

THE ROLE OF LATIN AMERICAN DANCE MAKERS IN THE FLEMISH DANCE LANDSCAPE

A DECOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF THE FLEMISH DANCE LANDSCAPE THROUGH THE CONCEPT
OF CULTURAL EXTRACTIVISM

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Abstract:

This Master's dissertation shows that the concept of “(cultural) extractivism” is relevant for a decolonial analysis of the Flemish dance landscape, as it helps to understand, not only the colonial origin of the material wealth that has allowed this cultural scene to exist, but also current dynamics related to: cultural appropriation and exoticization in the field of dance; displacement of people from the Global South to Flanders (especially to its capital city of Brussels); and displacement of ideas from the Global North to the Global South. This study argues that, in being a dance scene built around individuality in which the vast majority of the dancing individuals are not originally from Flanders, the Flemish dance landscape operates under a cultural extractivist logic of fetishization. It also reveals that these dynamics and this logic are not well known in this context, because the official discourse around it has been primarily produced by tribally biased Flemish authors: most sources take the internationality and cultural diversity of the Flemish dance scene as its defining characteristics, but they celebrate this fact without addressing the inequalities it implies. At the core of those inequalities lies the white supremacy culture that typically shows up in Western organizations. This research suggests that real institutional decolonization demands true interculturality, beyond performative gestures, exoticization and tokenism. It requires addressing power imbalances in decision-making processes, and for internationality to reach the institutional staff.

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Table of contents:

Introduction (to an introduction)	1
Introduction	8
The moral imaginary and philosophical universe of the West	9
A tribally biased state of the art	11
(Cultural) extractivism	12
Decolonizing practices	15
Performance analysis to resist epistemic violence	15
Research methods	16
Semantic activism	18
Chapter 1) Cases	20
1.1. Amanda Piña's <i>The Jaguar and the Snake</i>	20
1.2. Fabián Barba's <i>A Mary Wigman Dance Evening</i>	27
1.3. Amanda Piña's <i>Exótica</i>	31
1.4. <i>SPAfrica</i> , by Ntando Cele and Julian Hetzel	34
Chapter 2) Addressing the gaps in the state of the art	38
2.1. Epistemic violence in dance studies	38
2.2. Tribal biases	41
2.3. A dance scene built around individuality	44
2.4. A cultural extractivist logic of fetishization	47
2.5. Cultural appropriation as a form of extractivism	50
Chapter 3) The shiny red apple of the Flemish dance landscape	56
3.1. Displacement of people within the extractivist model	57
3.2. P.A.R.T.S.	62
3.3. When dreams of the North go south	65
3.4. The institutions of the Flemish cultural sector	69
Conclusion	74
Bibliography	77
List of Images	85

Annex I. Interviews in English (translation)

- I.I. Fabián Barba (dance maker and researcher), interviewed by Paulina Rosa
- I.II. Lisi Estarás (dance maker), interviewed by Paulina Rosa

Annex II. Interviews in Spanish (original)

- II.I. Fabián Barba (coreógrafo e investigador), entrevistade por Paulina Rosa
- II.II. Lisi Estarás (coreógrafa), entrevistada por Paulina Rosa

Introduction (to an introduction):

When I moved to Belgium from Argentina, three years ago, I already had two diplomas, one as a Bachelor and the other as a Professor¹ in Fine Arts. I also had three years of experience as an assistant professor in Art History at my National University of Rosario² and I had carried out a short research stay at the Autonomous University of Madrid.³ That background was good enough to get me into Ghent University,⁴ but once inside, I was suddenly back to square one. I was placed in the same classrooms as students almost a decade younger than me, fresh out of high school; I was expected to learn and produce the same academic knowledge as them, in the same ways, with the same tools. In my three years at UGent, my Latin American academic background was never acknowledged as a valid source of knowledge, methodologies and epistemologies.⁵ I had to leave APA behind and embrace Chicago style. I had to let go of my expectations of classes that promoted open debate and original ideas, and adapt to memorizing large amounts of encyclopedic knowledge to reproduce it as accurately and acritically as possible in one all-encompassing exam. I was encouraged to find a researcher's attitude and a writer's voice that I had already been developing throughout two five-year study plans and two theses. I had believed that the approach of my original education had been highly Eurocentric, and yet, it was being fully ignored in Europe.

After getting my attestation of proficiency in Dutch, I was not yet allowed to start the Master of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theater Studies at UGent. First, I had to follow a two-year Preparatory Course for it: a barely abbreviated Bachelor program. In order to finish it, I had to write a dissertation project that was the equivalent of a Bachelor's thesis. My theme was the role of Latin American dance makers in the Flemish dance landscape. That work constitutes

¹ In Argentina, the title of "Professor in Fine Arts" is not necessarily related to the possession of a doctoral degree. Instead, it can be obtained by completing a three-year pedagogical training complementary to the Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts. The degree qualifies its holder to teach art at all levels of Argentinian education: primary, secondary, college and university.

² Abbreviated as UNR.

³ Abbreviated as UAM.

⁴ Abbreviated as UGent.

⁵ The only exception might be the three subjects for which I obtained an exemption, but even then I had to submit three annual courses for each semester course I wanted to validate.

the basis for this Master's thesis. The overarching research question of my Bachelor's thesis (as I will refer to it for lack of a better term) was: "In what ways does the context of the Flemish dance landscape enable, influence, determine or limit the creative practice of Latin American dance makers Fabián Barba, Amanda Piña and Lisi Estarás?" While working on that research, I interviewed Ecuadorian dance maker and theorist Fabián Barba, and discovered that their path through Belgian education in the field of dance had remarkable parallels with mine. They had also felt that their entire educational and professional background in Latin America had been enough to carry them through the door of a European institution –in their case, P.A.R.T.S.⁶– but once inside, that background was never acknowledged again, and was therefore rendered invisible and invalid.⁷

I started wondering what the point was. Why would prominent Belgian institutions go through the efforts of attracting promising international students, if the idea was to shape them into the same as the Belgian students who were already there? What did they have to win? Many international students, like myself, study in Belgium with a student visa. After they are done with their studies, either they find a way to stay in the country legally, or they go back home. If they go back, they import back into their homelands a European education, expanding the European model in the process. If they stay, they are no longer useful human resources for their countries of origin, but for the Belgian nation instead, and they have been tamed and shaped unproblematic in the process. Cultural colonization on the one hand; cultural extractivism on the other. Both masked under the promise of internationalization and cultural exchange; sometimes even developed in parallel to polished discourses of institutional decolonization.⁸

When I was working on the theoretical framework of my Bachelor's thesis, my promotor Annelies Van Assche (one of the few professors I had at UGent who actually tries to put theories of decolonization to practice in her classroom) signaled to me the need to define my usage of the terms "postcolonial" and "decolonial." I chose to use "decolonial" to refer to the corpus of theories that aim at unmasking and dismantling the power relations at work, historically and still today, in the broad geopolitical landscape; and "postcolonial" to refer to that same current geopolitical landscape. I then arrived at the key concepts of "postcolonial context" and "decolonial thinking." The distinction is important because, as many authors before me have pointed out,⁹ the term "postcolonial" seems to imply that

⁶ Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (in Brussels).

⁷ Fabián Barba (dance maker and researcher), interviewed by Paulina Rosa (Ghent University student), February 2023, my translation from Spanish.

⁸ Ghent University, "Decolonisation MUST begin at the university," Dare to Think, 2021, <https://www.durfdenken.be/en/research-and-society/decolonisation-must-begin-university>.

⁹ This has been explored, among others, by: Brennan in "Re-imagining postcolonial studies: a discussion of Neil Lazarus's *The Postcolonial Unconscious*"; Bunzl in "Postcolonial Studies and Beyond"; Lazarus in "The Postcolonial Unconscious"; Loomba in "Colonialism/Postcolonialism"; Rolnik in "Archive Mania"; and Watson and Wilder in "The Postcolonial Contemporary: Political Imaginaries for the Global Present."

we are somehow inhabiting a reality that has left colonization behind. A reality in which colonial relations are no longer at work, let alone powerful, let alone daily.

Throughout my research for my Bachelor's thesis, I had the opportunity to interview and to exchange ideas with multiple expats who have tried to make Belgium their new home. In those talks, we foreigners would often state as obvious, undeniable truths, things that then would be almost impossible to support through traditional academic sources: "Of course this is a closed-off society that does not fully accept immigrants"; "of course racism runs rampant in the Flemish cultural sector"; "of course decolonization in these institutions is a performatic afterthought rather than a structural effort." Echoes of those same statements could be found here and there: in an article of a progressive cultural magazine; in a passing comment by a self-critical professor; in a conference by a guest lecturer; in an interview with a foreign artist about their work; in an Instagram post... but nothing big and scientific enough to write these things down in a thesis. I came to suspect that this was Eurocentrism's way of protecting itself. Academic conventions demand for citations to back up any non-established claim, but one can only cite what has already been researched. I would assume that the prevailing research landscape, dictated by the hegemonic institutions of the dominant culture, tends to prioritize topics, sources, and methodologies aligned with the values and objectives of said culture. Later, in a Research Seminar, I was invited to position myself as a researcher; I wrote:

How do I position myself? From an everburning anger that guides me towards the right questions. Where does that anger come from? Intergenerational trauma. Five centuries of colonial history. Thousands and thousands of years of the patriarchy. Queerphobia. Mononormativity. Institutionalized religion. Anger has many sources; they inform my research.

How can I position myself? My position was given to me at random before I was even born. I've just been fighting to change it; it is very tiring.

Where do I position myself? In the arts. Whether in my search for beauty or in my passion for fiction. When I finished my second degree, my promotor told me: "Don't forget that you are also an artist." But I do forget. I never find the time for it. I end up positioning myself again and again as a researcher. A fan, a critic, an outsider with inside knowledge.

I think from anger and search for beauty, and I speak whatever nuanced original thought I manage to develop that will bring us hope. What is the concept in the field of anger and beauty and the arts that triggers me? That of justice. Social justice. Curricular justice. Unbearable injustice. More omnipresent methodology than explicit research question.

I search for my sources in feminism, decolonial studies, queer studies, the entire woke agenda. I negotiate with the inevitable tradition of white, male, first-world thinkers. More than anything I find stories, personal stories, life experiences. Subjective mini-universes that both confirm my suspicions and forever surprise me.

I wonder what pieces of embodied, tacit, and intangible knowledge have shaped the world as it is here. Has the pain of my ancestors followed me here to Ghent, Belgium? Or was it already here long before I arrived? My real questions are always too big for the scope of the investigation. I make them check their ambitions. Beat them into submission. Shape them tinier. Try again.

I wonder if all the structural injustice in the world is held in place largely through the devices of scientific inquiry that tell us that our questions are too big for the scope of the investigation. That we should limit ourselves to one or two case studies so specific that any conclusion we can draw from them will be, by definition, impossible to extrapolate to a broader problem. That our academic writing should be devoid of personal opinions and emotions. That intersectionality is a beautiful theoretical framework to be kept on a pedestal, and not a methodology to connect my inner anger to that of every immigrant from the Third World with a social conscience that I meet in Belgium. Oh, I almost forgot: white guilt now demands that we call it “the Global South,” even if it is about as located in the south as the West is in the west.¹⁰

I am sure there is a reason why only one professor, who also happens to be my one Latin American professor, checked on me when a far-right zionist puppet of the USA won the elections in my country.¹¹ When that happened, I was angry. My professor checking on me made me feel a bit less angry. I am sure that reason is closely related to the anger of my non-Western classmate when an earthquake devastated her country while she was working 47 hours a week, and not one of our Flemish classmates thought of asking her how she was doing. I am sure it is also connected to the anger of a young Ecuadorian dancer who cannot make dance for the Flemish audience anymore.¹² I am sure I have read that anger in Moya Michael’s “State of the Union.”¹³ I am sure I have seen that same anger on stage earlier this year, in Ntando Cele’s *SPAfrica*¹⁴ and Amanda Piña’s *Exótica*.¹⁵

¹⁰ As I am yet to find a more satisfactory terminology, throughout this dissertation I continue to use the terms “West / First World / Global North,” and their counterparts “Non-West / Third World / Global South,” respectively, almost interchangeably.

¹¹ Sarah Fortinsky, “Trump congratulates Javier Milei on win in Argentina presidential race,” *The Hill*, November 20, 2023, <https://thehill.com/policy/international/4318471-trump-javier-milei-argentina-presidential-race/>.

¹² Barba, interview.

¹³ Moya Michael, “State of the Union,” Het TheaterFestival, 2022, <https://www.theaterfestival.be/23373/>.

¹⁴ Julian Hetzel and Ntando Cele, *SPAfrica*, solo performance, 24 november 2023, Gent: CAMPO Nieuwpoort.

¹⁵ Amanda Piña, *EXÓTICA: Endangered Human Movements Vol. 2*, dance performance, 2 december 2023, Waregem: CC De Schakel.

But what research question is large enough to encapsulate that anger in a scientific way? Surely if our anger cannot be pushed into one small question to be applied to one small case, then it does not have a place within academia. Surely our perception of this world is entirely coincidental. Surely I cannot write this for my introduction, the masters will take offense. Academia becomes a challenge rather than a facilitator for decolonization. I want to write an elegant text that will keep a nuanced tone and smuggle subversive ideas within unimpeachable statements backed up by a long tradition of scientific research... but I am so angry.

