of the groups opted for the second option and what emerged were these trios that moved around the space in fascinating ways. There were some movements that closely resembled cueca dance and there were some ways of moving that looked nothing like cueca dance. One group, the fourth group to begin dancing in the “Community” section, for example, created a choreography that had very little inspiration from cueca dance and kathak elements. Their movement phrase was influenced by Euro-Western contemporary dance the most since they played with tilt and fall and catch, ways of moving that are not present in cueca choreographies nor kathak. Nonetheless, each of the groups exuded joy and fun, which was not something that we had encouraged but which was wonderful to see.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> One complete cycle of the extended pulse sounded out: da-dum (3-4) da-dum (6-1) da-dum (3-4) da-dum-da-da-dum (6-1-2-3-4) da-dum (6-1) da-dum (3-4) da-dum (6-1) da-dum-da-da-dum (3-4-5-6-1). We ended on a “one” to follow a custom in a kathak.

<sup>10</sup> In my research journal I mention that on this particular date (November 15) the check-in had been a little somber in part to the rainy, cloudy weather. Some of the dancers were also exhausted and feeling a lot of pressure at this point in the semester. However, by the end of the rehearsal the mood had completely changed, the dancers were smiling and their movement felt joyous. Moreover, Bajpeyi and I never wanted the dancers to perform something they did not feel themselves. We wanted them to stay as true to their feelings as possible. When I first started taking dance lessons in B.C., I noticed that smiling and displaying joy was asked of dancers. Sometimes, the smiling faces

My intention had always been to shape each group's choreography to "look" more like cueca dance once their movement sequences were created. However, time constraints during the choreographic process did not allow for this. There was one rehearsal during which I was able to adjust and shape the first group's choreography. My main intervention was with respect to the shape of their choreography: the three dancers had created a sequence that was performed in a line with one dancer behind the other. This felt out of place, for me, because straight line formations do not show up in cueca dance. Instead, I shifted their formation to a small circle and had them begin facing each other. From this position, they would move away and return to their circle, mimicking the play with distance and proximity that is found in cueca choreography. I also adjusted some of their steps to resemble cueca dance more and to better align with the pulse and extended pulse rhythms. Aside from these interventions, most of their choreography remained the same. The impulse to have movements "look" like cueca dance and the adjustments I described offered a glimpse at the memory of cueca dance I had cultivated during my year of research.

The "Community" section was, for me, one of the most experimental ways of remembering cueca dance because the way that cueca dance elements were being brought together was out of my hands. Although I had offered the dancers specific steps and ways of moving their pañuelos, in the end it was up to them to decide: 1) whether they were going to engage with the elements I had offered; and 2) how to bring those elements together. The rhythms that they choreographed to and to which their movement phrases were connected were essentially the only

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felt dishonest and more like a failed performance. Bajpeyi and I did not want to work with the dancers in a way that coaxed feelings out of them. On my end, I turned to how choreographers Sashar Zarif and Aria Evans had worked with me: allowing me to feel whatever feelings were emerging in the moment. Working in this way was liberating and I was able to be more present and honest in performances. Therefore, the way the dancers exuded joy and fun was surprising because something about the choreography and the process made them feel this way. This suggested to me that Bajpeyi and I were leading a process in which joy and fun were emerging organically.

tethers to cueca dance. This was particularly true for the fourth group, which used the least amount of cueca dance elements in the creation of their movement phrase. Because dancers could pick and choose which elements to bring together—without an awareness of the context—the process felt more like re-arranging or collaging, which still involves sensing but feels different than re-membering as a directional, sensorial practice (Maracle 2015; Pandolfo 1997).

With more time, I would have adjusted all the groups' choreography to "look" more like cueca because this was my initial inclination. I would have done this more so to offer a stark contrast between cueca dance vocabulary and kathak movements. Although I would not have changed each groups' movement phrases, I would have shaped them by adding other cueca dance elements such as specific pañuelo movements, curved and/or crouched postures and cueca dance footwork that better aligned with the rhythms. I also would have turned lines into circles in a similar way that I did with the first group. Although I was aware of this impulse in the moment, I had a hard time interrupting my inclination and leaving the movement phrases that the YDE dancers created as they were. Paradoxically, this impulse was at odds with my goal of re-membering cueca dance, differently, because I inadvertently was reiterating the form as I had seen it be performed. Paying attention to this paradox, however, helped me notice my memory of cueca dance. As such, this inclination and its tension with my goal demonstrates well that I had been affected by learning (about) cueca dance and that I had cultivated a memory of the form. In other words, my memory of cueca dance was kicking in as a force, "orientating" me to movement histories (Ahmed 2006) that I was attempting to interrogate.

### 6.4.3 Choreographing the “Anticueca” Section

In this sub-section, I describe how I worked with cueca dance elements to choreograph the “Anticueca” section. “Anticueca” was the only section that I choreographed by myself and one of the few sections we put on the YDE dancers.<sup>11</sup> I choreographed the “Anticueca” section on January 12, 2023, and I began putting the choreography on the dancers the following day during the first rehearsal following the holiday break.<sup>12</sup> As I explain below, re-membering cueca dance elements on my own revealed to me my memory of cueca dance. However, challenges arose with respect to imparting the choreography to the YDE dancers. These challenges reminded me that re-membering is a sensorial *and* communal practice as Lee Maracle (2015) forwards.

Within *Copucha + Gup Shup*, the “Anticueca” section sits between the “Thaat” or “Transition” section and the “Roosters” section. “Anticueca” begins as an interruption to the “Thaat” or “Transition” section. During “Thaat” the dancers are split into two groups: one group of five dancers is downstage left while the rest of the dancers are clustered diagonally across from them and between centre stage and downstage right. The five dancers who are downstage left are loosely performing a kathak thaata: a scene with poses and gestures that usually appears at the beginning of a kathak solo and that follows a repeating rhythmic pattern in vilambit, the slowest tempo. The rest of the dancers are clapping a cueca rhythm, guitar rhythm A (see Figure 6.22), in the direction of the five dancers, giving them the tempo for their thaata-like performance.

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<sup>11</sup> “Anticueca” was created in part to echo the “Tukkuda” section, which was created solely with kathak elements, since only cueca elements were engaged to choreograph this section. As a result, “Anticueca” also balances *Copucha + Gup Shup*.

<sup>12</sup> “Putting choreography on the dancers” is way of working with dancers in which the choreographer creates the movement and imparts it to the dancers, step by step. As a side note, this is a way of choreographing that, I have been told by some choreographers, is not always well regarded. It is sometimes connected to the choreographer as “auteur” or author and to forms like ballet and commercial dance. In Euro-Western contemporary dance the custom is developing a vocabulary with the dancers and guiding the dancers in the creation of movement phrases. However, I have also heard from dancers that they view this practice as extractive because these movements are their intellectual property. Putting choreography on the dancers is a way of choreographing in which they interpret my intellectual property.

The tempo of the clapping begins to speed up and as it becomes unsustainable two dancers burst out of the cluster and run towards the five dancers who are downstage left. As these two dancers run through the thaat-like scene, the musician Leo Orlov starts playing Violeta Parra's *Anticueca No. 1*. This marks the beginning of the "Anticueca" section.

A chase ensues during the musical introduction in Parra's composition. The dancers move in opposing concentric circles on stage as they either attempt to catch or follow the two dancers that disrupted the previous scenario. The dancers end up in a circle at the end of the composition's introduction; and they maintain this circular formation for the rest of the "Anticueca" section.

Movement-wise, "Anticueca" mainly alternates between gestures and steps that are performed in place and curvilinear trajectories that move and maintain the circular formation. After the dancers arrive at the circle, there is a moment during which they engage with their pañuelos by making them move in both conventional and unconventional ways such as by flicking them or by rubbing them on their face. Following this, the dancers skip in a counterclockwise direction while tracing arcs in the air with their pañuelo-holding hands. Once the dancers arrive at their new spot on the circle, they begin the "Major Redonda", the longest moving circle in "Anticueca".