I want to write an introduction devoid of anger, because anger is the downfall of the political activist. On stage at CAMPO, a white man describes Ntando Cele's work in *SPAfrica* while she is away, showering after the show. He discusses art and extractivism. He explains that Cele has very interesting materials to offer to the European audience because, as a black South African woman, she has gone through "meaningful" life experiences such as pain, poverty, anger, and being perpetually pushed into the role of a victim: all experiences that can provide the European audience with the cathartic relief of empathy. He talks of capitalism and racism. He talks of the beauty of the city of Ghent and the burden of its colonial heritage. He explains the idea of collecting the tears of white Europeans who cry about Africa. The audience laughs a lot at this parody of Western whiteness. Then Cele gets rid of the costume of white man and starts talking in her (other) native language, Xhosa. The audience does not laugh anymore. Back in English, she explains: "Masking for me is necessary in order for you to see me as a fellow human being and not another black body complaining on stage",¹⁶ and wonders: "How can I be authentic when I'm constantly viewed as a stereotype?"¹⁷ Cele talks not of the scars but of the open wounds of colonial history. There is no postcolonial context. And in masked academic writing, devoid of anger and of politics, there is no decolonial thinking.

I have spent the last two months staying afloat of my studies while exploited by the precarious work situation I am pushed into by my immigrant status; mourning for my own country that celebrated its first forty years of continued democracy¹⁸ by appointing a woman who vindicates our former genocidal dictators as vice president;¹⁹ and witnessing in horror the ongoing colonial genocide perpetrated by Israeli forces in Palestine,²⁰ with a proportion of

¹⁶ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

¹⁷ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

¹⁸ After secret and compulsory voting for men was established in Argentina in 1912, six coups d'état were successfully carried out in 1930, 1943 (self-proclaimed "Revolution of '43"), 1955 (self-proclaimed "Liberation Revolution"), 1962, 1966 (self-proclaimed "Argentinian Revolution"), and 1976 (self-proclaimed "National Reorganization Process").

¹⁹ Luciana Bertoia, "La misión de Victoria Villarruel: convertir a los genocidas en víctimas," *Página 12*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/614779-la-mision-de-victoria-villarruel-convertir-a-los-genocidas-e>.

²⁰ Raz Segal, "A Textbook Case of Genocide," *Jewish Currents*, 2023, <https://jewishcurrents.org/a-textbook-case-of-genocide>.

Palestinian civilian deaths²¹ similar to that of World War II, considered the most lethal war in world history.²² A genocide that started with the material²³ and moral²⁴ support of Belgium, but that has not been acknowledged once by any of my Belgian classmates, who are the future of the Flemish cultural sector. When talking about this genocide, that same Latin American professor asked me, or asked herself: “Why is it always the international students that are the most affected by these things?” Events such as this only ever affect the Third World, so first-world students have nothing to worry about. To the citizens of the Third World who have a social conscience, this genocide has reminded us that colonial settler states and ethnic cleansing campaigns are not a thing from the past; that the institutions of international law do not exist to challenge the status quo but to legitimize it; and that the USA alone today still has the power to decide against thirteen other nations²⁵ to allow yet more than 10.000 children to be murdered in Palestine.²⁶ There is no postcolonial context. And within our university, that expelled the leader of a white supremacist student group in 2018²⁷ only to welcome the perpetrator of a white supremacist hate crime in 2023,²⁸ and that was “appalled by the unprovoked acts of aggression by the Russian authorities in Ukraine”²⁹ and condemned them “in the strongest possible words”³⁰ but fails to acknowledge Israel’s daily live-streamed war crimes in its official statements,³¹ there is no decolonial thinking.

²¹ Julian Borger, “Civilians make up 61% of Gaza deaths from airstrikes, Israeli study finds,” *The Guardian*, December 9, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/09/civilian-toll-israeli-airstrikes-gaza-unprecedented-killing-study>.

²² Andrew Marshall, “An Overview of the Civilian Casualty Ratio,” Boot Camp and Military Fitness Institute, 2023, <https://bootcampmilitaryfitnessinstitute.com/2023/05/16/an-overview-of-the-civilian-casualty-ratio/>.

²³ Peoples Dispatch, “Workers’ Party urges the Belgian government to impose a strict military embargo on Israel,” Peoples Dispatch, 2023, <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/11/23/workers-party-urges-the-belgian-government-to-impose-a-strict-military-embargo-on-israel/>.

²⁴ Claudia Chiappa, “Belgian PM calls Israel’s actions in Gaza ‘no longer proportionate,’” Politico, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/belgiums-pm-says-israels-actions-in-gaza-are-no-longer-proportionate/>.

²⁵ United Nations, “US vetoes resolution on Gaza which called for ‘immediate humanitarian ceasefire,’” UN, 2023, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/us-vetoes-resolution-on-gaza-which-called-for-immediate-humanitarian-ceasefire-dec8-2023/>.

²⁶ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, “Over 10,000 infants and children killed in Israel’s Gaza genocide, hundreds of whom are trapped beneath debris,” Euro-Med Monitor, 2023, <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6020/Over-10,000-infants-and-children-killed-in-Israel%E2%80%99s-Gaza-genocide,-hundreds-of-whom-are-trapped-beneath-debris>.

²⁷ Hanne Decré, “Rector UGent: “Geen plaats meer voor Dries Van Langenhove aan onze universiteit,” *VRT NWS*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2018/09/06/ugent/>.

²⁸ Nils Schillewaert, “UGent neemt veroordeelde Reuzegommer aan als onderzoeker,” *VRT NWS*, August 29, 2023, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2023/08/29/ugent-neemt-reuzegommer-aan/>.

²⁹ Ghent University, “Statement Russia Platform on the war in Ukraine,” Ghent University, 2022, https://www.ugent.be/eureastplatform/en/partners/overview_on_ukraine.htm.

³⁰ Ghent University, “Statement Russia Platform on the war in Ukraine.”

³¹ Ghent University, “Conflict Israel - Hamas: Ghent University statement,” Ghent University, 2023, <https://www.ugent.be/en/news-events/conflict-israel-hamas-statement-ghent-university>.

On December 6, 2023, in an online outburst not too different from this one, South African dramaturg Kopano Maroga wrote:

As some of you know, I've been in a deep depression/burnout situation, the foundation of which being the generally violent state of affairs in Western Europe for black, queer, so-called "third country nationals." Exacerbating factors being my expulsion and ostracization from my previous employers VierNulVier and the ongoing genocide in Palestine. I write this here because I believe, as Zora Neale Hurston wrote: "If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it." I think the thing that tipped me over the edge was the general inertia and malaise of formalized structures of the arts and cultural sector(s) in Belgium around the ongoing genocide in Palestine. Engaging with cultural organizational representatives to garner support and coalition around the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement and being told that: "We do not support political parties or political movements"; "We want to organise something around this, just not now, maybe in January?" or "We do not appreciate your tone therefore we will not support the movement," has really done a number on me. It has totally snuffed out any naïve belief I may have been carrying about what this sector can or could mean to society.³²

This is not the introduction of my Master's thesis. It is not the distilled, sanitized, nuanced academic text to be expected from an introduction. It includes no positive statements about how much Europe, Belgium, the Flemish cultural sector and UGent have given us. It offers no promising future for the formerly colonized and the currently oppressed. This is what I got to write in December 2023, when faced with a deadline for a first draft of my introduction, while feeling sick with the flu and feeling sick of this world. Because sometimes counterbalancing (neo)colonial horrors with undying hopefulness is too impossible a task. Because declaring oneself burned out and still having deadlines postponed and a salary in your bank account is a privilege not reserved for international students or so-called "third country nationals." Because for us, inequality is not something we can explore when interested and leave alone the rest of the time, but an everyday reality that passes through us at all times. To decolonize the university is also to understand that.

³² Kopano Maroga (@kopano.maroga), "Statement" Instagram, December 6, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/kopano.maroga/?hl=en>.

Introduction:

When sickness left my body and hope started to crawl back to it (prompted by a landmark interim ruling by the International Court of Justice³³ that declared the claim that Israel is committing genocide as plausible),³⁴ I was still left with the task of reflecting on what I had written. My main question to myself was: “Why is the genocide of the Palestinian people at the hand of Israeli forces at all relevant to a thesis about Latin American dance makers in Belgium?” Part of the answer belongs to this text, which *is* in fact the introduction to my Master’s thesis: apart from the fact that the Palestinian struggle for liberation should be of interest to any self-respecting decolonial scholar, the ongoing genocide is relevant to this research in particular because it has major implications for my theoretical framework.

This is a thesis about the political, sociological and economic aspects of cultural colonization/extractivism. It is also a thesis about performance and dance. As Jesse Green, the chief theater critic at The New York Times, beautifully put it: “All art is political, yes, and deserves to be judged as such. But art is not just political, and deserves to be judged on other grounds, too.”³⁵ Dance has political implications and aesthetic value, and should be analyzed in relation to both. In this section, I will explain the theoretical framework and methodology that support this research; the reader may notice that there is quite a lot of overlap between the two. At times, they feel like one and the same. It is also worth mentioning, once more, that this Master’s thesis is built upon the findings of my Bachelor’s thesis. Here, I have developed that material further –trying to update, rework, and recontextualize it– in relation to my new research question: “In what

³³ Abbreviated as ICJ.

³⁴ Helena Lysaght, “The ICJ’s interim ruling in South Africa’s genocide case against Israel: what now?” Universiteit Leiden, 2024, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2024/01/icj-delivers-interim-ruling-in-south-africas-genocide-case-against-israel>.

³⁵ Jesse Green, Isabelia Herrera, Carina del Valle Schorske, Matthew López and Misha Berson, “The Great ‘West Side Story’ Debate,” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/01/theater/west-side-story-steven-spielberg-movie.html>.

ways is the concept of ‘cultural extractivism’ relevant for a decolonial analysis of the Flemish dance landscape?”

In the first chapter, I focus mainly on the aesthetic dimension of my research. There, I start from my subjective experience as a foreign spectator in the Flemish dance landscape: I witness that scene from the perspective of an outsider. And yet, the productions created by international dance makers that share my Latin American roots awaken in me glimpses of recognition and inside knowledge. In their movements and their words, I read signs of an identity that is *other* to the Flemish context and that feels *familiar* to me. Performance analysis was the initial spark that ignited this research, and thus it remains the starting point of this dissertation. In the second chapter, I review the official discourse around the Flemish dance landscape –notably most often produced by Flemish authors– under the hypothesis that it might show epistemic flaws and blind spots. By contrasting it with the voices of the actors that provide this context with its much celebrated multiculturalism, we can aim at understanding the ways in which *they* experience it, and the embodied traditions they carry into a “Flemish” canon. In the third chapter, I examine the reasons behind the international influx into the Flemish dance landscape through a decolonial lens. In that last chapter, I theorize what are some of the historical and broader systemic issues that can explain the current state of this context; and I explore the diversity issues in some of its most prominent institutions. Finally, in the (rather unconventional) conclusion, I summarize the main ideas and reiterate the key points of this paper, with the understanding that much remains to be written on this subject.

The moral imaginary and philosophical universe of the West:

In a recent article for Middle East Eye, Iranian professor Hamid Dabashi invites us to imagine a scenario in which an Eastern middle power such as Iran or Turkey, fully backed by an Eastern great power such as Russia or China, decides to carpet bomb Tel Aviv –its civilian population, its residential buildings, hospitals, synagogues, schools, universities and libraries– relentlessly for three months. Then he suggests imagining how Western powers would react, not within three months, but within twenty-four hours of the onslaught of such a fictional scenario. He then brings us back to the reality of the opposite scenario, in which since October 7, 2023, Israel’s Western allies have provided military, diplomatic and ideological support to the ongoing slaughter in Gaza.³⁶ From this, Dabashi infers that in the existing world order, “we helpless people of the world, just like

³⁶ As I give this dissertation its final revision, those three months have become seven, and the situation has not changed significantly.

Palestinians, do not count.”³⁷ For once, I get to read “we” in a sentence that does not assume the white, Western universal, but its traditional Other. The author says that, apart from being a political reality, this double standard when it comes to the casualties of armed conflict is “pertinent to the moral imaginary and philosophical universe”³⁸ of the West:

Those of us outside the European sphere of moral imagination do not exist in their philosophical universe. Arabs, Iranians and Muslims; or people in Asia, Africa and Latin America - we do not have any ontological reality for European philosophers, except as a metaphysical menace that must be conquered and quieted.³⁹

To support this argument, Dabashi lists a tradition of European thinkers who have seen non-Europeans as things to decipher rather than as fellow human beings. A tradition that starts with foundational voices of Western thought such as Kant and Hegel, and culminates with leading European philosopher Jürgen Habermas publicly supporting Israel’s slaughter of the Palestinians,⁴⁰ while simultaneously invisibilizing seventy-five years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian land previous to Hamas’ attack of October 7.⁴¹ Dabashi wonders what this implies about Habermas as a social scientist and critical thinker:

If Habermas has not an iota of space in his moral imagination for people such as Palestinians, do we have any reason to consider his entire philosophical project as being in any way related to the rest of humanity - beyond his immediate tribal European audiences?⁴²

Dabashi sees the Eurocentrism of Western philosophical thinking as a consistent sign of incurable racism. He understands the current situation in Palestine as a completely self-coherent extension of the colonial atrocities perpetrated in the past by European powers upon other peoples. While I agree with that last statement, and with the idea that such atrocities can only be justified by a racist ideology, I do not believe that racism in Europe is incurable. I think Dabashi’s reasoning is at its strongest when he attacks the false claims of universality that European philosophical imaginations have long exhibited, because he understands these imaginations as *incurably tribal*.⁴³ The argument that we cannot look for ideas that are useful and liberating for everyone else within the dominant model is not new. Already forty years ago, Audre Lorde

³⁷ Hamid Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza, European philosophy has been exposed as ethically bankrupt,” Middle East Eye, 2024, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/war-gaza-european-philosophy-ethically-bankrupt-exposed>.

³⁸ Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza.”

³⁹ Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza.”

⁴⁰ Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza.”

⁴¹ Nicole Deitelhoff, Rainer Forst, Klaus Günther and Jürgen Habermas, “Grundsätze der Solidarität. Eine Stellungnahme,” Das Forschungszentrum „Normative Ordnungen“ der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, 2023, <https://www.normativeorders.net/2023/grundsätze-der-solidarität/>.