The "Major Redonda" switches direction seven times during the span of a minute (see Table 6.10 below). These changes in direction coincide with a musical call and response that is embedded in the Parra's *Anticueca No. 1*. During the "Major Redonda" there are also instances when the dancers pause the rotation of the circle before continuing in the same direction. These moments are also connected to Parra's composition. Moreover, the interruptions, switches and

| The “Major Redonda” in the “Anticueca” Section ( <i>Anticueca No. 1</i> , 0:43-1:33) |                                                         |                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Direction                                                                            | Travel Steps                                            | Switches                             |
| Clockwise                                                                            | travel step to the left 4 times                         | switch leading foot                  |
|                                                                                      | travel step to the left 3 times                         | switch leading foot, switch again    |
| Counterclockwise                                                                     | travel step to the right 3 times                        | switch leading foot                  |
|                                                                                      | travel step to the right 4 times                        | switch leading foot, switch again    |
| Clockwise                                                                            | travel step to the left 7 times                         | switch leading foot                  |
|                                                                                      | (through the silence in the music)                      |                                      |
|                                                                                      | travel step to the left 3 times                         | switch leading foot, switch again    |
| Counterclockwise                                                                     | travel step to the right 4 times                        | switch leading foot in place 3 times |
|                                                                                      |                                                         | while turning to the left            |
|                                                                                      | travel step to the right 4 times                        | switch leading foot in place 4 times |
| Clockwise                                                                            |                                                         | while turning to the left            |
|                                                                                      | while travelling to the left, turn to the left 8 times  |                                      |
|                                                                                      | (these are 4 complete turns)                            |                                      |
| Counterclockwise                                                                     | travel step to the left 4 times                         | switch leading foot, switch again    |
|                                                                                      | travel step to the right 2 times                        | switch leading foot, switch again    |
| Clockwise                                                                            | while travelling to the left, turn to the left 14 times |                                      |
|                                                                                      | (these are 7 complete turns)                            |                                      |
| In Place                                                                             | throw your pañuelo in the air (as the music slows)      |                                      |

Table 6.10: Choreography for the Major Redonda

turns in place during the “Major Redonda” are paired with a “sh” sound, which the dancers vocalize together.<sup>13</sup> Following the “Major Redonda” the dancers engage with their pañuelos again and then begin a stomping sequence during which they move towards the centre of the circle and then back to the periphery. The stomping is soft and subtle at first but then it swells into bigger, louder movements before it fades away as the dancers return to their spot on the circle. The dancers then travel in a counterclockwise direction, execute another stomping sequence in place and perform their final moving circle in a clockwise direction. “Anticueca” ends with the music, as the dancers make their way to a sitting position on the ground. It is from here that the dancers begin the “Roosters” section.

Unlike the “Community” section, “Anticueca” was not created in collaboration with the YDE dancers. I choreographed “Anticueca” by myself and on myself and then I put the choreography on the dancers. Part of the reason for engaging this choreographic method was time constraints since I could work on this section on my own, outside of rehearsals, and then bring it into rehearsal. Another reason for choreographing “Anticueca” on my own was that, prior to the Christmas break in 2022, Bajpeyi and I had a conversation with the dancers during which we asked them if they preferred creating their own choreography or having choreography be put on them. Surprisingly, half of them preferred to be choreographed on. We took this into consideration and decided that I would choreograph a section inspired by cueca dance elements.

The significance of being inspired by cueca dance elements is that it allowed me to activate my memory of cueca dance. By allowing myself to be inspired by cueca dance elements,

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<sup>13</sup> During rehearsals, the dancers would yell “switch” when changing directions. We used this strategy in rehearsals to help the dancers embody the choreography for the “Anticueca” section, which some of the dancers likened to math because of its precision. The goal was to eventually get rid of the “switch” calls, but instead we swapped out the word with the “sh” sound. This permitted the dancers to maintain the practice of calling the switches that they had developed in rehearsals while also giving an uncreative nod to rumour and gossip, which in the hallways occur in whispers followed by shushes when someone is nearby. The “sh’s” are also akin to the sound that brush steps make in cueca dance. Thank you to Ken Little for making this connection.

I was engaging the form through a personal impulse to re-member cueca dance through my intuitive dance method. Up until this point, I had only offered cueca dance elements to the dancers and shaped their movement phrases, as I explained in above; I had not yet experimented with the form by myself in a purposeful way—in a way in which I could draw from my memory in a moment. Prior to choreographing, I had danced arrangements of the cueca dance elements during the dance portion of my daily practice that did not “look” and/or “feel” like the cueca dances I had watched. However, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, the intention had not been to replicate cueca dance performances or become a master cueca dancer; the goal of my research had been to cultivate a memory of the dance form. Choreographing “Anticueca”, on the other hand, had the explicit goal of re-memembering cueca dance. The process of creating “Anticueca” allowed me to sense with my memory.

“Anticueca” was choreographed to Violeta Parra’s *Anticueca No. 1* in one afternoon.<sup>14</sup> I chose Parra’s *Anticueca No. 1* because the composition sounded nothing like conventional cueca music. Over the winter break in 2023, I was searching for music that could compliment *Mishra*, the Hindustani raga melody that Bajpeyi wanted to use. By happenstance I came across Parra’s five anticuecas. These five guitar compositions, which are in 3/4 and/or 6/8 time, contain no lyrics and do not sound like typical cueca music. The five anticuecas have a surreal sound quality that is, at times, melancholic. Both characteristics left *Anticueca No. 1* open to movement interpretation and resonated well with *Mishra*.

Parra’s *Anticueca No. 1* was an exciting and challenging composition to choreograph to. The guitar piece can be interpreted in 3/4-time or 6/8-time and is quick since the quarter note is

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<sup>14</sup> Parra was an immensely important Chilean singer-songwriter who laid the foundations of the Chilean New Song movement. Between 1957 and 1960, Parra recorded *Composiciones para Guitarra*, an experimental album in which Parra played with and pushed traditional musical genres. The album contains five anticuecas, compositions in 3/4- and/or 6/8-time signatures that experiment with cueca music melodies and harmonies.

set to 152 beats per minute (BPM).<sup>15</sup> When I first encountered the composition, I was amazed by how much it diverged from the cueca music that I had been dancing to and through which I had fostered a sensibility for cueca music, as I discussed in Chapter 5. This disorientation encouraged me to enter the composition through sensoriality. I listened to Parra's *Anticueca No. 1* many times to get a sense of the composition, but that was not helpful because I could not sense the pulse rhythm. As such, I decided to get out of the chair I was sitting on and improvise to the composition by directing my intuitive dancing method towards cueca dance elements. This engagement helped me sense the pulse rhythm in *Anticueca No. 1* in my body, specifically my feet, which found and fell into the pulse rhythm. This surprised me because I had been under the impression that I had cultivated an ear for the pulse rhythm; however, improvising to Parra's composition highlighted for me that my attunement to the pulse rhythm was a bodily awareness, a sense. Although I had not been able to sense the rhythm while listening to it, dancing to the composition revealed the rhythm to me and cueca dance elements immediately began to emerge.

By engaging my intuitive dancing method and drawing cueca dance elements forth, I felt how my body wanted to move with cueca vocabularies and this provoked movement images. The movement images, in turn, offered additional ways of moving to the music. Therefore, I flip-flopped between sensing how my body wanted to move and moving towards the movement images that were emerging. After improvising to Parra's piece several times, I had enough movement phrases and vocabulary for the "Anticueca" section. I spent the rest of the afternoon shaping the choreography and finalizing the cueca movements.

The choreography for the "Anticueca" section gave a nod to cueca dance but did not replicate cueca choreographies. A benefit of choreographing with Parra's *Anticueca No. 1*, a non-

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<sup>15</sup> Songs with the same BPM include No Doubt's "Don't Speak", Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around... Comes Around" and Mumford & Sons' "After the Storm", for example.

traditional cueca composition, is that it offered me the possibility to re-member cueca dance elements in unconventional ways: I was able to sense, play and experiment with these elements without being inclined or bound to the codified cueca choreography or other cueca dance performances. Consequently, “Anticueca” became deeply connected to Parra’s piece, which guided the emergence of the choreography. Interestingly, the strongest sense and image that I kept receiving while improvising was that of a moving circle that kept switching curvilinear trajectories over and over again. This provided a nice framework for including cueca dance steps and ways of moving but not in their usual order or in stereotypical ways. In this way, I was able to work with cueca dance elements to re-member cueca dance, differently.