⁴² Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza.”

⁴³ Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza.”

warned us that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.⁴⁴ Eurocentrism⁴⁵ is dangerous because it has historically been accompanied by an expansionist campaign of (cultural) colonization, but it would not be fair to assume that only European philosophical imaginations and tools are **tribally biased**. We all pledge allegiance to some sort of tribe. Racism can only be cured, and decoloniality can only flourish, when we deviate from the idea that any culture is inherently superior or evil in comparison to all others. The scale of the devastation enabled by the Western world in Gaza is so massive, that it can only be taken as proof of how relevant the call to decolonize our institutions and our minds still is; how urgent it is to find alternative worldviews to that of the dominant model that allow for multiplicity and diversity to coexist; and how irreparable is the cost of not attempting to do so.

A tribally biased state of the art:

The task of decolonizing our minds and finding alternative worldviews to that of the dominant model is relevant to every field of study. In this dissertation, I intend to resume this task in relation to the analysis of the role of Latin American dance makers in the Flemish dance landscape (including the city of Brussels, capital of Flanders and Belgium). My approach to dance studies is inevitably influenced by my situation as an international student from Argentina, but the question is relevant for anyone who is interested in understanding the complexity of this landscape. Pieter T'Jonck uses the name "Tachtigers" to designate the Flemish choreographers who founded contemporary dance companies in the early 1980s that eventually grew to acquire international fame, such as Wim Vandekeybus' *Ultima Vez*, Alain Platel's *Les Ballets C de la B*, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Rosas*.⁴⁶ Charlotte De Somviele claims that, in the last three decades, thanks to the presence of such companies, plus that of De Keersmaeker's prestigious school P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels, "Flemish dance has enjoyed an enormous international influx."⁴⁷ According to Rudi Laermans, "the majority of dancers and

⁴⁴ Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (London: Penguin, 2018), 1-64. Originally published in 1984.

⁴⁵ I understand "Eurocentrism" as the worldview that interprets the past and the present of humanity as a whole from a European perspective.

⁴⁶ Pieter T'Jonck, "Contemporary Dance from Flanders (1980-2016): An essay on thirty-five years of contemporary dance in Flanders, including Brussels," Flanders Arts Institute, 2016, <https://www.kunsten.be/en/publications/let-me-be-your-guide-contemporary-dance-from-flanders-brussels/>.

⁴⁷ Charlotte De Somviele, "Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018)," Flanders Arts Institute, 2022, <https://www.kunsten.be/en/now-in-the-arts/hedendaagse-dans-uit-vlaanderen-en-brussel-anno-2018/>.

choreographers who make up the vibrant field of 'Flemish' contemporary dance come from abroad."⁴⁸

For these Belgian authors, the eminently international character of the Flemish dance scene is undeniable. Latin American dance makers are only a part of that internationality, but (as I am tribally biased as well) that part is the closest to my own expertise. Therefore, as in my Bachelor's thesis, my main case studies remain Fabián Barba (Ecuador), Amanda Piña (Mexico/Chile), and Lisi Estarás (Argentina). The experiences and ideas of non-Western dance makers and theorists are often very valuable resources to this research; especially the cases of South African performers Ntando Cele, Moya Michael, and Kopano Maroga. But the main focus of it remains on the cultural exchange between Flanders and Latin America. Most of the findings can be generalized to some extent to the whole Global South, but not all of them.⁴⁹

Even though most sources take the internationality of the Flemish dance scene as its defining characteristic, no author has tried to lay out a detailed overview of the different cultural traditions that influence dance in Flanders; nor has the influx of foreign dancers been analyzed in depth from a decolonial perspective in this context. Official Western narratives are often taken as a neutral truth, while the non-Western narratives that counter them are read as political and biased. I want to make it clear from the start that I believe all narratives to be political and biased. What we choose not to say, says as much about our political position as the things we choose to mention. The purpose of this research is then to analyze the Flemish cultural scene as a specific context with definite cultural qualities, and the discourse generated by its Flemish theorists as a tribally biased one, instead of assuming Western culture as the neutral universal.

(Cultural) extractivism:

For this analysis, it is useful to remember that cultural colonization has always been rooted in colonization as an economic project. To explain that, Ecuadorian economist Alberto Acosta provides a definition of "extractivism" as a mode of accumulation that began to be established on a massive scale five centuries ago:

The world economy – the capitalist system – began to be structured with the conquest and colonisation of the Americas, Africa and Asia. This extractivist

⁴⁸ Rudi Laermans, "Impure Gestures Towards 'Choreography in General': Re/Presenting Flemish Contemporary Dance, 1982–2010," *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 20(4) (2010), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10486801.2010.505764>, 405.

⁴⁹ For example, racial issues arising from the colonization campaigns of European powers in Africa tend to be analyzed in relation to the concepts of "whiteness/blackness," while those in Hispanic America tend to be analyzed in relation to the concepts of "purity/mestizaje." While individuals from both formerly colonized continents can suffer experiences of daily racism or exoticization in Europe, the specificities of each situation will vary.

mode of accumulation has been determined ever since by the demands of the metropolitan centres of nascent capitalism. Some regions specialised in the extraction and production of raw materials [...] while others took on the role of producing manufactured goods.⁵⁰

Acosta uses the term “extractivism” broadly to refer to all economic activities which remove large amounts of unprocessed natural resources for export; but he does not extend his definition to cultural, academic, or human resources. That task was taken over by other authors, such as activists for indigenous peoples Sócrates Vasquez and Avexnim Cojtí, decolonial scholar Rolando Vázquez, Argentinian cultural politics scholar Paula Serafini, and Bolivian subaltern theorist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. As an addition to this still nascent theoretical tradition, the main goal of this research is to answer a research question that, although limited enough to adapt to the scope of the investigation, is also wide enough to examine the Flemish context from various angles: “In what ways is the concept of **cultural extractivism** relevant for a decolonial analysis of the Flemish dance landscape?”

Vasquez and Cojtí analyze **cultural appropriation** as a manifestation of the extractivist model in relation to the (im)material culture of indigenous communities.⁵¹ Rolando Vázquez discusses the idea of **primitivism** as the extraction of aesthetic resources from other cultures in order to challenge the canon of Western aesthetics.⁵² Serafini sees extractivism as a social, political and cultural phenomenon that affects all spheres of private and public life. She argues that the framework of extractivism helps understand and critique how cultural and creative industries expand and perpetuate socio-environmental inequality.⁵³ She also asserts that this framework allows us to locate dynamics of **displacement of people** symbolically “within the imaginary of [...] a region that is still invested in specific visions of development based on the extraction of resources, where culture risks becoming another resource for the extraction of value only to benefit those at the top.”⁵⁴

Following these authors, the concept of cultural extractivism starts profiling itself as a useful tool to analyze the dynamics of the Flemish dance landscape through a decolonial lens. It might help us understand the reasons behind the displacement of dance makers from all over the world (and their aesthetic

⁵⁰ Alberto Acosta, “Extractivism and neoextractivism: two sides of the same curse,” in *Beyond Development: Alternative visions from Latin America*, ed. Miriam Lang and Dunia Mokrani (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2013), 62.

⁵¹ Sócrates Vasquez and Avexnim Cojtí, “Cultural Appropriation: Another Form of Extractivism of Indigenous Communities,” *Cultural Survival*, 2020, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/cultural-appropriation-another-form-extractivism-indigenous-communities>.

⁵² Rolando Vázquez, *Vistas of Modernity: Decolonial Aesthetics and the End of the Contemporary* (Amsterdam: Modriaan Fund, 2020).

⁵³ Paula Serafini, “Cultural Production Beyond Extraction? A First Approach to Extractivism and the Cultural and Creative Industries in Argentina,” in *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis: New Approaches for Policy*, ed. Kate Oakley and Mark Bank (Cham: Springer, 2021), 57.

⁵⁴ Serafini, “Cultural Production Beyond Extraction?,” 59.

resources) towards the center of Europe, and the instances of inequality they might experience there.

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The open wounds of colonial history are deep. When discussing the case of scientific research in the humanities about Africa, Senegalese philosopher Felwine Sarr urges us to call into question, not only the universality of the knowledge originating from Western societies, but also the way in which Africans think about themselves due to the dominance of that knowledge:

Africans must be as critical of [...] their own modes of knowledge to the extent that these very forms of knowledge often find their justification within the same Western theoretical apparatus that enclosed Africa within a narrative of barbarism, primitivism, savagery, orality, and paganism.⁵⁵

The same can be said, possibly even more, of Latin American thinkers, given that the entire history of our continent is often told to us, from early on, in the terms of a lucky discovery rather than a colonial massacre at the hands of Europeans. In order to understand how Latin American dance makers think about contemporary dance in Flanders, we need to understand how Latin Americans think about themselves. Cusicanqui talks of the reproduction of Western imaginaries in relation to progress and development, in the case of the Bolivian elites. She talks of “elites” not only to refer to the political class or the state bureaucracy, but also to the intellectuals who follow the lead of Western academia to recreate pyramidal structures of power and symbolic capital⁵⁶ within Latin American universities. Cusicanqui believes that the discourse created in the present-day centers of imperial power (i.e., North American universities), and reproduced by the Latin American elites, masks new forms of colonization. Therefore, she uses the idea of cultural extractivism to analyze the **displacement of ideas**: “Ideas flow, like rivers, from south to north [...]. But as in the world market for material goods, ideas also leave the country converted into raw material, which is regurgitated and returned in a large mass in the form of finished products.”⁵⁷

She denounces the role of Latin American universities –in articulation with the ones of the Northern Hemisphere– in maintaining the colonial status quo. In her view, their selective incorporation of ideas into a new canon of scientific discourse prioritizes only those that feed comfortable, depoliticized multiculturalism, while neutralizing true decolonizing practices. To her fellow Latin American scholars, she clarifies: “I allude to this crucial issue – the role of intellectuals in the empire’s domination – because I believe we have a collective

⁵⁵ Felwine Sarr, *Afrotopia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 75.

⁵⁶ In sociology and anthropology, “symbolic capital” refers to the resources, both tangible and intangible, that an individual holds due to their prestige or recognition. This type of capital represents the value a person has within a culture, stemming from their esteemed status.

⁵⁷ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010), 68, my translation from Spanish.

responsibility not to contribute to the resurgence of this domination.”⁵⁸ Her words speak to me, because the flow of academic ideas from south to north is embodied in my own case, with my passage from the National University of Rosario to Ghent University. Cusicanqui reminds us: “The possibility of a profound cultural reform in our society depends on the decolonization of our gestures, of our actions, and of the language with which we name the world.”⁵⁹ She highlights that there can be no discourse of decolonization, no theory of decolonization, without a *decolonizing practice*.⁶⁰

Decolonizing practices:

Performance analysis to resist epistemic violence:

How does a decolonizing practice work in academic research? First, by avoiding reproducing forms of *epistemic violence*. This term, first coined by Indian theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her 1988 essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”⁶¹ has since become a recurrent concept in many decolonial writings, with varying definitions. When revising history, it becomes apparent that systems of oppression all around the world (and in all ages) are not simply held in place through physical violence –which would be costly and barely sustainable– but through the gradual development of complex epistemic relations that lead both the oppressor and the oppressed to internalize their position in the system, so that eventually such a status quo appears natural to them. This process of oppression through the meaning produced by culture, education, and language is what I understand as “epistemic violence.” Maya K’iché indigenous professor Silvel Elías provides the following definition:

Epistemic violence is a consequence of epistemic injustice, that is, the structural prerogative that a system of knowledge, self-perceived as more accurate and valuable, has over another system of knowledge, which it deems to be inferior and uncertain. Epistemic violence exists when methods are used that lead to the extermination, annulment and destruction of certain knowledge and its bearers [...].⁶²

⁵⁸ Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 63.

⁵⁹ Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 70-71.

⁶⁰ Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 62.

⁶¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Joshua Chakawa and Rudolf Nyandoro (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

⁶² Silvel Elías, “Epistemic violence against indigenous peoples,” *Debates Indígenas*, 2020, <https://debatesindigenas.org/ENG/ns/59-epistemic-violence.html>.

The author further explains that the destruction of indigenous knowledge that began with the European invasion and conquest of the Americas “is an expression of epistemic violence that has since been used by Western powers to expand their domain and plunder the material and immaterial assets of subjugated peoples.”⁶³ In other words, epistemic violence is functional to (cultural) extractivism. Elías also mentions that this violence can be exerted through subtle or brutal methods alike. In the course of colonial history, one of the main targets of epistemic violence has been, alongside their language, the embodied knowledge of the oppressed peoples. That is, the corporeal practices that help produce, carry and transmit information and meaning in a community: dance, sport, ritual, gesture, oral tradition, habit. Diana Taylor (originally from Mexico, now professor of performance studies at NYU⁶⁴) coined the concept of “the repertoire” to refer to such knowledge and distinguish it from “the archive” of supposedly enduring materials.⁶⁵ She explains that, given that the colonizers brought their own embodied practices with them, what changed with the Conquest “was not that writing displaced embodied practice [...] but the degree of legitimization of writing over other epistemic and mnemonic systems.”⁶⁶ She explains that an epistemic hierarchy was established, according to which the written knowledge took precedence over the embodied knowledge, and that is why today we need to use both kinds of knowledge to dismantle that hierarchy.

Taylor argues that, by “taking performance⁶⁷ seriously as a system of learning, storing and transmitting knowledge, performance studies allows us to expand what we understand by ‘knowledge.’”⁶⁸ Following this reasoning, performance analysis as a methodology is by definition a decolonizing practice. Nevertheless, the performances that we see as an audience are the product of a much longer creation process that, in the case of Latin American creators in the Flemish dance scene, began in a different continent. Therefore, in this study, performance analysis is only one of multiple research methods used.