Although the process for creating “Anticueca” was short for me, it took a lot longer to put the choreography on the dancers. The vocabulary and sensibility that came quite easily to me was challenging to transfer to the dancers. For instance, the dancers had a hard time sensing the call-and-response-like structure that permeated the composition, which, as I mentioned above, guided me in the creation of the “Major Redonda” section. For me, the switches in the “Major Redonda” were clear because I had cultivated a sensibility for the call-and-response in the melody of *Anticueca No. 1*. For the dancers, however, the switches—especially how they were spaced out—felt like an odd mathematics. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the movement and choreographic structure had not come from their bodies. Therefore, I had to give them the counts for where the switches resided in the “Major Redonda”. To further help them embody these changes and get a sense of the music, I had them call out “switch” every time they switched feet during this portion of “Anticueca” during rehearsals, which later turned into the “sh” sound. The dancers embraced and enjoyed the “sh’s” and they remained in the choreography as a part of the “Anticueca” section.

Because I knew that the “Major Redonda” was the most complicated part of “Anticueca”, this is what I started with when I began putting the choreography on the dancers. I recognized that they would not be able to embody the “Major Redonda” in one rehearsal; therefore, I scaffolded how I imparted this section. The remaining rehearsals, for example, were spent doing several activities in the three hours: 1) rehearsing the “Major Redonda” at least once; 2) giving the dancers the rest of the “Anticueca” section in digestible bits until they had the whole choreography; and 3) completing the remaining sections of *Copucha + Gup Shup* with Bajpeyi. This layered approach permitted Bajpeyi and I to keep choreographing *Copucha + Gup Shup* without getting stuck on one section; and, more importantly, it allowed the dancers to be continuously exposed to the “Major Redonda” so that they could get comfortable with and foster a sense for the choreography without tiring them out or making them sick of it.<sup>16</sup>

Despite setting the choreography for “Anticueca”, there were moments in the section during which the dancers could improvise and perform their own interpretation of cueca dance elements. Specifically, these moments of improvisation were connected to when the dancers had to interact with their pañuelos as well as the parts when they stomped. During these spaces in the choreography, the dancers were allowed to draw on gestures and movements that they had encountered in rehearsals. For example, the ways that they chose to engage with their pañuelos were informed by gestures and movements that they had come up with during the initial workshop that I facilitated for them as well as ways of interacting with their pañuelos that they

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<sup>16</sup> The “Anticueca” section was the most challenging section for the dancers. Two weeks before the first performance, Bajpeyi and I spoke with the dancers about whether or not they wanted to keep this section in the piece. Up to that point, how the YDE dancers performed the section oscillated: sometimes they performed it with ease and sometimes they struggled and became confused; and the dancers and I never really knew which way it would go. My fear was that the adrenaline of performing on stage for an audience might affect their performance of “Anticueca” in a negative way. For this reason, I let the dancers know that I was okay if they wanted to remove this section from the choreography, but they insisted on keeping it in. Before every performance, the thirteen dancers would get together and specifically run through the “Major Redonda”, demonstrating their determination and willingness to embrace a challenge.

had fostered throughout the choreographic process. Similarly, the ways in which they stomped depended on how they had engaged with this step in rehearsals. I did not push a particular way of stomping on the dancers; instead, I offered them the guidance and means so that they could find their own ways of performing this step. As such, the stomping step differed in size and sound since the dancers chose to perform the step small or big, softly or loudly and mixtures thereof. These spaces for improvisation permitted the dancers to draw from their own cueca dance vocabularies and sensibilities, which, in turn, filled these moments in “Anticueca” with a variety of movements that were “different but the same”, as Lee Maracle (2015, 2017) would say.

The “Anticueca” section turned out to be experimental in a completely different way than the “Community” section. Whereas the choreography was out of my hands in the latter, in “Anticueca” I had complete control over the choreographic structure since I was directing my memory of cueca dance. The vocabulary and movement phrases that the piece evoked from my body were completely tethered to the memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated during research. Ultimately, I did not choreograph a conventional cueca dance; I created an anti-cueca choreography—a choreography that explicitly (rather than accidentally) moved away from cueca performances. It was in this way that “Anticueca” was experimental.

Choreographing to Parra’s *Anticueca No. 1* enabled me to re-member cueca dance elements in different or new ways as well as imagine and move beyond cueca choreographies. However, I was re-membering alone, outside of the community of *Copucha + Gup Shup*; and I am thinking here specifically with Lee Maracle (2015) who weaves oratory by “feeling the room” to “draw the best threads forward” (17). I was, therefore, not creating “Anticueca” with the dancers’ sensibilities and memories of cueca dance in mind. I was creating by myself, drawing only from my memory of cueca dance. This process worked well to reveal to myself my

memory of cueca dance and offered me an avenue of inquiry for how I can dig deeper into the form. However, as I mentioned, this way of working presented challenges with regards to putting the choreography on the dancers because they had different experiences with and memories of cueca dance.

#### 6.4.4 Choreographing the “Roosters” Section

In this sub-section, I focus on how the “Roosters” section, which engaged structured improvisation to re-member cueca dance and kathak elements. Bajpeyi and I created the “Roosters” section near the end of our choreographic process. We mapped “Roosters” on January 20, 2023, and spent the following rehearsals digging into the movement and the intention behind the section. This section specifically focussed on “re-orientating” the rooster character, which appears in both kathak and cueca dance, away from being an aggressor and towards a fun, kind and mischievous demeanour. Re-imagining this character “directed” (Maracle 2015) my memory towards the collective goal of presenting an otherwise story, which informed how I re-membered cueca dance.

Within the piece, the “Roosters” section sits between the “Anticueca” section and the “Rhythms Revisited” section or “Finale”. As I mentioned above, the “Anticueca” section finishes with the dancers sitting in a circle on the ground. Once they are settled on the ground, a dancer drums guitar rhythm A (see Figure 6.22) by hitting the ground with their hands and the rest of the dancers respond to this call in the same manner, marking the beginning of “Roosters”. This call-and-response occurs twice and then they all drum the rhythm together. While the dancers are doing this, the musician, Leo Orlov, throws fragments of Parra’s compositions into the space, adding to the sonic landscape of this section. After a couple of rounds of the rhythmic pattern,

three dancers—the roosters—step into the middle of the circle. What unfolds resembles a game: the roosters take turns showing off their dance moves, trying to outdo each other. While one rooster dances, the other two clap the rhythm to egg them on. Suddenly, one of the roosters breaks away from the trio and invites a dancer from the circle to engage them in friendly competition. The other two roosters follow suit and also invite dancers from the circle to join them. This sequence of invitation and friendly competition continues until all the dancers have left the circle and have had a chance to show off their moves. The symmetry and harmony of the circle (from the beginning of the section) gives way to disorder as the dancers begin to pair off and occupy and overwhelm the space with their distinct movements. As the scene reaches this tipping point, one of the roosters yells, “PA-pa-pa pa-pa-PRRRR”. This vocalization marks the end of the “Roosters” section and the beginning of “Rhythms Revisited”.

Bajpeyi and I created “Roosters” as a structured improvisation with the following parameters: 1) the section had to begin with guitar rhythm A, a cueca rhythm (see Figure 6.22), and a specific dancer would initiate the drumming; 2) this rhythm had to be maintained throughout the piece either through drumming and/or clapping; 3) after several rounds of drumming the rhythm together, the three dancers we assigned to be roosters would step into the middle of the circle; 4) dancers who were standing had to invite dancers from the circle into the space; and 5) a particular rooster would signal the end of the section by yelling “PA-pa-pa pa-pa-PRRRR”. These parameters related more to the sequence of events of the “Roosters” section and not the movements that the dancers had to perform.

“Roosters” was a section during which the dancers could improvise with an array of movements to a 6/8-time cueca rhythm. Cueca dance and kathak steps, then, were adapted and adjusted to encourage ways of moving that supported the ways of relating that were important

for the section. For example, a zapateo could still take up space, but it did not have to be performed in an intimidating way as is usually seen in various of cueca dances. A zapateo could take up space in a showy, playful manner to invite another dancer to show off their moves. The structured improvisation was meant to allow the dancers to perform steps, gestures and postures that resonated with them and/or that they felt comfortable with.