Research methods:

This study is largely based on the analysis of primary sources: performance analysis, yes, but also semi-structured in-depth interviews and participatory observation; supported by the literature review of secondary sources. To collect data for this study, I saw the performances *The Jaguar and the Snake* and *Exótica* by Amanda Piña, *#THISISBEAUTY* by Lisi Estarás, and *SPAfrica* by Ntando Cele

⁶³ Silvel Elías, “Epistemic violence.”

⁶⁴ New York University.

⁶⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 18.

⁶⁷ Here, Taylor refers to “performance” in a broad sense, which includes the performing arts but is not limited to them. It may also include other forms of embodied social behavior.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 16.

and Julian Hetzel. I was a passive observer of Fabián Barba's presentation of their text *Modernity's Imaginary*, of Piña's lecture series *The Jaguar Talks*, and of an inclusive workshop coordinated by Estarás. I actively participated in the workshop on Wixárika dances organized by Piña and Katira Ramirez,⁶⁹ and in the one around rituals organized by Piña and Zora Snake.⁷⁰ I attended the keynote lecture "When victims fight for justice: A conversation between arts, activism, academia and institutions,"⁷¹ of a conference on transitional justice organized by Justice Visions. I also took part in the symposium "Dancing diaspora: Opening up European Contemporary Dance," and the research seminar "Dancing diaspora: Rethinking Contemporary Dance discourses," organized by KU Leuven⁷² in collaboration with UGent and UAntwerpen,⁷³ with Barba as a speaker in both. In addition, I interviewed Fabián Barba and Lisi Estarás.

I also discussed ideas in informal talks with several immigrants active in the cultural sector of Flanders and Brussels, such as KVS⁷⁴ dramaturg Gerardo Salinas, dancer Raphael Philippe Damasceno, curator researcher Gadiel Ulanovsky, and freelance writer Rojda Karakuş. To admit that my thoughts around decolonization are fed by daily interactions with other immigrants as much as by formal academic texts is also a decolonizing practice, in that it reclaims the repertoire as a source of knowledge as valid as the archive. The adoption of a qualitative methodological approach is adequate and necessary for this type of research, as it contemplates the value of individual experiences and the subjectivity of the researcher.⁷⁵ Taylor has argued that she finds it impossible to separate her scholarly and political commitments from who she is, which is why she has chosen to allow a range of tone and personal intervention in the discussions that she poses in her writings.⁷⁶ I fully relate to her experience, and have made the same decision with regard to my own writing. Furthermore I, like performance studies scholar Sruti Bala, believe in the underrated value of the anecdote in academic research. Bala explains that, although it is often dismissed in scholarship due to a gender-based bias that equates it to gossip rather than to scientific truth, "the anecdote has gained prominence in methodologies such as

⁶⁹ Juan José Katira Ramirez is a Mara'akame: a shaman in the indigenous Wixárika tradition in Mexico.

⁷⁰ Zora Snake is a choreographer, performer and dancer of Cameroonian origin, from the Bamiléké people.

⁷¹ Julissa Mantilla, Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez, Gerardo Salinas and Luke Moffet, "When victims fight for justice: A conversation between arts, activism, academia and institutions," (keynote lecture, Saint Peter's Abbey, Ghent, March 13, 2024). See video online: Justice Visions, 02:05:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgXS9zIAbBE&t=4432s>.

⁷² Catholic University of Leuven.

⁷³ University of Antwerp.

⁷⁴ Royal Flemish Theater (in Brussels).

⁷⁵ Roberto Hernández Sampieri, *Metodología de la Investigación* (Mexico D.F.: Mc Graw-Hill/Interamericana Editores, 2014), 11.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, xv.

oral history [...] and in the feminist emphasis on knowledge being intersubjective and situated.”⁷⁷

Qualitative inquiries do not pretend to generalize in a probabilistic way the results to broader populations.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, all research founded on decolonial theory aims to provide interpretations and examples regarding a problem considered structural and major: Eurocentrism. As mentioned before, time and time again during the course of this research, I found myself confronted with the dichotomy between the statements that foreigners living in Belgium took for obvious, undeniable truths, and the tremendous difficulty of backing up such statements with academic sources. When I presented this frustration to Fabián Barba after the presentation of their last text, they could absolutely relate to it. Barba explained to me that this is the exact reason why they started registering their own personal experiences in formal writings: so the next person who went researching would find at least one source.⁷⁹ Such is the value of the anecdote for decolonial research. Such is the value that I hope this paper will have for the next person who goes researching.

Semantic activism:

Finally, the militant practice of resisting epistemic violence through language itself is what I understand as semantic activism: if we do not learn to question the way we say things, we will not learn to question the things we are saying. As thinkers such as Cusicanqui⁸⁰ and Mudimbé⁸¹ have signaled, some of the mechanisms that keep the structures of the “postcolonial” context in place are ingrained in the same language that shapes our thoughts. For example I, as Taylor,⁸² Galeano,⁸³ and many other Latin American authors, grew up calling my home “América,” only to later discover that the name of the whole continent had already been claimed in English –the dominant language of global communication– by the United States. In Spanish, “yo soy americana,” but this paper is written in English. In English, I do not get to be an American, even though my readers get to be Europeans.

The practice of semantic activism is the answer to Cusicanqui’s call for Latin American scholars to decolonize the language with which we name the world.⁸⁴ It is also what has led me to repeatedly question the usefulness of an academic thesis as a tool for decolonial discourse. After all, the university is *the* Western

⁷⁷ Sruti Bala, “Decolonising Theatre and Performance Studies. Tales from the classroom,” *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 20, nr. 3 (2017): 335, <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGN2017.3.BALA>.

⁷⁸ Hernández Sampieri, *Metodología de la Investigación*, 19.

⁷⁹ Fabián Barba, “Modernity’s Imaginary,” (lecture, Kaaistudios, Brussels, April 21, 2023).

⁸⁰ Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 71.

⁸¹ Sarr, *Afrotopia*, 76.

⁸² Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, xiii.

⁸³ Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (México D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2004), 16.

⁸⁴ Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa*, 70-71.

institution of knowledge production par excellence. Due to the conventions that are necessary for this dissertation to be taken seriously, many transformations –or, in Cele’s terms, “maskings”⁸⁵– need to happen that undermine the power of decolonial thought. To illustrate, one of the main studied artists of this research is a person who introduces themselves as “Fabi” and who always greets me with a big smile and a hug. Yet, in these pages, they suddenly become a cold and distant “Barba,” effectively erasing all the warmth and familiarity that so often appear in the embodied encounters of Latin American expats meeting abroad. European academia may never be the most effective platform for decolonial discourse. But it is still a platform, and representation is important. If I am to use the master’s tools in an attempt to dismantle the master’s house, my decolonizing practice of semantic activism is to at least make my readers aware of how they work. Whether it comes to a philosophical project, an economic model, academic conventions, or a cultural scene, power relations at play are all the more powerful for as long as they remain hidden. Trying to detect, understand, unveil, and resist them, is the very least we can do if we want to change the world for the better.

⁸⁵ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

1. Cases:

1.1. Amanda Piña's *The Jaguar and the Snake*:

In my second year studying at UGent, as part of the course “Repertoire Study of Modern Theater,” my classmates, our professor Christel Stalpaert, and I, attended Amanda Piña's *The School of the Jaguar*. Piña's production is framed within the ongoing long-term project *Endangered Human Movements*, that started in 2014, and has since encompassed all kinds of artistic proposals in which ancestral embodied practices –such as dances and movements– are recontextualized into the space of the theater.⁸⁶ The third volume of this project, *The School of the Jaguar*, included three different parts: (1) the symposium *The Jaguar Talks*; (2) a workshop on Wixárika dances coordinated by a Mara'akame (a shaman in the indigenous Wixárika tradition in Mexico);⁸⁷ and (3) the performance *The Jaguar and the Snake*. *The School of the Jaguar* as a whole was produced by Nadaproductions, and co-produced by the Flemish institutions DeSingel and STUK.⁸⁸ It took place for the last time in Ghent, where my classmates and I attended all three parts of it, within the context of KASK,⁸⁹ as a school within a school.

The performance *The Jaguar and the Snake* was carried forward by Amanda Piña, Lina María Venegas (Colombia), Juan Carlos Palma (Mexico) and Juan José Katira Ramirez (Mexico).⁹⁰ The performers wore no masks, no elaborate hairstyles, but two of them did wear colored contact lenses. The costumes, designed by the French Lise Lendais,⁹¹ looked artificial to me; like a sort of parody

⁸⁶ Nadaproductions, “Endangered Human Movements,” Nadaproductions, 2023, <https://nadaproductions.at/projects/endangered-human-movements>.

⁸⁷ Amanda Piña, “The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge,” in *The School of the Jaguar. Endangered Human Movements. Vol. 3*, edited by Amanda Piña (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Bewegungsangelegenheiten, 2019), 47-94.

⁸⁸ Amanda Piña, ed., *The School of the Jaguar - Endangered Human Movements Vol. 3* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Bewegungsangelegenheiten, 2019), 315.

⁸⁹ Royal Academy of Fine Arts (in Ghent).

⁹⁰ Nadaproductions, “The Jaguar and the Snake,” Nadaproductions, 2022, <https://nadaproductions.at/performance/the-jaguar-and-the-snake>.

⁹¹ Nadaproductions, “The Jaguar and the Snake.”

or contemporary version of what Western people would expect indigenous clothes to look like (see image 1).⁹² Katira Ramirez was the only one wearing a distinctively authentic indigenous outfit. His attire during the performance was quite similar to the clothes he wore during *The Jaguar Talks* or the workshop on Wixárika dances (Img. 2).⁹³



Image 1: Amanda Piña, Yoan Sorin and Lina María Venegas performing *The Jaguar and the Snake* at Fondation Cartier Paris.

⁹² Image 1: Marc Domage, *Amanda Piña, Yoan Sorin and Lina María Venegas performing The Jaguar and the Snake at Fondation Cartier Paris*, 2019, photograph. © Marc Domage.

⁹³ Image 2: Left: Estudio El Gozo, *Mara'akame Juan José Ramirez in installation at deSingel Antwerp*, 2018, photograph. © estudioelgozo. | Right: Estudio El Gozo, *Mara'akamé Juan José Katira Ramirez closes the silent and empty space by singing a Wixáritari song*, 2022, photograph. © nadaproductions.



Image 2: Left: Mara'akame Juan José Katira Ramirez in installation at DeSingel, Antwerp. | Right: Katira Ramirez closes the performance *The Jaguar and the Snake* by singing a Wixáritari song.



Image 3: The set for the performance *The Jaguar and the Snake*.

Throughout the performance, Venegas and Palma remained more on stage, in a sort of loop of slowly repeating actions or sequences of movement, at times interacting without touching. Piña often sat with the audience. Outside of the silver circle of the performance space (Img. 3)⁹⁴ she did not seem to maintain a character or role, defying the established boundaries between performer and spectator. Inside of the circle, the two women sometimes mirrored each other in their movements. Every once in a while, one of the performers stared at the members of the audience. The three of them exhibited sort of dumb, demonic facial expressions every now and then, otherwise their faces remained neutral. Eventually, they started puking brightly colored liquids and multiple nature-inspired objects out of their mouths, such as flowers, feathers and animal tails. As the choreography unfolded, most of the space of the stage was dark, except from a focalized light coming from the center of the ceiling structure. Near the end, the two women rolled towards each other and the light changed, getting darker as the ceiling seemed to come down. To me, this felt like the most powerful part of the performance. It was also the one with the most pronounced bodily interaction between the performers, with some insinuations of sapphic love, proximity and connection. After the ceiling came fully down on top of them and the lights turned off, Katira Ramirez played a small ritual instrument and sang a Wixáritari song to signal the end (Img. 2).

According to its promotional material, the performance is based on the Amerindian notion of multinatural perspectivism.⁹⁵ That is, an accumulation of identities that embraces the multiplicity of entangled beings that inhabit the Earth, thus resisting the more rigid Western categories of classification. The performers are said to work on embodying Amerindian iconography, with special focus on the interactions in which animal, human, and vegetal fuse and transform.⁹⁶ From the point of view of the audience, the piece does portray a certain hybridity; a never-ending morphing of the human figure,⁹⁷ embodying what could be read as references to multiple animals. Professor Stalpaert has argued that, by doing so, it challenges the boundaries between categories such as “humans/non-humans,” “culture/nature,” “contemporary/traditional,” “modern/primitive,” “performance art/ritual art.”⁹⁸ These dualities are based on what Piña calls “a colonised difference”;⁹⁹ the idea that, when an opposition is created in attachment to certain values, a hierarchy and a power relation are also created as a result. The theoretical framework behind the choreography is thus

⁹⁴ Image 3: Marc Damage, *The set for the performance The Jaguar and the Snake*, 2019, photograph. © Marc Damage.

⁹⁵ Piña, “The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge,” 50.

⁹⁶ Nadaproductions, “The Jaguar and the Snake.”

⁹⁷ Paula Chaves, “Gazing from behind the jaguar’s eyes: On the performance The Jaguar and the Snake,” in *The School of the Jaguar - Endangered Human Movements Vol. 3*, edited by Amanda Piña (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Bewegungsangelegenheiten, 2019), 42.

⁹⁸ Christel Stalpaert, “Werkcollege 05: Nagesprek The School of the Jaguar,” A001490 Repertoire Study of Theater (class lecture, Ghent University, Ghent, 27 October 2022).

⁹⁹ Piña, “The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge,” 56.

substantiated by decolonial theory, and can be clearly defended in rhetorical discourse. And yet, can the audience really deduce these ideas simply by witnessing three performers moving and puking in slow motion?