The steps that the dancers performed in “Roosters” were based on a similar directive that Bajpeyi and I had used for the construction of “Community”: the dancers were allowed to engage with cueca dance and kathak elements, mixtures thereof and/or movements inspired from these dance forms. Examples of the latter two would be moving a pañuelo to a kathak movement such as performing a quick, whipping motion while spiralling their body or performing a cueca dance stomp in a lifted way with an upright posture. We also directed the YDE dancers to bring steps and mini movement phrases from earlier parts of *Copucha + Gup Shup* into the “Roosters” section. Additionally, I offered the roosters short movement phrases that they could perform, but they were also permitted to abstain from doing these phrases.<sup>17</sup> As often occurred, the dancers’ movements were also being translated through their Euro-Western contemporary dance training, which Bajpeyi and I embraced so as to not colonize their bodies by forcing the “inscription” (Ness 2008) of kathak and cueca dance gestures. This open invitation to experiment with movements allowed each dancer to show off their personal moves, which, in turn, filled the space with an eclectic mix of steps during the “Roosters” section.

There were several differences between “Roosters” and the “Community” and “Anticueca” sections that allowed this section the space to breathe and be alive. One difference between “Roosters” and “Community” was that, in the former, the movements could change

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<sup>17</sup> Over the winter break in 2022, I had created movement phrases for all the dancers because of the conversation we had had, which I discussed above. I imparted the movement phrases as needed.

from performance to performance, whereas in the latter, the movement phrases of the groups were always the same. This improvisational aspect was also present in “Anticueca” but to a smaller degree since most of the choreography was set. Another difference between “Roosters” and “Community” was that the pairings in “Roosters” could differ each time the choreography was performed. Conversely, the groups in “Community” remained unchanged. Although the place of the dancers in the circle formation in “Anticueca” could also shift from performance to performance (since I had not set who would stand next to whom), this choreographic choice had minimal effects on “Anticueca” compared to the variations in pairings in “Roosters”. That the pairs could vary meant that different relationships could be presented during “Roosters”.

The main difference between the “Roosters” section and the “Community” and “Anticueca” sections was that the prior was explicitly informed by rooster stories, which Bajpeyi and I wanted to engage and subvert. Both in cueca dance and kathak, the rooster shows up as an animal and character with a particular demeanour. In Chapters 3 and 4, I mentioned that in the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa the story of the rooster and the hen is one of conquest, which is enacted through the rooster chasing and catching the hen. Through this choreography, the rooster becomes a cocky—pardon the pun—and “unyielding” aggressor (Sotoconil 2009). Bajpeyi and I did not want to replicate this story nor the uneven and violent ways of relating it forwards. Through movement, rhythm and randomization, this section subverts the nationalist narratives of roosters in our respective dance forms—in the Chilean case, how the rooster connects to gender, race, class, rurality, heterosexuality and competition, which are central to sovereigntist inequalities. Therefore, “Roosters” was a nod to the rooster characters in cueca dance and kathak as well as an intervention in those rooster stories.

Furthermore, Bajpeyi and I wanted to reimagine this character within the context of our choreography and shift the rooster's demeanour from arrogant and aggressive to playful, friendly and mischievous (in a "chaotic good" kind of sense, to think with Dungeons and Dragons). To achieve this, we re-orientated the rooster character along several dimensions: 1) by choosing specific dancers who had a knack for physical comedy to perform the character; 2) by expanding the kinds of movements the roosters could perform (in the case of cueca dance this meant going beyond being unyielding and aggressive);<sup>18</sup> and 3) by having the dancers engage different ways of relating such as through friendly competition. The latter two aspects were reliant on the parameters of the structured improvisation, as I will elaborate on below.

Usually, a competitive or social cueca campesina-huasa is performed in a heteronormative pairing in which the man (el huaso) performs the rooster and the woman (la china), the hen. In "Roosters", Bajpeyi and I chose three dancers to be rooster characters: two of the dancers were women-presenting and the third was man-presenting. We chose these specific dancers to be the roosters because of their ability to be playful, quirky, comedic and to commit to a character. These qualities are dependent on being able to laugh at oneself and, therefore, require a different kind of self-confidence or self-assuredness than is found in the arrogance or cockiness of a traditional cueca dance rooster.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Bajpeyi and I expanded the kinds of movements that the rooster characters could perform by not reiterating the roles they are made to enact in kathak and cueca dance.

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<sup>18</sup> I had got a glimpse of how the rooster could move differently during the third phase of my year of research. I had been listening to cueca music during this time but had not yet found a way to dance to it with cueca dance steps and trajectories. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, I used my intuitive dancing method to feel through the music. On a particular occasion a movement emerged that reminded me of a chicken walking around the space. This movement made me realize that roosters and hen can move in different ways and, therefore, can be embodied in diverse ways.

<sup>19</sup> Clowning is perhaps a good example of what we wanted the roosters to strive towards. However, we did not discuss this direction with the dancers, nor did we employ these methods in their character development. This was in part because the dancers we chose already had the skills of a physical comedian.

Because we were not bound to the rooster choreographies of our respective dance forms (such as the chase and catch of the competitive and social cuecas campesina-huasa), nor beholden to the ways of moving that dancers are made to perform in these choreographies (such the relentless and imposing movements of el huaso-as-rooster on la china-as-hen), we were able to imagine otherwise ways of moving for the three roosters. Importantly, we moved away from movements that (inadvertently) perpetuated hostility and the violation of women's space and bodies and grounded the roosters' movements in another aspect of our respective dance forms: playfulness.

Play is significant to both kathak and cueca dance. Connecting the roosters to playfulness became instrumental to situating these characters in our respective dance genres while subverting their prescribed roles in the traditional rooster stories, such as the one described in Chapter 3. By playing with a playful character, we offered an otherwise interpretation of the rooster that was misaligned with the common conceptualization of the character and that added to a rooster repertoire. As ethnomusicologist Christian Spencer Espinosa (2022) explains about the potential of cueca (dance), “La ganancia es integrar la realidad de la praxis y no prescribirla.” + “The gain is to integrate the reality of the praxis and not prescribe it” (276). The rooster characters allowed us to dig into what else roosters could do and could be in the choreography.

The parameters of the dance allowed us to further develop alternative ways of relating; first between the roosters and then, between the roosters and the rest of the dancers. When the three roosters step out into the middle of the circle, they enter the circle to perform for each other and the rest of the dancers. Play comes into the intention to outdo each other with their moves. This sets up “Roosters” as a section that unfolds as a game of friendly competition. This friendliness is also seen in how the roosters invite sitting dancers into the circle. Here, the invitation to dance is more akin to an invitation to play, which shifts the partnering because there

is no leader or follower, only dancers taking turns showing off their moves and trying to outdo each other. By changing the rules of engagement, the roosters became playful, teasing show-offs who were also welcoming, kind, generous and fun. In the end, the roosters in *Copucha + Gup Shup* behaved nothing like the traditional roosters from the stories of our respective dance forms and, significantly, offered us an opportunity to interrogate and experiment with these stories.

The “Roosters” section experimented with character and story, which in turn influenced the form. Unlike the “Community” and “Anticueca” sections, the impetus for creating “Roosters” stemmed from wanting to re-imagine the rooster character. Re-imagining and presenting an otherwise story informed how I re-membered cueca dance elements such as partnering, footwork and ways of relating. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the competitive cueca campesina-huasa, specifically, feels like a rigged game because of the prescribed chase and catch in the choreography that always favours men’s desires (as well as settler colonial claims, occupation and rape of land-as-property). By creating a different game—a showcase with no winner and loser, subject and object—Bajpeyi and I transformed the rooster character and changed the story, which consequently affected how cueca dance and kathak were re-membered.

The choreographic process for “Roosters” revealed to me that cueca choreographies are informed by how characters and ways of relating are storied and performed through the form. What is prioritized in the creation of the “Roosters” section are ways of relating that are simultaneously competitive, democratic, playful, friendly, supportive, caring, generous and kind. Therefore, “Roosters” does not replicate the demeanour of the rooster character nor the ways of relating in the story of the rooster and the hen. As I reflect on “Roosters”, I am cognizant of how I wanted to subvert the uneven relationships between men-presenting and women-presenting dancers/people—informed by gender, race, class, sexuality, heteropatriarchy and settler

colonialism—that are reiterated and reinforced through this criollo-ized story. Transforming the rooster character’s behaviour demonstrates this well. It also suggests that my memory of cueca dance was attuned to how the arrogant, aggressive and unyielding rooster is an enactment that is deeply connected to variations of la cueca campesina-huasa. Changing the character and the story “directed” (Maracle 2015) my memory to a different goal and allowed me to re-member cueca dance differently.

The importance of stories for directing memory became apparent while choreographing “Roosters”. By making “Roosters” a friendly game of competition, the dancers were able to perform a way of relating that is uncommon in the cueca dances I examined. Consequently, the way that the section unfolded looked nothing like the cueca performances I watched. This process revealed that a key element of cueca dance are ways of relating since dancers perform particular interactions and relationships with each other to enact specific stories through the form—stories that can be harmful or healing, as Daniel Heath Justice (2018) argues. This helped me understand how cueca dance is tied up with the stories that cueca dances perform and how these stories direct how cueca dances are re-membered.

Telling different stories requires that cueca dance elements be re-membered differently. This is not just about rearranging cueca dance elements; it is about actively subverting dominant and dominating stories. These stories carry the most insidious mnemonics because they are perceived as normal or normative and taken in without question. As I discussed, the story of the rooster and the hen did not resonate with me because I did not want to commit to memory the ways of relating through ways of moving that this story was advancing. Therefore, I disengaged from it. However, attending to the underlying mnemonics of this story and subverting them presented an opportunity to transform the story from one of uneven power relations and

experiment with one of equality. I could not have done this solely by re-membering cueca dance elements in the ways that I did in the “Community” and “Anticueca” sections. I had to create a context for re-membering cueca dance differently and that context was an alternative story.

## 6.5 Working with Memory

In this section, I discuss how activating my memory reminded me of the range of ways of moving that I had observed during my year of research; and how those ways of moving connected to the music I listened to and the literature I read. The numerous memories of cueca dance informed how I re-membered cueca dance elements, even if I did not engage with all the ways of moving that I had watched. Attending to what I had observed allowed me to “direct” my memory (Maracle 2015) to imagine and re-member otherwise ways of moving.

Activating my memory helped me remember the numerous ways of moving and ways of relating that I had seen in the cueca dance videos on YouTube as well as how the movements connected to the music and the literature. The cueca dance phrases and sections in *Copucha + Gup Shup* were influenced by, but not beholden to, the vast range of postures, gestures, movement phrases and steps that I encountered on YouTube. As I discussed, the movements I offered the YDE dancers were often performed to the pulse rhythm, which I fostered an ear for by engaging with cueca music. Moreover, the movements I gave the dancers did not replicate the conventions that appeared in the YouTube videos and that was discussed in the literature, conventions that simultaneously guide and limit cueca movements. Therefore, the videos and their relation to music and literature imprinted on or “inscribed into” (Ness 2008) my memory numerous ways of moving and relating that specifically deviated from the competitive cueca campesina-huasa.

For example, I remembered the bent bodies of men-presenting dancers in las cuecas chora-brava performing rhythmic footwork overtop of the pulse rhythm. I remembered how sometimes they would crouch or go down on one knee, postures that I did not see in the competitive cueca campesina-huasa. I remembered the way that women-presenting dancers moved their hips in different cuecas: quickly and in time with the pulse rhythm in the social cueca campesina-huasa (but not in the competitive variation); or slowly and sensually, extending the music, in la cueca chora-brava. I remembered the limp pañuelo + handkerchief as women performed la cueca sola to condemn the dictatorship's human rights violations. I remembered how the immobile pañuelo contrasted the women's seguillida, a travel step in which each foot moves on an eighth note in 6/8-time. I remembered how la cueca sola broke with the structure of the codified cueca choreography because there was no man to dance it with and, therefore, there was no point in following the delineated curvilinear trajectories. I remembered how la cueca chora-brava also broke with the choreographic structure as well as pushed the boundaries of proximity as the dancers often touched each other or even caressed each other with their pañuelos + handkerchiefs. Sometimes, the dancers would put a pañuelo in their mouth and the other dancer would pull it out with their teeth. I remembered the quick footwork, the slow footwork, the bloody footwork, the ways of taking up space, the ways of giving space, the ways of marking space, the straight bodies, the curved bodies, the locked hips, the loose hips, the strict circular formations, the lack of formations, the ways of creating distance, the ways of getting really close, the steady eye contact and the various ways of moving the pañuelos. I engaged these initial visual, aural and kinesthetic impressions as departure points to re-member cueca dance.

I used my intuitive dancing method to lean into cueca dance through these impressions while simultaneously leaning away from the heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies that

inform many of the cueca dances. As I discussed in Chapter 5, what I call my intuitive dancing method is a way of sensing how my body wants to move by attuning to and, at times, “re-orientating” (Ahmed 2006) impulses and inclinations. This method helped me engage with cueca dance elements and their connections to music and literature without replicating and reinforcing outdated and harmful conventions including but not limited to: 1) heteronormativity through woman-man pairings; 2) gender roles based on dichotomy and inversions such as leader/follower, assertive/demure, aggressive/delicate; 3) class distinction connected to postures and gestures such as a straight back and other confined movements, which tend to signal civility; 4) power dynamics informed by heteropatriarchal and settler colonial hierarchies and uneven ways of relating; 5) misogyny and sexism due to male chauvinism, heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism; and 6) ideas of conquest informed by settler colonialism and settler colonial entitlement to claim and own subjects-as-objects. I leaned away from these ideologies, conventions and practices by digging deeper into otherwise ways of moving and relating within cueca dance vocabularies. I also drew on my experiences from learning (about) cueca dance to sense what otherwise ways of moving and relating could be brought into the choreography.

Subverting, therefore, became important while choreographing because it allowed me to recognize these outdated and, at times, harmful conventions. Subverting also helped me sense what otherwise ways of moving and relating were possible. Throughout the choreographic process I was drawing on the memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated. Recognizing the conventions meant that I could either follow them, which were at hand since they are so prevalent in the dance form, or I could go in a different direction. If I had drawn from dominant stories and ways of relating, I would have reinforced these aspects of cueca dance and remembered a conventional cueca dance. This would have revealed my memory of cueca dance,

but it would have been incomplete, like cueca dance's history, which favours la cueca campesina-huasa and erases other cueca dance versions and variations. Sensing otherwise movements and stories through experimentation allowed me to re-member cueca dance differently, highlighting for me a more expansive memory. Attending to a memory of cueca dance, then, means simultaneously acknowledging the history and stories as well as sensing what else is there or could be. Subverting is a critical act because it is about recognizing this past without throwing it away. Remembering the past and the conventions is important, if not pertinent, to move and re-member otherwise. As Lee Maracle (2015) reminds, memory is directional and remembering is about where you want to end up, which requires knowing where you have been.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003) activated my memory of cueca dance. Teaching and choreographing served as methods with which to re-member cueca dance elements and reveal to myself the memory of cueca dance that I cultivated. I described a hybrid workshop that I facilitated for students at York University and SUNY Buffalo, during which I imparted cueca dance elements in a scaffolded manner. This process highlighted aspects of the cueca memory that I cultivated during my year of research. The rest of the chapter focussed on *Copucha + Gup Shup*, an interdisciplinary multi-“ethnic” (Kealiinohomoku 2001) contemporary dance piece that I co-choreographed with Arpita Bajpeyi in collaboration with the dancers of the York Dance Ensemble (YDE). This choreography brought cueca dance into conversation with kathak and provided me with an opportunity to re-member cueca dance elements in different ways.

Teaching and choreographing with cueca dance elements highlighted that re-membering as a sensorial activity (Maracle 2015; Pandolfo 1997) takes practice. As I explained, at first re-membering with cueca dance elements felt more like re-arrangement. Over time, however, I learned to draw from memory and sense which cueca dance elements were necessary for different sections of the choreography. Therefore, not all cueca dance elements that I noted in Chapter 4 showed up in the different sections of *Copucha + Gup Shup*. “Community”, for example, favoured pulse-rhythm and was less attentive to cueca dance or kathak steps. On the other hand, “Anticueca” insisted on specific footwork and a circular structure. And “Roosters” focussed on telling an otherwise story about a friendly but mischievous rooster. The different intentions for each section allowed me to practice re-membering until I was able to sense to with memory.

I want to acknowledge that I entered into teaching and choreographing with a partial memory of cueca dance. This partial memory was informed by my process for cultivating a memory of the dance form and what I chose to bring into my research. The inclination to want to work with sensoriality such as by playing with pañuelos and vocalizing rhythms with the YDE dancers signals the first phase of my research and the way that I approached learning about cueca dance. As I explained, working with sensoriality was a viable choreographic method but it did not activate my memory in the same way that encouraging re-membering with cueca dance elements did. The sensorial approach, which was open-ended, had the consequence of activating the dancers’ memories and drawing out their experiences and ways of moving. On the other hand, imparting cueca dance elements required that I synthesize what I had learned, which activated my memory of cueca dance. This process was still open but focussed, allowing for creative engagement through targeted responsiveness. The impulse to work with sensoriality

highlights that the ways that one approaches learning about something matters because it has the potential to affect one's partial memory and how one re-members.