While the Flemish dance landscape is only one of the many “postcolonial” environments to which Piña’s creative practice reacts, this context does acquire its own specificity when it comes to determining how her work is received there. To me, coming from a Latin American background, the performance felt very close to what I am used to seeing in the Flemish landscape: performances that are long, somehow repetitive, and building towards a climax; trying to make the audience uncomfortable by being grotesque. Reviews of the performance in Flemish magazines and websites describe it as “ritualistic,”¹⁰⁰ but also talk of “the choreographer Amanda Piña,”¹⁰¹ and of “dancing,”¹⁰² “dancers,”¹⁰³ and “dance performance.”¹⁰⁴ The idea of dance as presented in this performance felt very far from anything I had seen in Argentina, both in traditional theater settings and informal cultural contexts. It seemed far from the dynamic concert dance driven by virtuosity, narrative and spectacle that I would usually see on Argentinian stages. But it also seemed far from the structured traditional dances and the spontaneous popular dances (often involving much physical contact) that I knew from my country. To me, in comparison to that dance scene, this performance did not feel Latin at all, except for the pas-de-deux near the end.

The lexicon of movement felt very close to European or North American modern and contemporary dance. Venegas and Piña would hold an attitude *derrière* with the supporting leg in demi-plié and its foot flat on the floor, with a tilted torso and non-rotated legs, in the kind of pose that evidences a training in modern dance technique even if it deviates from it (Img. 4).¹⁰⁵ *The Jaguar and the Snake* was supposed to embody “endangered human movements,” but I was not seeing any movement there that would look out of place to me on a European stage. As I watched them contracting and releasing their bodies in the second or the fourth dance position on the floor, I saw a way of moving that was more reminiscent of Graham’s technique than anything else. As Latin American scholars Jorge Poveda Yáñez, Beatriz Herrera Corado and María Mendizábal remind us, recent dance scholarship shows that much of modern dance was inspired by, or even copied from, indigenous folk dances, and that Martha

¹⁰⁰ STUK, “Nadaproducties / Amanda Piña: The Jaguar and the Snake,” STUK, 2019, <https://www.stuk.be/nl/programma/the-jaguar-and-the-snake>.

¹⁰¹ Matilde Casier, “De veelkleurige ogen van de jaguar,” *Rekto:Verso* Nr. 98 (2023), <https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/de-veelkleurige-ogen-van-de-jaguar>.

¹⁰² Joachim Ben Yakoub, “Dancing with a deer, a jaguar or a snake,” *Etcetera. Tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten* #159 (2020), <https://e-tcetera.be/dancing-with-a-deer-a-jaguar-or-a-snake/>.

¹⁰³ Casier, “De veelkleurige ogen van de jaguar.”

¹⁰⁴ STUK, “Nadaproducties / Amanda Piña: The Jaguar and the Snake.”

¹⁰⁵ Image 4: Left: Amanda Piña, *The Jaguar and the Snake*, 2022, Screenshot of *Amanda Piña over 'The Jaguar and the Snake'*, © VierNulVier, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AvUyTMPWrk>. | Right: Barbara Morgan, *Martha Graham performing "Letter to the World" (also called "The Kick")*, 1940, Underwood Archives/age fotostock, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martha-Graham#/media/1/240726/233147>.

Graham's work itself was linked to Native American cultures.¹⁰⁶ But in the "postcolonial" context, most viewers would recognize this way of moving from the former rather than the latter (Img. 5).¹⁰⁷



Image 4: Left: Amanda Piña, *The Jaguar and the Snake*. | Right: Martha Graham, *Letter to the World*.



Image 5: Left: Amanda Piña and Lina María Venegas, *The Jaguar and the Snake*. | Right: Martha Graham, *Clytemnestra*.

¹⁰⁶ Jorge Poveda Yáñez, Beatriz Herrera Corado, and María Mendizábal, "Forced Secularization and Postmodern Discourses within Contemporary Performance: Weaponizing Multicultural Rhetoric to Ratify Asymmetries among Dance Practitioners," *Dance Chronicle* 45 no. 1 (2022): 79–100, doi:10.1080/01472526.2022.2025738.

¹⁰⁷ Image 5: Left: Amanda Piña and Lina María Venegas, *The Jaguar and the Snake*, 2022, Screenshot of Amanda Piña, « *The Jaguar and the Snake* », Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNG6SFtg3-k>. | Right: Sam Falk, *Martha Graham performing as Clytemnestra*, 1958, *The New York Times*, <https://marthagraham.org/19poses/>.

On that evening of October 2022, I left the iconic KASK building feeling disappointed and annoyed: I had been expecting to see something different, something Latin for once, and I had mostly seen what to me, felt like a typically European piece of contemporary dance. After all, in the two years prior in Flanders, I had seen bodies losing themselves to animality, addressing the audience with their gaze, and releasing bodily fluids on stage in laGeste's *Promise Me*, Florentina Holzinger's *A Divine Comedy*, Needcompany's *Billy's Violence*, or Nadia Beugré's *L'homme rare*. I had also seen performers slowly and silently moving their way towards interacting with each other in Anthony van Gog's *Heartscore* and Wit.h's *The Crip Academy*. It felt to me like, in order to make the performance accessible to a European audience, the final result seemed detached from much of what it was trying to honor in the first place.

In her theoretical framing of the performance, Piña claims to "have looked at the dances of others as a counter-spell to capture or reveal the underlying modern notions, present per default in the practice of dance and performance making." In a way, *The Jaguar and the Snake* accomplishes this. In my case, the performance revealed those underlying notions by appearing, from my perspective, to be too similar to them, and in that sense it felt frustrating. For other people, it achieved this the opposite way. Based on an after-talk about the piece,¹⁰⁸ I understood that for my European professor and classmates, it felt much more disruptive in relation to what they understand as "Flemish dance landscape." To them, having no framework of reference with regard to Latin American indigenous culture, it did feel a lot more like something they had never seen before. For some of them, the performance felt challenging, confronting an exoticizing gaze. It was mentioned, for example, that if it had been done in nature, it would have been easier for Europeans to categorize it as "wild" instead of as "art." For others, having performers of indigenous background looking at them with stupid expressions on their faces felt rather functional to an exoticizing gaze.

But to me, the visual result looked like it was at home in the Flemish performance scene, even though the references behind it belonged to the Amerindian world. This felt even more puzzling, because the bodies on stage looked different enough from the white Western bodies that dominated the scene for most of the history of theater dance in the Northern Hemisphere. Dance scholar Annelies Van Assche and choreographer Kareth Schaffer remark that "the history of Western concert dance is linked to different currency reigns [...] privileging one body (or bodily technique) over others."¹⁰⁹ They also highlight that, in Western dance history, this idea of favoring a certain bodily aesthetics has been twisted more than once to justify racial exclusion. However, this does not seem to be the case in the Flemish dance landscape, long praised for its multicultural aspirations. In her State of the Union speech for Het Theater Festival in 2022,

¹⁰⁸ Stalpaert, "Werkcollege 05: Nagesprek The School of the Jaguar."

¹⁰⁹ Annelies Van Assche and Kareth Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity: What Contemporary Dancers Do When They Do What They Do," *TDR: The Drama Review* Vol. 67, No. 1 (2023): 203-222, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/885095>.

South African dancer Moya Michael offered a not-too-hopeful explanation as to why that could be:

Now that the poles are shifting and aesthetics of the South are gaining traction and momentum in the North too. You want to see how we can be included in your diversity policies; I can imagine that must be really hard for you, influenced by the canon of Flemish Nationalism. You swear you want to "decolonize" everything too if necessary!¹¹⁰

The question of where do all the international dance makers fit in the construction of a "Flemish canon" has often come to the fore throughout the development of this research. But "decolonizing everything" is not really necessary in that equation, if we keep in mind Indian dancer and scholar Ananya Chatterjea's argument that "the wonderfully unifying and legitimizing aesthetic category of "contemporary dance" (really meaning Euro-American modern/contemporary dance)"¹¹¹ offers celebrated access to the global stage at the cost of erasing difference, and repeating the racial, gendered and colonial violence of the projects of modernity. Along the same line of thought, Van Assche and Schaffer acknowledge that, in Barba's analysis of their own dance career in Quito and Brussels, "Barba foregrounds a struggle with the globalized notion of contemporary dance, which they analyze as monocultural, or differently put, as a neocolonial expansion of a predominantly Western practice [...]"¹¹² In other words, we may see many different bodies of all kinds of backgrounds on the Flemish stages, but what they are allowed to do on stage in order to be considered contemporary dance makers is inscribed within the rules of a Western-European understanding of what contemporary dance is.

1.2. Fabián Barba's *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*:

Barba, like Piña, also tried to criticize the universal claims of Western thought in the Flemish contemporary dance landscape through their choreographic work, only to discover that this work was being incorporated into the local scene with virtually no friction; it was not succeeding in promoting self-criticism on the audience.¹¹³ Although when Barba first arrived from Ecuador to live in Belgium in 2004 they intended to stay for only one year, they ended up following the entire

¹¹⁰ Michael, "State of the Union."

¹¹¹ Ananya Chatterjea, "On the Value of Mistranslations and Contaminations: The Category of 'Contemporary Choreography' in Asian Dance," *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 45, Issue 1 (2013): 7-21, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767712000320>.

¹¹² Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 211.

¹¹³ Barba, interview.

study program of P.A.R.T.S. until their graduation in 2008.¹¹⁴ In their texts “The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance,” “Impure Transmissions: Traditions of Modern Dance Across Historical and Geographical Boundaries,” and “Research into Corporeality,” Barba describes this period of their life in much detail, and theorizes (from a decolonial standpoint) why things felt for them the way they did. In those texts, Barba goes over their realization that they were not going to improve their Quito-acquired technique in Brussels; their process of inscribing themselves within a new dance culture through a new dance education; the growing feeling that the dance scene in Brussels was considered superior and more contemporary than the dance scene in Quito by some invisible but very active standards;¹¹⁵ and the breaking point at which all these accumulated frustrations motivated the creation of their project *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening (AMWDE)* in 2009:

When I started working on AMWDE I had a clear target audience and a clear intention. I wanted to get as close as I could to producing a living and moving image of Wigman as a way of disrupting the conventions and codes with which my classmates and I had become familiar at P.A.R.T.S. I wanted to do so because I had the impression that Ausdruckstanz and modern dance in Quito did not have a place within the ‘contemporary’ dance world into which we were being educated.¹¹⁶

By then, Barba had come to recognize a certain affinity between the Ausdruckstanz tradition best embodied by Mary Wigman, and the tradition of movement that they had known in Quito.¹¹⁷ Both traditions were not only similar in terms of movement, they were also similarly treated by the Flemish dance landscape: ignored at best, insulted as old-fashioned at worst. In their analysis of the reasons behind that treatment, Barba shows that classification operates in the dance world as a value system, because “if a dance practice is not greeted as contemporary dance [...] then it has no place, agency or relevance within the contemporary dance scene.”¹¹⁸ They explain that “contemporary dance, at least nominally, claims the present for itself and excludes other kinds of dances from it.”¹¹⁹ According to the author, this leads to modern dance (in this case, Ausdruckstanz) being read as a remnant of the past, and not as a living tradition of movement that belongs to the present as well. The same occurs with dance presently produced outside of the West (in this case, in Ecuador).

¹¹⁴ Barba, interview.

¹¹⁵ Fabián Barba, “The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance,” *Documenta* 34.2 (2016): 46-63; <https://doi.org/10.21825/doc.v34i2.16385>.

¹¹⁶ Fabián Barba, “Impure Transmissions: Traditions of Modern Dance Across Historical and Geographical Boundaries,” in *Transmissions in Dance: Contemporary Staging Practices*, edited by Lesley Main. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 55.

¹¹⁷ Fabián Barba, “Research into Corporeality,” *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 54 Issue 1 (2022): 82, <https://doi.org/10.5406/danceresearchj.43.1.0083>.

¹¹⁸ Barba, “The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance,” 54.

¹¹⁹ Barba, “The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance,” 52.

That is the central idea that led Barba to the creation of *AMWDE*, and yet, the way the performance was interpreted by the scholars of the Flemish dance landscape was almost the radical opposite of Barba's intended effect. Barba tried to create a convincing portrayal of Mary Wigman –an icon of European modern dance– in order to expose the unspoken conventions of contemporary dance in the Flemish scene. The overarching question behind the project was: "Why is it difficult to recognize two simultaneous dance scenes as contemporary to each other?"¹²⁰ But the texts that Flemish scholars Timmy De Laet and Christel Stalpaert wrote about *AMWDE* present the dichotomy between modern dance and contemporary dance as an unquestionable given. Stalpaert talks of the historical distance the spectator experiences during the performance and tries to understand how Barba has managed to re-enact modern time;¹²¹ De Laet talks of "re-embodying a dance style that is historically outmoded."¹²² Both authors highlight the difficulty of reconstructing dance out of archival material, taking the past tense of modern dance as a fact. Additionally, they both focus their analysis on the fact that the dances of a female dancer were re-enacted by a male-looking body. Although at the time Barba did not yet publicly identified themselves as a non-binary person, I cannot help but wonder whether such analysis –based on a rigid binary understanding of gender expression– can still be considered useful in a world that is trying to make room for queer identities. Only Ramsay Burt, who has been a visiting teacher at P.A.R.T.S. since 2008,¹²³ takes the analysis one step further. He remarks that, in insisting on making room for a kind of expressionist dance that is not currently part of the innovative European dance scene, but that had still been a part of it within living memory, the performance achieved a disruptive effect that blasted Wigman's work out of the past.¹²⁴

Burt does not stay within the binary opposition between past and present, modern and contemporary, male and female. He acknowledges that, in blasting Wigman's works out of the past, *AMWDE* reminded its audience "of the potential for alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and living, and the relations of power whose aim is to regulate these."¹²⁵ In my interview with Barba, I asked them if they had felt such power relations in the Flemish dance landscape in the form of an exoticizing gaze. They recalled the unexpected success of *AMWDE*. The performance was well received, in the sense that it could be performed in many venues. However, the way in which *AMWDE* was promoted and praised by the actors of the Flemish dance landscape was borderline exoticizing. According to Barba, this hid a certain ignorance, because for many people it was difficult to

¹²⁰ Barba, "The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance," 49.