Teaching and choreographing with cueca dance elements helped sense a pathway for remembering cueca dance elements differently. This line of inquiry emerged from wanting to tell otherwise stories: ways of relating that are always already present but that have been absented from cueca dance repertoires. Transforming the character of the rooster from an arrogant aggressor to friendly and mischievous “directed” my memory (Maracle 2015) towards co-choreographing a scene that moved away from conquest and towards friendly competition. Presenting this otherwise story encouraged me to re-member cueca dance differently. I might not have attempted to tell a different story if I had not engaged with cueca dance in a critical manner.

In the final chapter, the Conclusion, I elaborate on my critical memory practice. This practice emerged from my interactions with cueca dance; it is the result of attending to how my body felt when encountering cueca dance and tracking those feelings and sensations. This practice is also the consequence of my history of experiences with a range of dance forms—the resonances and dissonances in how I have been made to move. This critical memory practice helped me attend to that feeling of something being not quite right, those “strange encounters” (Ahmed 2000) and “queer moments” (Ahmed 2006) that allow for re-orientations, as Sara Ahmed might say.

## Chapter 7 | Conclusion

### 7.1 Introduction

I remember entering carefully into encounters with cueca dance. I remember entering carefully because I wanted to take care of myself as well as care for the dance form. I did not want to re-colonize my body with another dance practice, nor did I want to conquer cueca dance. I wanted to cultivate a memory of cueca dance that could serve both me and the dance form. Entering carefully required a slow process that embraced negotiations and adjustments, that played with distance and proximity. I remembering keeping distance with some aspects of cueca dance—committing them to memory while avoiding enacting them. I also remember getting close to other aspects of cueca dance—committing them to memory to re-member them later on. A careful process of negotiation and adjustment. Careful, like Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) process of “kneading”: carefully folding ingredients in without letting the air out of la masa + the dough. Carefully amassing cueca dance in my body—the ideologies, histories, stories and choreographies—while holding space for contradictions, counter-memories and possibilities. Carefully becoming a memory of cueca dance.

In the first section, “A Critical Memory Practice”, I detail how I engaged with cueca dance in a critical manner: committing to memory what I could while being cognizant of the effects of my encounters with the dance form. This critical memory practice allowed me to cultivate a memory of cueca dance while simultaneously keeping some distance from ways of moving, relating, being and becoming that no longer serve me because they are harmful to me and my body and to society.

The next section, “Methodological and Theoretical Contributions”, explains that my slow, scaffolded multi-modal methodology is a contribution to knowledge. I also highlight my engagement with memory as a sense in the context of dance as a theoretical contribution.

“Future Directions”, the final section, offers additional avenues of inquiry for future projects. I mention that more research about cueca dance, specifically, is needed in cueca scholarship to have a more comprehensive understanding of the tripartite practice. This research necessarily needs to be done about and with individuals that dance cueca. I also forward that more research on movement and memory at the intersection of the senses is pertinent. We need to better understand how the dance forms that we are engaging are activating and shaping our memory.

## 7.2 A Critical Memory Practice

In this section, I summarize the dissertation by reflecting on my critical memory practice. A critical memory practice is needed in dance to critically reflect on how dance forms cultivate and shape memory and affect the senses and perception. Attending to how my memory was being cultivated and shaped while reflecting on its cultivation and shaping was important for noticing how I was being affected by cueca dance. My critical memory practice did not stop me from becoming affected by cueca dance, but it brought to my attention how I could be re-colonized by cueca dance. Additionally, the purpose of my critical memory practice was to notice and interrogate the dominant and dominating structures to be able to re-member differently.

This critical memory practice was informed by the scholars with whom I developed my theoretical framework. These scholars offered pieces for how to attend to and reflect on the process of becoming a memory of cueca dance. Memory as a sense was an important starting

point because this conceptualization of memory brought to my attention that I could be actively involved in the shaping of my memory. C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) and Lee Maracle (2015) highlighted that my active involvement in the creation or cultivation of my memory of cueca dance was dependent on how I was mediating its emergence through the cultural practice of dance: the contexts, communities and media I was involving myself with to cultivate a memory of cueca dance. The assertion that memory as a sense is emergent was an important reminder that memory is always already in-the-making and that memory's made-up-ness is informed by webs of relations. An important part of this critical memory practice was paying attention to the webs of relations that I was connected to while learning about cueca dance.

In this research, my webs of relations were the people in the various media that I engaged during my year of research. My social milieu consisted of the performers in the videos on cueca dance that I watched, the musicians whose music I listened and danced to and the authors of the cueca (dance) literature I read. Each media was informed by the perspectives of the people who were its creators. Therefore, the people in the media imparted information to me such as ways of moving and ways of relating; the connection between cueca dance and cueca music; and a history of cueca dance and cueca dance stories, as I have discussed in this dissertation. It was through a relationship with the people in/and these media that I cultivated and shaped a memory of cueca dance. Although this memory of cueca dance is partial, it is nonetheless situated within a Chilean context because the dancers, the musicians and most of the authors that I engaged were Chilean. I do not claim that this project emerged within the physical space of Chile, but it did engage with the "14th region of Chile", the virtual, online "region of *el exterior* or *el reencuentro* (reunion)" (Knudsen 2001, 78; original italics) where much of the media I engaged exists for the

purpose of disseminating Chilean culture and connecting Chileans globally. As such, my memory of cueca dance emerged in relation to Chile even at a distance.

Paying attention to the iterative was a significant aspect of my critical memory practice. Both Sally Ann Ness (2008) and Sara Ahmed (2006) illustrate in their works the important role that iteration plays in shaping bodies. The “inscription of gesture” (Ness 2008) is an inward migration of movement that transforms the body by aligning it with the dance form that it is taking up/in and embodying. This bodily shaping is dependent on iteration: gestures must be repeated to migrate into the body. With each repetition a gesture moves into the body more and more; with each repetition a body is shaped by the gesture.

I engaged my critical memory practice to attend to the gestures that were migrating into my body. During my year of research, the movements that migrated inward were the ones that I gravitated towards because they stuck in my memory. Because I was not learning cueca dance through from a teacher, which would have imposed on me particular movement vocabularies, I felt the cueca dance performances pull me in different ways. At times I was captivated by men-presenting dancer’s complex footwork; at other times, I was drawn to women’s use of hips. By trying out a range of movements I was able to critically reflect on what cueca dance wanted me to perform versus the ways that I wanted to move.

As I have mentioned in the dissertation, cueca dance performances forwarded ways of relating that were often uneven and in favour of men’s and settler colonial desires. I was averse to these ways of relating because I have been made to enact these ways of relating through dance and because, as a queer, disabled, racialized man, I have also striven to relate with women-presenting and disenfranchised people in equitable ways. Additionally, educating myself a settler colonist living, working, writing, dancing and more on Indigenous land has also helped me relate

differently with land. My past and my efforts played a critical role in showing me the unequal ways of relating in dance, which I did not want to reiterate and reinforce, much less “inscribe” (Ness 2008) into my body and memory. I used my critical memory practice to notice these ways of relating, question them, move away from them and not reproduce them.

Ahmed (2006) adds to what Ness (2008) proposes by pointing out that bodies also become orientated through repetition. In this instance, a body’s orientation is informed by the movement histories that an individual inherits; moving along previously carved out paths that have the feeling of being “normal” and/or “natural” because they have become normalized and naturalized over time. This is what Ahmed calls the sedimentation of history, a history that has settled and hardened and, as such, disappears or appears to no longer be a history but, rather, erroneously something innate. For this reason, Ahmed (2006) urges for attending to queer moments to re-orientate ourselves and go athwart sedimented histories of movement. Queer moments interrupt the repetition and re-orientate bodies along different paths.