¹²¹ Christel Stalpaert, "Reenacting Modernity: Fabian Barba's 'A Mary Wigman Dance Evening' (2009)," *Dance Research Journal* 43, no. 1 (2011), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266828>.

¹²² Timmy De Laet, "Giving Sense to the Past: Historical D(ist)ance and the Chiasmatic Interlacing of Affect and Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, ed. Mark Franko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 37.

¹²³ Ramsay Burt, "About," Ramsay Burt Wordpress, 2020, <https://ramsayburt.wordpress.com/about/>.

¹²⁴ Ramsay Burt, *Ungoverning Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 208.

¹²⁵ Burt, *Ungoverning Dance*, 210.

make sense of the fact that an Ecuadorian was interested in Mary Wigman's dances:

So I remember that they advertised it as "a young Ecuadorian dancer." And "a young Ecuadorian dancer" had an element of surprise. Like an element of there being something halfway attractive, but you couldn't make sense of it. And without ever really wondering what it means that a person from Ecuador is doing Mary Wigman's dances.¹²⁶

For Barba, the fact that the critique would highlight their Ecuadorian origins as something worth mentioning yet not worth investigating, was a sign of an exoticizing gaze. Such is the case, for example, in the text on DeSingel's website on the piece,¹²⁷ or in the reviews written in 2010 by Julie Rodeyns for the blog of iDans festival,¹²⁸ and by Pieter T'Jonck for DeMorgen.¹²⁹ In her 2009 article on the piece, Stalpaert does dedicate two sentences to the ways in which Barba's training from Quito appears in the performance.¹³⁰ But for a deeper exploration of the connection between Barba's interest in Wigman and their formation in Ecuador, we need to look outside of Belgium, and wait until the description of the work by the Reina Sofía Museum (Spain) in 2018.¹³¹ By then, Barba themselves had already published a few texts on the subject. Ramsay Burt is also the only author to point out this fact in his 2017 analysis of *AMWDE*. There, he says that the illusion of Barba becoming Wigman is never realized in the performance partly due to Barba being and *looking* South American instead of German:

This fact was invariably mentioned by theatres when they promoted the performance—it is a popular work that has been performed many times across Europe and internationally. Many reviews have also mentioned [their] South American origin. A subtext of this seems to be how surprising it is that someone from Ecuador has produced such a conceptually sophisticated and fashionably up-to-date dance work. The origin of dance artists from Western Europe or North America is not commented upon in this way [...].¹³²

Over the years Barba realized that part of the reason why *AMWDE* was well received in Europe, was that it allowed European societies to engage from a safe place (the interest of a foreign "young Ecuadorian dancer") with a problematic part of their past (Wigman's association with Nazi Germany, while also being an

¹²⁶ Barba, interview.

¹²⁷ DeSingel, "Fabián Barba," DeSingel, 2010, <https://desingel.be/nl/programma/dans/fabian-barba-a-mary-wigman-dance-evening-3>.

¹²⁸ Julie Rodeyns, "mary wigman fabian barba," iDans Blog, 2010, <https://idansblog.org/2010/10/19/mary-wigman-fabian-barba/>.

¹²⁹ Pieter T'Jonck, "Repertoire als bron van experiment," DeMorgen, 2010, <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/repertoire-als-bron-van-experiment~bed8c2e5/>.

¹³⁰ Stalpaert, "Reenacting Modernity: Fabian Barba's 'A Mary Wigman Dance Evening' (2009)," 91.

¹³¹ Museo Reina Sofía, "Fabián Barba," Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2018, <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/activities/fabian-barba>.

¹³² Burt, *Un governing Dance*, 206.

important figure of Western modern dance).¹³³ In that sense, both Barba¹³⁴ and Burt¹³⁵ have referred to how vital it becomes for members of former European colonies to know as much about European culture as they do about the traditions of their own countries when it comes to navigating the world of dance in Europe.

1.3. Amanda Piña's *Exótica*:

According to its promoting material, *Exótica* is a revival of the forgotten works of La Sarabia, Nyota Inyoka, François Benga, and Leila Bederkhan, who were influential dancers and choreographers of color in early 20th-century Europe. Despite their success in life, they were overlooked in Western dance history, fading from collective memory. Therefore, Piña wants to resurrect their legacy, exploring what she terms "the brown history of European dance."¹³⁶ Through reenactments, invocations, exorcisms, and celebrations, *Exótica* seeks to open a space for their performative presence to be felt once more (Img. 6).¹³⁷ The work attempts to delve into the kind of art these dancers created, and how it was perceived amidst the backdrop of racism and the white exoticizing gaze of the time. Importantly, it wants to raise questions about the relevance of this heritage today. The promotional text ends with the question: "What is still present of their contexts (racism and the white gaze) in our contexts of work within Europe and beyond?"¹³⁸

¹³³ Barba, "Modernity's Imaginary."

¹³⁴ Fabián Barba and Cecilia Lisa Eliceche, "Dancing diaspora: Opening up European Contemporary Dance," (symposium, OPEK Kleine Zaal, Leuven, April 24, 2023).

¹³⁵ Burt, *Ungoverning Dance*, 197.

¹³⁶ Nadaproductions, "EXOTICA – On the brown history of European dance," Nadaproductions, 2024, <https://nadaproductions.at/performance/exotica>.

¹³⁷ Image 6: CIRCA, *The set for the performance Exótica with some of the performers*, 2023, photograph. © Nadaproductions.

¹³⁸ Nadaproductions, "EXOTICA – On the brown history of European dance."



Image 6: Amanda Piña's *Exótica*.

In the first part of their review of *Exótica*, South African dramaturg and dancer Kopano Maroga praises Piña's artistic abilities, highlighting her talent for creating profound and impactful performances that blend the intangible with the material, resulting in emotionally stirring, thought-provoking, intellectually challenging, and spiritually resonant works. They recall that, when entering the theater, they were confident that, if there was a performance artist qualified to approach the themes of *Exótica*, it would be Piña herself.¹³⁹ My own experience when entering the theater was different, as I was still skeptical about Piña's capacity to provide convincing attempts at decolonization in her performances after having seen *The Jaguar and the Snake*. Sadly, I left the theater having reconfirmed my skepticism, and Maroga left it disappointed in their confidence. In their review, they explained: "Unfortunately, the iteration I saw seemed to only re-perform the exoticization the artistic ancestors of the performers were beholden to."¹⁴⁰ They refer to the sea of white faces in the audience the night they saw the performance in Brussels, something I also noticed when I saw it in Waregem: "The framework to revisit and reappropriate the exoticizing terms of engagement of the performers' artistic ancestors is seemingly primed."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Kopano Maroga, "God is alive, magic is afoot," *Etcetera. Tijdschrift voor podiumkunsten* #173 (2023), <https://e-tcetera.be/god-is-alive-magic-is-afoot/>.

¹⁴⁰ Maroga, "God is alive, magic is afoot."

¹⁴¹ Maroga, "God is alive, magic is afoot."



Image 7: Re-exoticization in *Exótica*?

Piña opens her performance framing it as a ritual. She explains the concept of *Exótica* as described in the promotional material, and what follows is a succession of re-enactments of choreographic works (Img. 7)¹⁴² by La Sarabia, Nyota Inyoka, François Benga, and Leila Bederkhan; interspersed by moments in which the performer in charge of embodying each late dancer gives a speech regarding the life of that ancestor, their own life, and the things they have in common. The dancers also perform recurring ritualistic gestures, such as lighting candles at the altars that exhibit the pictures of these formerly famous racialized dancers, or drinking mezcal to their memory.

There are some strong moments: the same choreography that highlights the centrality of the exotic dancer as an object to admire rather than a subject with agency is performed first by the colored body of Zora Snake, and immediately after again by the white body of Ángela Muñoz Martínez. The contrast highlights the frequency with which we see racialized bodies in those places, and how consequently, seeing a white body in that role feels strange. There are disjointed moments, in which the performers seem to be having their own private party on stage; a contemporary party, with contemporary music, alien to the proposed concept and to the audience's view. There are also weak moments, in which the intended effect of the performance is made so explicit by the performer's discourse that it feels like they are trying to spoon-feed decolonization to the audience. In her monologue to and about Nyota Inyoka,

¹⁴² Image 7: CIRCA, *Exótica*, 2023, photograph. © Nadaproductions.

Dafne del Carmen Moreno talks about herself and the late dancer as “souls from the borders,”¹⁴³ and about the complexity of being of mixed heritage, embodying both the oppressed and the oppressor. She asks: “I wonder how it must have been like for you to live in Paris at that time, being so brown-skinned.”¹⁴⁴ All of these could be strong points to confront the audience with some difficult issues, but they are delivered in Spanish, and with such naivety that they are rendered harmless. Far from the powerful speeches that mobilize the masses at public protests for emancipation, the performer’s tone reminded me of the thank-you speeches given by Latin American girls at their quinceañera parties.

When it comes to the audience, *Exótica* is, for the most part, polite at best and condescending at worst. Without exception, the things that might come across as aggressive to the European viewer are said and sung once and again in Spanish.¹⁴⁵ The performers talk and sing of resistance, of curing extractivism, of curing Europeanness, but always in a language that most of the Flemish audience is not likely to comprehend, and often in distorted lyrics that were even difficult for me as a native Spanish speaker to understand at first hearing. I left the theater with my white, Flemish partner and his white, Flemish godmother. I asked her if she liked the performance. She replied that she did, because she likes rituals. I felt like something had been lost in translation. To me, the performance felt lacking. As Maroga put it, *Exótica’s* greatest strength is that “it succeeds in opening up a pressing question for our time: exactly what is required to do this kind of ancestral work where, for some, our ancestors are the historical victims and, for others, our ancestors are the historical perpetrators.”¹⁴⁶ To redeem Dafne’s speech I might add that, for many, many Latin Americans, our ancestors are both.

1.4. SPAfrica, by Ntando Cele and Julian Hetzel:

SPAfrica, a concept by the South African performer Ntando Cele and the German performance maker Julian Hetzel, performed solely by Cele, explores the same struggles and conflicts as *Exótica* in much less diplomatic ways. Dramaturg Fransien Van Der Putt jokes about it by opening her review with an anecdote much telling of the current notion of contemporary dance in Europe: ““This is a dance performance, right?” The lady next to me in row five in Theater Kikker looks

¹⁴³ In the performance, she says “almas fronterizas” in Spanish. This is my translation.

¹⁴⁴ In the performance, she says this in Spanish: “Me pregunto cómo habrá sido para tí vivir en París en esa época, siendo tan morena.” This is my translation.

¹⁴⁵ This could be considered a decolonizing practice, in that it does not force the performers to speak a language other than their mother tongue. However, I argue that, given the discursive nature of the piece, the impact of the arguments it wants to make is diminished as it forces the members of the audience to follow by reading subtitles that are often not easily readable.

¹⁴⁶ Maroga, “God is alive, magic is afoot.”

at me in surprise. A discussion has just started at the beginning of the performance.”¹⁴⁷ Cele later jokes about it in the performance itself: “What did you expect, contemporary edgy theater?”¹⁴⁸ She does not need to engage in a sophisticated play of re-enactment to confront the audience with their own expectations regarding the contemporary Flemish scene; that question is enough.



Image 8: Ntando Cele wearing the mask of a white man (modeled after Julian Hetzel's face) in *SPAfrica*.

Just as Piña in *Exótica*, Cele talks about extractivism in *SPAfrica*, but her approach is different. Not in elusive sung Spanish, but in clearly spoken English, Cele –wearing the mask of white man (img. 8)¹⁴⁹– explains to the local host what the name of the performance means: “SPAfrica” is the world’s first empathy drink! Water is extracted from a South African township, bottled and sent to Europe. Alongside the bottled water, Europeans are offered a tear-catcher device in which they can catch the tears they shed when they think of the poverty, the misery and the injustice in Africa. The collected tears of the “voluntears” will then be shipped back to South Africa, to be released as a small rain over the township. It is extractivism, the white-masked Cele explains: “Their water, our tears.”¹⁵⁰

The discourse goes over the same talking points as *Exótica*, but if there is any condescension involved it is venomous rather than patronizing, and there is definitely no politeness. For me, the strongest part of *SPAfrica* is the fact that it

¹⁴⁷ Fransien Van Der Putt, “Absurde tranenvanger laadt de toeschouwer met ernstige verantwoordelijkheid,” *Theaterkrant*, 2023, <https://www.theaterkrant.nl/recensie/spafrica/ntando-cele-julian-hetzel/>, my translation from Dutch.

¹⁴⁸ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

¹⁴⁹ Image 8: Anouk Maupu, *Ntando Cele wearing the mask of a white man (modeled after Julian Hetzel's face) in SPAfrica*, 2023, photograph. © Anouk Maupu.

¹⁵⁰ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

always seems to be one step ahead of an allegedly progressive postcolonial discourse. Every single time a maskless Cele confronts the audience with a caricatured version of herself, a white man (the local host) appears onstage, on a screen, or as a voice over, to say out loud what a member of the audience might say after the performance in order to neutralize her aggressive accusations and go home with peace of mind. The white host praises how touching, how confronting and inspiring Cele is being; he signals how much work still needs to be done. He asks Cele questions as if he wanted to educate himself while she cries on stage (img. 9).¹⁵¹



Image 9: Ntando Cele without mask in *SPAfrica*.

She composes herself and summons a cynical smile; a forced smile that twists her whole face. She growls. She growls and barks. The audience looks uncomfortable as Cele tries to attack them, but a rope she attached to herself long ago holds her back. Her growl turns into a sentence that she repeats almost like a mantra: “Oh my god. Oh my dog...”¹⁵² And then, in English, she sings a song in which she declares herself to be the dog that makes art for the breeder, who is also the white audience. Her performance is a manifest on black art as demanded by the white market. A black mouth foaming with rabies appears projected in the background. Cele’s growl turns into a nervous laugh: “Oh, so savage. She’s a savage,” she says, mocking what the members of the audience might be thinking: “So much power. So strong. Yeah, so much stamina.” And then she taunts: “Watch me, watch me lose control.”¹⁵³ She presents herself as grotesque and strong and savage and primitive, and finally, she asks: “You like what you see?” And she

¹⁵¹ Image 9: Anouk Maupu, *Ntando Cele without mask in SPAfrica*, 2023, photograph. © Anouk Maupu.

¹⁵² Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

¹⁵³ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

concludes: “This is what you paid for, right?”¹⁵⁴ There is nothing polite about Cele’s words, and as much as she makes use of her native language, Xhosa, she does not rely on it to hide her accusations:

Especially in European theatre, I feel I have just become support for white people to survive their difficulties of diversity, even though I know it is almost impossible to make white people identify with their prejudice and injustice. It is just too painful. How can I be authentic when I am constantly viewed as a stereotype? When white people look at me they see a black person. The white gaze makes it impossible for me to be me.¹⁵⁵

SPAfrica is a work of art that does not compromise itself at any turn. It remains unapologetic, confrontational, and intransigently decolonial. It summarizes the cultural extractivist logic of fetishization in the declarations of an artist who complains on stage about leaving her home only to be classified, only to have to speak the audience’s language, all because, as she blatantly puts it: “White people want blacks to confront them with their own shit.”¹⁵⁶ What is interesting about it is that the piece is performed by Cele, but it was conceived under the artistic direction of Julian Hetzel. *SPAfrica* succeeds as a decolonial critique because it evidences a deep understanding of both sides of structural racism: that of the racialized woman who suffers from it, and that of the white man who benefits from it even if he does not want to. Maybe Cele and Hetzel’s triumph is more complete than that of Piña or Barba, because they achieved it together. After all, you cannot change the status quo without convincing the people who benefit from it that change is necessary. Non-Western performers such as Cele, Piña and Barba, and scholars like myself, can try to show what we find wrong with the Flemish dance landscape; but we need our Western audiences and readers to be convinced of our claims in order to change it. In the next chapters, I offer my decolonial analysis of the Flemish dance landscape through the central concept of cultural extractivism. I hope I can be convincing.

¹⁵⁴ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

¹⁵⁵ Van Der Putt, “Absurde tranenvanger laadt de toeschouwer met ernstige verantwoordelijkheid.”

¹⁵⁶ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

2. Addressing the gaps in the state of the art:

2.1. Epistemic violence in dance studies:

If some of the mechanisms that keep colonial structures in place in our thoughts are ingrained in the language we use, dancers and dance scholars like SanSan Kwan, Fabián Barba, and Ananya Chatterjea are key to understanding what lies behind the terminology around dance. If I tried to define the terms “modern dance,” “postmodern dance,” and “contemporary dance,” acritically from within Western tradition, I would arrive to the following conclusions: modern dance is the tradition of movement that emerged at the end of the 19th century in Europe and the USA, with individual creators such as Isadora Duncan or Loïe Fuller, who introduced radical innovations to the ideas around what dance could be.¹⁵⁷ Postmodern dance is made of the tendencies in Western dance production that developed as both a rejection and a continuation of the tradition of modern dance in the last decades of the 20th century.¹⁵⁸ Contemporary dance is the present-day heir to postmodern dance. In Flanders in particular, this designation seems to have become an umbrella term to encompass all kinds of crossings between dance, performance, video, text, light and new technologies: “In 2008, sociologist and dance theorist Rudi Laermans had already noted that ‘contemporary dance’ had become a hybrid term whose contours were no longer so easy to determine.”¹⁵⁹ However, if we revise these concepts from a decolonial perspective, there is more to them.

At the end of the 19th century, modernism in the arts was a way of breaking with tradition in order to align the aesthetic experience with the values of modern industrial life.¹⁶⁰ Modern dance is an expression of the project of modernity in the field of the performing arts, but decolonial thinkers have pointed to a darker side

¹⁵⁷ Ana Abad Carlés, *Historia del ballet y de la danza moderna* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2004), 281.

¹⁵⁸ Luuk Utrecht, *Van hofballet tot postmoderne dans* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1988), 306.

¹⁵⁹ De Somviele, “Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018).”

¹⁶⁰ Ramsay Burt and Michael Huxley, *Dance, Modernism, and Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 1-225.

of that project. Aníbal Quijano first established the concept of “modernity/coloniality” as two inseparable sides of the same coin.¹⁶¹ The concept was further developed by Walter Mignolo,¹⁶² and regularly applied to the field of performance studies in Belgium by authors such as Fabián Barba and Rolando Vázquez. The latter draws on Quijano’s reasoning to state that “there is no greatness of Belgium without the colonies, no city of Antwerp without the diamonds.”¹⁶³ Put differently, there is no great modern Belgium without colonial extractivism. Vázquez explains that, even though we often think that injustice could be overcome by modernizing the parts of the world that are not sufficiently modern yet, that is not the case: “Decolonial thought explains how global injustice is a constitutive part of the western model of civilization.”¹⁶⁴ Therefore, global injustice can only be overcome by abandoning that model.

SanSan Kwan argues that, although “contemporary” is a temporal designation, in the field of dance it does not apply to all current dance practices. She explains: “In non-Western dance, “contemporary” is a necessary qualifier when we do not mean to refer to traditional forms. Without it “Asian dance,” “African dance,” or “Native American dance” is immediately assumed to be traditional.”¹⁶⁵ The counterpart of that argument is that “contemporary dance” is by default assumed to be Western dance. Drawing on these decolonial perspectives, we can conclude that the terms “modern” and “contemporary” are not innocent designations for genres of Western dance, but political categories that play their part in maintaining a historicist¹⁶⁶ and Eurocentric approach to understanding reality. They provide the theoretical framework to legitimize certain dance practices while dismissing others.

These prejudices of the dance field are important to keep in mind when analyzing the Flemish dance landscape. That is, the geographic, economic, political and social context that surrounds dance in Flanders. This context encompasses the institutions for dance training, the material conditions in which dance makers develop their creations, the institutional mechanisms that make those productions possible, the venues for their performance, and the systems of promotion and reception of such productions, including dance scholarship. De Somviele declares that the differentiating factor of the dance landscape of Flanders and Brussels in recent years is “the deep desire to break open the canon

¹⁶¹ Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, Issue 2 (2007): 168-178, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>.

¹⁶² Walter Mignolo, “Delinking: The Rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, Issue 2 (2007): 449-514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647>.

¹⁶³ Rolando Vázquez, “Notes on Animality, the Body and the Decolonial,” in *The School of the Jaguar - Endangered Human Movements Vol. 3*, edited by Amanda Piña (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Bewegungsangelegenheiten, 2019), 236.

¹⁶⁴ Vázquez, “Notes on Animality,” 236.

¹⁶⁵ SanSan Kwan, “When is contemporary dance?” *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 49, Issue 3 (2017): 38-52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767717000341>.

¹⁶⁶ The term “historicism” designates here a problematic understanding of global history that assumes a hierarchy between contemporaneous societies: more industrialized or modernized cultures are considered to have evolved more than other cultures, which would inevitably be advancing towards that same unitary version of “progress.” In their text “The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance,” Barba points out that it is this way of assessing dance based on historical periodizations that tends to posit modern dance as previous to contemporary dance.

of (Western) dance, to let in more social, cultural and gender diversity."¹⁶⁷ She celebrates the international influx that Brussels and Flemish dance has enjoyed in the last thirty years. She praises how choreographers such as Fabian Barba, Radouan Mriziga, Serge Aimé Coulibaly and Moya Michael bring from their home countries different cultural heritages, references and aesthetic criteria, to make Belgians question how Eurocentric their vision is. From a decolonial perspective, this of course sounds promising. And yet, Chatterjea warns us against excessive hope with regard to the promise of a diverse, global stage. She says that rhetoric and practice can deliberately contradict each other:

While the idea of the "global" seems to offer the promise of a range of aesthetics and a range of bodies from different contexts marking widely different understandings of beauty and power, the reality of what materializes on stage seems to suggest that there are some unspoken conditions for participation on the global stage that ensure some kinds of conformity.¹⁶⁸

What Chatterjea denounces is that, even when a dance scene presents itself as pluralistic and multicultural, often what really happens in it is that non-Western dance makers adapt to the codes of Western dance in order to have a place in that scene. And thus, the canon of Western dance is in fact not broken open. Far from it. Instead, it illegitimately passes "once again as the neutral universal, which is able to contain all difference."¹⁶⁹ The categories of "modern dance" and "contemporary dance" should then be understood as subtle expressions of epistemic violence in the field of dance. As seen with the case of how Barba's *AMWDE* was received and theorized in the Flemish dance landscape, the problem with these labels arises when "modern" and "contemporary" are not understood simply as designations for certain movement traditions in dance, but also as indicators of a certain value associated both to temporal and geopolitical hierarchies. The problem appears when a recently-made piece of modern dance cannot be perceived as contemporary because it is seen as outdated; or when non-Western dances cannot be perceived as contemporary because they are assumed to be traditional.¹⁷⁰ Whether these terms are accepted by a certain author as given truths, or questioned as problematic, is one indicator of the biases that the discourse around them can carry.

¹⁶⁷ De Somviele, "Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018)."

¹⁶⁸ Chatterjea, "On the Value of Mistranslations and Contaminations," 12.

¹⁶⁹ Chatterjea, "On the Value of Mistranslations and Contaminations," 11.

¹⁷⁰ This has been explored, among others, by: Barba in "The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance"; Chatterjea in "On the Value of Mistranslations and Contaminations"; Demerson in "Sensing the Stage: Decolonial Readings of African Contemporary Dance"; Kwan in "When is contemporary dance?"; and Templeton in "Walking with the Self: Zab Maboungou's Interventions Against Eurocentrism Through Contemporary African Dance."

2.2. Tribal biases:

In the introduction, we followed Dabashi's attack on the claim of universality of Eurocentric thought, on the basis of its tribal bias.¹⁷¹ It is my suspicion that all geography-based isms are born from a tribal bias. That in itself is not necessarily harmful, but trying to pass a biased ideology as a universal truth often is. The Flemish dance landscape –and especially its capital city of Brussels– is often described as *a* or even *the* capital of contemporary dance in Europe, most tellingly, almost exclusively *by Belgian authors*. Belgian authors Laermans,¹⁷² De Somviele,¹⁷³ T'Jonck,¹⁷⁴ and Van Assche,¹⁷⁵ do not shy away from highlighting the centrality of this landscape in the European context and the importance of Flemish choreographers such as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jan Fabre, Wim Vandekeybus and Alain Platel as pioneers of European contemporary dance. In this quote by T'Jonck, we can see how a biased idea can be presented as a universal truth.

Despite a relative lack of interest in contemporary dance from the Flemish Government, since 1980 a dance scene emerged in Flanders that has become so rich and varied in its output that Brussels, the Capital of Flanders and Belgium, has widely been considered as the contemporary dance capital of Europe.¹⁷⁶

Meanwhile, non-Belgian authors such as Ramsay Burt¹⁷⁷ and André Lepecki¹⁷⁸ also mention the same Flemish choreographers, but they seem to put their merits on equal ground as those of Xavier Le Roy, Jean-Claude Gallotta and Catherine Diverrès in France, or Jonathan Burrows and the group DV-8 in the UK. In her doctoral dissertation on the working and living conditions in the contemporary dance scenes of Brussels and Berlin, the Belgian author Van Assche does mention that Berlin, like Brussels, also attracts a high number of contemporary dance artists from the rest of the world.¹⁷⁹ It would also be easy to point out the relevance of other metropolitan centers with a long history of theater dance, such as Paris or London. Thus, on the one hand, we have an author born and raised in Belgium such as T'Jonck, claiming that “the Capital of Flanders and Belgium, has *widely* been considered as the contemporary dance capital of

¹⁷¹ Dabashi, “Thanks to Gaza.”

¹⁷² Laermans, “Impure Gestures,” 405.

¹⁷³ De Somviele, “Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018).”

¹⁷⁴ T'Jonck, “Contemporary Dance from Flanders,” 3.

¹⁷⁵ Annelies Van Assche, *Dancing Precarity: A transdisciplinary study of the working and living conditions in the contemporary dance scenes of Brussels and Berlin* (Ghent: Ghent University, 2018), 1.

¹⁷⁶ T'Jonck, “Contemporary Dance from Flanders,” 3.

¹⁷⁷ Burt, *Ungoverning Dance*, 1-255.

¹⁷⁸ André Lepecki, “Skin, Body, and Presence in Contemporary European Choreography.” *TDR (1988-)* 43, no. 4 (1999), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146801>.

¹⁷⁹ Van Assche, *Dancing Precarity*, 1.

Europe”¹⁸⁰ (my emphasis). On the other hand, we have Moya Michael –who is now a Belgian citizen, but was born and raised in South Africa¹⁸¹– making much more modest claims in her keynote speech for the yearly theater festival in Flanders:

Last week when I was on the phone with a good friend of mine. They asked me what I was up to. I told them I was stressed because I was preparing this speech.

They were like, “What speech?”

I told them, “I am preparing ‘The State of the Union’, a very important yearly keynote. A reflection, introspection or perspective on the state of the arts in Flanders.”