My critical memory practice helped me bring to my awareness how I was being “orientated” (Ahmed 2006) by a history of cueca dance, the cueca dance stories and the ideologies woven through both. I noticed how a history of cueca dance privileged la cueca campesina-huasa, erasing or at least ignoring the various cueca dances that exist in Chile. The neatness of this history forced me to look deeper and tease out for myself how this history is constructed to present a specific narrative about cueca (dance) and its connection to a criollo, agrarian chilenidad + Chilean-ness. In other words, this history was organized around the propagation of the Chilean nation-state. Bringing this to my awareness encouraged me to look for the silences in this history.

Moreover, I noticed how cueca dance stories embodied, inadvertently or not, heteropatriarchal and settler colonial ideologies. Attending to my memory of cueca dance, particularly those elements that created tension such as the cueca dance stories, was important for not reiterating and reinforcing stories that I believe are harmful to bodies including land. The insidious manifestations of these ideologies also encouraged me to pay attention to how these ideologies are embodied and enacted through dance. Going athwart these ideologies and the ways of relating and moving that evoke them served as the impetus for re-imagining otherwise stories and re-membering cueca dance differently.

Paul Connerton (1989) and Diana Taylor (2003) also remind that iteration is necessary for the transference of memory and, therefore, a critical memory practice also required attending to “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989; Taylor 2003). A critical memory practice allowed me to pay attention to what I was conjuring from memory and imparting to other individuals through teaching and choreography. This process revealed to me the expansive and nuanced memory of cueca dance that I had cultivated. I noticed that I could draw from memory a range of movements and understood their connections to a history of cueca dance, cueca dance stories and the ideologies embedded in both. Attending to the memory of cueca dance that I was imparting forced me to negotiate cueca dance’s past with an imagined future. A critical memory practice was necessary to be able to not throw away cueca dance’s problematic past, but to work with it in ways that were generative for a particular moment. Not throwing away the past requires a critical memory practice. Things cannot change if we do not remember what has not worked before or is not working now.

Even though I ran the risk of re-creating cueca dance by developing a memory of the dance form, this memory also became necessary for querying (and queering) the form.

Therefore, attending to a memory of cueca dance—cueca ways of relating through ways of moving that are committed to memory and then re-membered in a cueca dance—through a critical memory practice served to re-member cueca differently. Breaking cueca dance down to its constituent parts and reassembling them worked for me as a method. Other dancers and scholars might have otherwise ways of attending to a dance's memory and re-membering that dance form.

### 7.3 Methodological and Theoretical Contributions

In this section, I elaborate on the methodological and theoretical contributions that I make in this dissertation. I first focus on my slow, scaffolded multi-modal methodology I engaged to learn about cueca dance. Then, I note how my theoretical contribution was putting memory as a sense into practice.

This dissertation adds to research-creation as a methodology. I presented a unique process for encountering a dance form over the course of a year that could be replicated and even adjusted to engage with other dance forms and artistic practices. Importantly, this process is dependent on moving away from mastery and, instead, moving towards experimentation and play to attend to the effects (and affects) of encountering a dance form. The process that I created included: 1) engaging a slow rigour by encountering cueca dance every day for a whole year; 2) beginning with sensoriality and then moving to steps; and 3) staggering YouTube videos on cueca dance, cueca music and cueca (dance) literature over the period of a year. Although I chose these three media to encounter cueca dance, I could have also included other media or activities such as learning guitar or another instrument, singing, dancing in community, taking dance lessons and more. A significant aspect of this methodology was attending to what stuck in

memory to bring to my awareness how I was being affected. Therefore, I approached each mode of encountering cueca dance as both a way of thinking and doing, as Erin Manning (2020) forwards, and did not separate theory from practice. Also important was paying attention to how the media interacted and were in conversation with each other. This was particularly crucial for paying attention to how cueca dance performances and the “discursive canon” of cueca (Espinosa 2009) informed each other.

This slow, scaffolded multi-modal methodology provided me with a comprehensive, embodied and sensorial understanding of cueca dance. This methodology, therefore, presents a way of scaffolding different modes of learning about a dance form or another artistic practice, and it would be useful to someone who wants to encounter an arts practice in an unconventional way. By beginning with sensoriality instead of steps, this methodology brings a practitioner’s body and sensorium slowly into proximity with the arts practice. This methodology is also useful if an individual wants to attend to how their memory is being cultivated and shaped by an arts practice over a long period of time. By encountering the arts practice every day, the individual can notice what is sticking to memory and track the development of that memory.

Additionally, this dissertation adds to theory about memory as a sense. Dance as a mnemonic practice brings memory as a sense into conversation with dance studies by putting this perspective into practice. As such, I offer another example of what Seremetakis (1994) and Maracle (2015) illustrate, that the cultivation and shaping of memory is an emergent, active and purposeful process that is informed by context. As I have discussed, the multiple media that I engaged to learn about cueca dance were the context that cultivated and shaped my memory of cueca dance. The slow, scaffolded multi-modal methodology presented an opportunity to pay attention to how I cultivated and shaped a memory of cueca dance and highlighted for me how

my memory of the dance form did not emerge passively. For example, by focussing on what would stick in my memory from cueca dance performances and secondary source materials on cueca dance showed me that my memory was at work. As I remarked, this memory work was not memorization, which is usually connected to cognition and the mind: I was not memorizing movement and information. Instead, I was noticing how I was becoming a cueca dance body, to think with Susan Leigh Foster (1997) and Bruno Latour (2004).

Moreover, in becoming a cueca dance body I was also fostering a “historical sense” of the dance form (Foster 1997, 240). As I discussed in the Introduction, I consider Foster’s (1997) historical sense to be memory as a sense. Therefore, to think with Maracle (2015, 2017), I was also simultaneously becoming a memory of cueca dance. I use the phrase “becoming a memory” as something akin to “rememberer”, which is the term that Maracle (2015) uses when talking about this role in an Indigenous community. I acknowledge that I taught myself cueca dance outside of community (but within a virtual Chilean context) and, therefore, understand that I might not be considered a carrier of cueca dance by those within the community. However, I also want to recognize that I did my due diligence to learn about different cueca dances and take in multiple perspectives about cueca dance, which included paying attention to stories that deviate from an official history of the dance form. The point that I am trying to make is that because body, memory and the senses cannot be disconnected (Foster 1997; Latour 2004; Maracle 2015; Seremetakis 1994), becoming a cueca dance body involves becoming a memory of cueca dance.

Although I began with minimal knowledge and memory of cueca dance, as I revealed in the Introduction as well as Chapters 4 and 5, over the course of the year and through the different media I cultivated a complex memory of cueca dance. I activated my memory (as a sense) of cueca dance during the creation of *Copucha + Gup Shup*: an interdisciplinary, multi-dance form

contemporary dance piece co-choreographed with Arpita Bajpeyi in collaboration with the dancers of the York Dance Ensemble. In this process, I worked with memory as a sense to remember or piece together anew cueca dance elements, as I discussed in Chapter 6. As such, the power of dance cannot be underestimated in the cultivation and shaping of memory as a sense.

Finally, this dissertation offers important insights into the significance of, what I call, “sensorial re-orientations” in the manifestation of otherwise futurities. My critical memory practice, for example, illustrates how paying attention to the ways that my memory as a sense was being cultivated and shaped—by cueca dance vocabularies and histories of movement in cueca dance—allowed me to move away from conventions and sense alternative ways of moving and relating. This process shares similarities, in terms of intentions and outcomes, with sociologist Rafael Narváez’s (2012) “somatic resistance”. Narváez’s (2012) concept attends to how “social actors collectively detach themselves from what that past prescribes for their bodies [...]; so that, as they disentangle their everyday lives from the organic grip of tradition, they bring to life new collective practices, and indeed new collective futures” (3). However, I do not engage with the concept of resistance because it often works within the binary logic that is critical to a sovereigntist system and is therefore tied up with opposition, negation and erasure. Additionally, resistance has the potential to reinforce what is being resisted as the norm or as dominant because it is often forwarded as and couched in seemingly innocuous terms such as “tradition”.

Instead, I prefer to think with Sara Ahmed (2006) and engage sensorial re-orientations, which align more with affirmative augmentation. In fact, affirmative augmentation is what I read in Narváez’s (2012) theory since detachments are kinds of movements away from traditions that make possible “new collective futures” (3). In my work, sensorial re-orientations are a way of

moving away from dominant and dominating practices and perspectives. As such, sensorial re-orientations have the potential to attune to otherwise ways of moving, relating and futures. For example, in my daily practice of dancing, drawing and writing, I was able to sense my impulses, reflect on how they were informed by past experiences and move away from them to find otherwise ways of moving and of relating with each media. Although I did not know what might happen on any given day, by re-orientating my impulses I allowed previous experiences to continue to exist while also sensing for other paths forward, a process of augmentation. It was in the act of re-orientating that other avenues of inquiry emerged and during which otherwise futurities revealed themselves and became actionable. This daily practice, then, became a research-creation process that activated otherwise futurities through fugitive involvements (Harney and Moten 2013; Hustak and Myers 2012; Moten 2018): collaborative movements away or escapes that re-orientated my senses to unsettle settler colonial and heteropatriarchal practices, perspectives and worlds.

#### 7.4 Future Directions

In this section, I discuss future directions for research on cueca dance as well as encourage further development of a critical memory practice in dance.

An important future line of inquiry is research on cueca dance that specifically attends to movement. As I have shown, research on cueca, generally, concentrates on the music and/or song/poetry aspects of the tripartite practice. What is troubling, is that the insights from these aspects of cueca are supplanted over cueca dance. It is crucial to conduct research about people moving with the people that move. Research on cueca dance, then, would allow analysis of the movement to emerge from moving bodies. For example, an ethnography of cueca dances, plural,

would provide a movement-based understanding of what cueca dance does in and for the communities that practice them. My contention is that this study would confirm my insights that cueca dance can be performed in multiple ways but would add a significant dimension that my investigation lacks: how cueca dance practitioners themselves theorize the world through cueca dance(s). Another example of cueca dance research could include reconstructing cueca dance(s) from the Era of Independence (1810-1818) and the subsequent Republican Era (1818-1891), to better understand how the dance form and bodies in motion served the nation-building project.

There are other research projects that could also be conducted such as archival research that focusses cueca competitions and shifts in repertoire during the Pinochet dictatorship;<sup>1</sup> as well as tracing a genealogy of movement influences on cueca dance, which is something that really interests me specifically because of cueca dance's recognition as a mestiza form that simultaneously erases Indigenous and Afro-descendent influences. With respect to the latter, a comparative analysis of literature on circum-Atlantic post-site folk forms would illustrate how Afro-descendent dance practices informed cueca dance and address this erasure. The story of the rooster and the hen offers insight into cueca dance's connection to some Afro-descendent dance practices since the movements engaged to enact this story of heteropatriarchal conquest—advance and retreat patterns, flirtation, shielding or protective skirt movements and hip movements—also show up in Kongo dance (Thompson 2005); Kalenda and chica practices (Gerstin 2004); chica, cahut and cancan (Parfitt forthcoming); various Atlantic dance forms including fandango (Goldberg 2018); Congolese and Congolese-Caribbean dance (Crowell 2002); and Cuban dance (Carpentier 2001; Daniel 2002). These lines of inquiry would enrichen cueca (dance) scholarship and add to the field of dance studies.

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<sup>1</sup> I must give credit to my supervisor Danielle Robinson for this example, which I completely agree would be a quite fascinating line of inquiry.

An important line of inquiry, for me, is more research on the intimate relationship between dance and memory as a sense. This study only begins to scratch the surface on dance as mnemonic practice, and I would be curious to know how other practitioners engage with this conceptualization of memory. By attending to this specific kind of embodied memory, I suspect that dance scholars and practitioners would find their own ways of articulating and theorizing the effects of dance on memory and vice versa. I envision these studies also adding more language to a phenomenon that has been under-examined. My hope is that these investigations will shift perceptions that memory is unruly and untrustworthy and, instead, bring attention to how memory is necessary for the development of dance practices and innovation.

Finally, further developing a critical memory praxis in dance is another significant future direction for research on dance as a mnemonic practice. A critical memory praxis is needed in dance because dancers become responsible for the dance forms they take up, embody and re(-)member. This responsibility should not be taken lightly. By learning dance forms, dancers become storytellers and, therefore, it becomes their responsibility which stories they choose to tell through dance. Without a critical memory praxis, dancers run the risk of replicating harmful and violent stories, relations and stereotypes, as I have demonstrated. This critical memory praxis requires attending to memory as a sense; and would need to be in conversation with Indigenous, Afro-descendent/Black and racialized as well as non-racialized scholars whose work on memory takes up the sensorial dimension of memory and deviates from Euro-Western understandings of memory that relegate this force to the mind or solely as a cognitive activity. This praxis is dependent on the perspective that memory is emergent and living; that it can be purposefully cultivated and shaped, like the other senses; and that it is pertinent to the futurity of all beings. A critical memory praxis in dance, then, would also need to be in conversation with an Indigenous

feminist ethics of care framework because it challenges, interrogates and disavows settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy (Doucet, Jewell and Watts 2024; Jewell 2024; Maracle 2015; Starblanket 2018; TallBear 2019).

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## Decreto 23

DECLARA A LA CUECA DANZA NACIONAL DE CHILE

MINISTERIO SECRETARÍA GENERAL DE GOBIERNO

Fecha Publicación: 06-NOV-1979 | Fecha Promulgación: 18-SEP-1979

Tipo Versión: Única De : 06-NOV-1979

Url Corta: <https://bcn.cl/2fjpe>



### DECLARA A LA CUECA DANZA NACIONAL DE CHILE

Núm. 23.- Santiago, 18 de Septiembre de 1979.- Vistos: Lo dispuesto en los decretos leyes N°s. 1 y 128, de 1973, y 527, de 1974, y

#### Considerando:

1°.- Que la cueca constituye en cuanto a música y danza la más genuina expresión del alma nacional.

2°.- Que en sus letras alberga la picardía propia del ingenio popular chileno, así como también acoge el entusiasmo y la melancolía;

3°.- Que se ha identificado con el pueblo chileno desde los albores de la Independencia y celebrado con él sus gestas más gloriosas, y

4°.- Que la multiplicidad de sentimientos que en ella se conjugan reflejan, no obstante la variedad de danzas, con mayor propiedad que ninguna otra el ser nacional en una expresión de auténtica unidad.

#### Decreto:

Artículo 1°.- Declárase a la cueca danza nacional de Chile.

Artículo 2°.- El Estado fomentará, a través de los diversos organismos e instituciones del sector cultural, la enseñanza, divulgación, promoción e investigación de sus valores musicales y coreográficos. Corresponderá al Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno, a través de su Secretaría de Relaciones Culturales, velar por el cumplimiento de esta norma.

Artículo 3°.- El Ministerio de Educación Pública organizará, anualmente, en el mes de Septiembre, un concurso nacional de cueca para alumnos de enseñanza básica y media, cuya organización corresponderá a las respectivas Areas de Cultura de las Secretarías Regionales Ministeriales.

Tómese razón, comuníquese y publíquese.- AUGUSTO PINOCHET UGARTE, General de Ejército, Presidente de la República.- Gonzalo Vial Correa, Ministro de Educación Pública.- Julio Fernández Atienza, General de Brigada, Ministro Secretario General de Gobierno.

Lo que transcribo a Ud. para su conocimiento.- Jovino Novoa Vásquez, Subsecretario General de Gobierno.

Decree 23 consists of three articles that are preceded by four considerations that situate cueca dance within the Chilean nation-state. In the translation below, I use the gender pronouns “she/her” to refer to cueca dance because there is no neuter “it” in Spanish and because cueca dance is gendered as woman, as seen in the fourth statement in the original document.

The four considerations are as follows:

- 1) “That cueca as a music and dance constitutes the most genuine expression of the national soul;
- 2) “That her lyrics house the typical mischief found in the ingenuity of the Chilean people, and also embraces their zest and melancholy;
- 3) “That she has been identified with the Chilean people since the dawn of Independence and has celebrated with said people their most glorious deeds; and,
- 4) “That the multiplicity of sentiments that are inflected in her reflect, despite the variety of dances, with greatest characteristics than any other form the national identity in an expression of authentic unity”.

The three articles that make up the decree are the following:

“Article 1: Declare the cueca the national dance of Chile.

“Article 2: The state, through its various agencies and institutions in the cultural sector, will promote the teaching, dissemination, promotion and research of its musical and choreographic heritage. The General Secretariat Ministry of the Government, through its Cultural Relations Secretariat, will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this regulation.

“Article 3: The Ministry of Public Education will organize, annually, in the month of September, a national cueca competition for elementary and secondary school students, whose organization will correspond to the respective Cultural Areas of the Regional Ministerial Secretariats.”