Their response was, “What the hell is Flammers?”¹⁸²

I do not point this out to question the undeniable relevance of the Flemish scene and its pioneers in the field of contemporary dance, but to illustrate that the way Belgian authors write about their own culture is inevitably influenced by their subjective experiences and loyalties. Tribal biases invite analytical blind spots. These same authors have long celebrated the multiculturalism of the Flemish dance landscape. More than a decade ago, in a text that focused mostly on the choreographic tendencies of Flemish contemporary dance, Laermans provided a concise contextualization on how in a matter of thirty years –between 1980 and 2010– the Flemish dance landscape went from a small scene predominantly devoted to classical ballet, to being the “central junction within the transnational network of contemporary dance.”¹⁸³ He argues that, by regularly showing the work of established dance artists and introducing new names from abroad, Flemish art centers and festivals facilitate a lively dialogue and exchange with the international dance scene and its practices.

Laermans goes as far as to declare: “Contemporary dance in Flanders may therefore be safely considered as a paradigmatic example of a ‘glocal’ art scene that unites local, regional and global issues and people.”¹⁸⁴ But how “safe” and “glocal” has this art scene effectively felt for the artists from abroad? If we take the examples of *Exótica* and *SPAfrica* as valid sources of knowledge, we can begin to guess that the answer is: “Not that much.” In these performances, the foreign dancers on stage talk about being classified, exoticized, dehumanized and overlooked; not about lively dialogue, exchange and unity. How productive has the dialogue facilitated by the Flemish art centers been for the newcomers? The answer of Michael, who grew up under apartheid, is unforgiving. She says that, when looking at Flanders and Belgium through the lens of apartheid, the word

¹⁸⁰ T’Jonck, “Contemporary Dance from Flanders,” 3.

¹⁸¹ Michael, “State of the Union.”

¹⁸² Michael, “State of the Union.”

¹⁸³ Laermans, “Impure Gestures,” 405-415.

¹⁸⁴ Laermans, “Impure Gestures,” 406.

“union” becomes surreal in the face of systemic separation and structural division. She says there is no State of the Union:¹⁸⁵

The separation wall has fallen, but its premise and function remains alive and kicking. [...] For years, we have counted on you. We gently asked for your recognition. To be supported. To take part in your game. To have access to your infrastructure. To have a share in your cultural wealth. But what we proposed was never "artistic" enough. It was too passé, you already did what we proposed years before, right?¹⁸⁶

Her criticism resonates with Barba’s understanding of how European modern dance and Ecuadorian contemporary dance are perceived in the Flemish scene of “contemporary” dance: as a remnant of the past,¹⁸⁷ its aesthetic value already expired. Michael wonders who is setting the tone aesthetically in Flanders; who are the programmers, who determines what is a good performance, and why are they people who are always too occupied to have a conversation about real inclusion or real innovation: “I wonder, if it is not on your terms, is there still room for relation, cross collaboration, sharing ideas, deeply sharing ways of knowing and sensing the world? How many art worlds are allowed in your performing art world?”¹⁸⁸

Her questions also resonate with my own experience. In the previous chapter, I explained the shock I felt while witnessing *The Jaguar and the Snake* both as a Latin American and as an outsider of the Flemish dance scene. The ideas I had brought with me from Argentina to Belgium about what dance was did not match what I was seeing on stage. Burt’s analysis of *AMWDE* has helped me understand that dissonance. Based on Barba’s recountings, the author points out that, while European audiences felt historically distant from Barba’s expressive portrayal of Wigman, audiences from Ecuador and India understood character construction and emotional intensity as indispensable elements of dance.¹⁸⁹ That was also the understanding of dance I had brought with me from Argentina, and that I was not seeing on the Flemish stages. So if people from three opposite corners of the Global South currently share an understanding of dance that is read as distinctly alien to the Flemish dance landscape by its European audience, how many definitions of dance are effectively allowed in this context?

¹⁸⁵ Michael, “State of the Union.”

¹⁸⁶ Michael, “State of the Union.”

¹⁸⁷ Barba, “The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance,” 52.

¹⁸⁸ Michael, “State of the Union.”

¹⁸⁹ Burt, *Ungoverning Dance*, 208-209.

2.3. A dance scene built around individuality:

In their inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance, Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds highlight: "Spectators' perceptions of dance are highly context-specific."¹⁹⁰ The authors indicate that the discussion around what dance is and what kind of dance is being watched are always relevant factors to understand the audience experience. When scholars discuss contemporary dance in Flanders and Brussels, they usually refer to an understanding of European contemporary dance in which "performances often do not look like dance and do not present conventional dance movement as such."¹⁹¹ When I first arrived to this context, what I saw on stage seemed far from the dynamic concert dance driven by virtuosity, narrative and spectacle that I would usually see on Argentinian stages. Van Assche and Schaffer characterize the ambivalence I experienced then as a rather common phenomenon. They remark that the subjectivities produced on stage by contemporary dancers in Europe are often met with the objection: "But, they are not dancing."¹⁹² What kind of dance performance thrives in a context in which dance is not allowed to look like dance?

Van Assche and Schaffer observe that a format of contemporary dance, that often has a discursive nature, has been influential since the beginning of the 21st century: "The term "precarity solo" describes a solo work, made and performed by a single artist, that because of its minimal tech requirements and labor can be easily toured and performed."¹⁹³ In that kind of artistic work, they add, the individual subjectivity of a dance maker, their personal experiences and their talents as a performer are particularly put on the spotlight. The authors venture that "many if not most contemporary dancers will have created a solo with minimal means."¹⁹⁴ Indeed, precarity solos often appear on Flemish stages: Cele's *SPAfrica*, Barba's *AMWDE*, and Lisi Estarás' *#THISISBEAUTY*, are examples of such a piece.

Spoken and danced language intertwine in *#THISISBEAUTY* which, in essence, consists of a dance maker performing her own mid-life crisis to the audience. Or maybe it is simply the current phase of an ongoing existential crisis: "Lately I was concerned with the term «parallelogram» itself. It can define itself as itself. I want to be that parallelogram. Being good in your skin."¹⁹⁵ The result is humoristic and heartbreaking at the same time, although it does end on a hopeful note. "I decided to make this solo but not an autobiographical one. Even if this seems a bit autobiographical,"¹⁹⁶ Estarás claims on stage. The work, in fact, is

¹⁹⁰ Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds, "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures: An Inquiry into Audience Experiences of Watching Dance," *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 42, No. 2 (2010): 49–75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266898>.

¹⁹¹ Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 204.

¹⁹² Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 205.

¹⁹³ Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 213.

¹⁹⁴ Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 213.

¹⁹⁵ Lisi Estarás, *#THISISBEAUTY*, dance performance, solo, 21 april 2022, Mechelen: KC Nona.

¹⁹⁶ Estarás, *#THISISBEAUTY*.

extremely autobiographical, ranging from the most banal to the most traumatic experiences in her life. Among all the ideas that come back throughout the performance, the most recurring one is that of Estarás trying to explain why she decided to create this solo in the first place; the reason she gives changes every time. The first reason she provides is also the most practical: “I decided to make this solo because the economy in the arts is falling apart. It already started like seventeen years ago. And everybody say [sic] “You have to make a solo! You have to make a solo! It’s a challenge! It’s eh... it’s cheaper.””¹⁹⁷ The audience of course laughs, but the simplicity of the staging betrays some truth behind that joke (img. 10).¹⁹⁸



Image 10: Lisi Estarás in #THISISBEAUTY.

Estarás says that, if one looks at her work, references to her Latin American, Argentinian and Jewish identities will always be there, albeit in the background. Her dance material is quite rhythmic, and the rhythms she chooses often come from her memories of Argentinian musical traditions, such as the folkloric malambo or the traditional tango. She also thinks that her way of moving and her sense of humor –two central components of her dance practice– are typically Latin American.¹⁹⁹ Perhaps she is right, because when watching #THISISBEAUTY, I had that sense of recognition of a shared heritage that I was lacking when watching *The Jaguar and the Snake*.²⁰⁰ I suspect that, because the dance maker

¹⁹⁷ Estarás, #THISISBEAUTY.

¹⁹⁸ Image 10: Lisi Estarás, #THISISBEAUTY, 2022, Screenshot of #THISISBEAUTY, directed by Lisi Estarás. (Mechelen: KC Nona, 21 April 2022).

¹⁹⁹ Lisi Estarás (dance maker), interviewed by Paulina Rosa (Ghent University student), February 2023, my translation from Spanish.

²⁰⁰ Which inevitably leads to the question of whether what I recognize is truly “Latin American,” or simply “Argentinian” (especially given the fact that in our interview, Estarás compared her usage of humor in her dance practice to that of our compatriot based in Brussels Ayelén Parolín).

must carry the entire performance solely on their shoulders, the precarity solo is the one format that allows for some character construction and emotional intensity to creep into contemporary dance as understood in the Flemish landscape.

Moreover, I would argue that some level of character and emotion are allowed in a precarity solo such as #THISISBEAUTY, because they serve the portrayal of one particular dancer's individuality. Interestingly, Van Assche and Schaffer recognize that the "fixation on the individual has a long history in the tradition of Western dance."²⁰¹ The authors argue that there has been a shift in the discourse around dance: postmodern dance practices in the US used to involve *postmodern dancing bodies*, focused on exploring everyday movements, impersonal scores and the potential in the development of their movement practice; but contemporary dance practices in Europe now involve *contemporary dancing subjectivities*, focused on hyperindividualism, hyperreferentialism, autodramaturgy, and negotiating proximity with the audience.

More specifically, they define: "we can distinguish a shift from postmodern dance's emphasis on de-individualization to contemporary dance's attention to individualism."²⁰² They associate this new dance historical paradigm with the neoliberal subjectivity of the 21st century. Acosta,²⁰³ Cusicanqui²⁰⁴ and Serafini²⁰⁵ all see neoliberalism as functional to colonial extractivism. Following them, and Van Assche and Schaffer's argument that the defining characteristics of contemporary dance (as understood by European audiences and scholars) is its attention to individualism in the form of contemporary dancing subjectivities, I suggest that the Flemish dance landscape operates under the logic of cultural extractivism in two distinct ways: on the one hand, through fetishization; on the other hand, through cultural appropriation. I will explain them below.

²⁰¹ Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 208.

²⁰² Van Assche and Schaffer, "Flexible Performativity," 207.

²⁰³ Acosta, "Extractivism and neoextractivism," 61-84.

²⁰⁴ Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa*, 59.

²⁰⁵ Serafini, "Cultural Production Beyond Extraction?," 55-62.

2.4. A cultural extractivist logic of fetishization:

What characterizes contemporary dance as it is understood in Flanders is the exploration of the identity of the dancer, but as the vast majority of dancers active in Flanders are not Flemish, these identities function as resources imported from other cultures. According to Van Assche and Schaffer, what makes contemporary dance different from postmodern dance is that the latter explored movement technologies through collectivity and de-individualization, but in the former, *who the dancer is* is important.²⁰⁶ The way these identities are selected to be showcased on stage is not innocent either. Vázquez discusses the idea of primitivism as the extraction of aesthetic resources from other cultures in order to challenge the canon of Western aesthetics.²⁰⁷ But that operation is done from *within* Western aesthetics. Therefore, primitivism, exoticization and fetishization often go hand in hand.²⁰⁸ Van Assche reasons that, because “the cultural institutions in Europe are still largely run by white, middle-class, European-born, and predominantly male gatekeepers,”²⁰⁹ the notion of contemporary dance in this context appears to be inextricably linked with the problems of fetishization, exoticization and tokenism. She denounces that initiatives that are supposed to favor diversity in Flanders are often inscribed within “a tendency to *festivalize* the minority, whereby white-run institutions make feeble and temporary attempts to be more inclusive.”²¹⁰ The author mentions that “fetishization is something that all contemporary dance artists in Europe seem to face,”²¹¹ but she emphasizes that it can be particularly hard when it comes to the intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities (such as being a woman, a person of color, or queer).

Van Assche has explored the idea of what programmers, audiences and critics expect to see in relation to a certain cultural background, with regard to Afrodiasporic dance makers. She says that fetishization happens when their choreographic work is expected to adhere to specific movement vocabularies, related to Africanist aesthetics and to their cultural identity. When discussing Moya Michael’s experiences with fetishization in European dance, Van Assche reports: “When selling and presenting her work in the European contemporary dance field as well as in her homeland of South Africa, she soon noticed that her work [...] was being seen in ways that fetishized her body and cultural identity.”²¹² While the exoticization of her body was always subtle, with choreographers

²⁰⁶ Van Assche and Schaffer, “Flexible Performativity,” 218-219.

²⁰⁷ Vázquez, *Vistas of Modernity*, 1-181.

²⁰⁸ See: Van Assche in “Coloured Swan: Moya Michael’s Prowess in the Face of Fetishization in European Dance”; Piña in “The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge”; Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal in “Forced Secularization and Postmodern Discourses within Contemporary Performance: Weaponizing Multicultural Rhetoric to Ratify Asymmetries among Dance Practitioners.”

²⁰⁹ Annelies Van Assche, “Coloured Swan: Moya Michael’s Prowess in the Face of Fetishization in European Dance,” *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 54 Issue 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767722000134>.

²¹⁰ Van Assche, “Coloured Swan,” 98.

²¹¹ Van Assche, “Coloured Swan,” 107-108.

²¹² Van Assche, “Coloured Swan,” 93.

asking her to move more suggestively or sensually, the performer could still feel it. Just like Cele in *SPAfrica*, Michael described the feeling that her body was being pushed into a frame to fit the white gaze.²¹³

Van Assche goes over Michael's trajectory in Europe. Michael, like Barba, also lived in Brussels while studying at P.A.R.T.S., and, ultimately, also tried to resist the subtle violence of that scene through her choreographic work. Van Assche recounts how Michael opted for a minimalistic approach that eclipsed "her multiple consummate dancing skills while remixing her personal history in the soundscape",²¹⁴ an approach that was being used at the time in Europe by many choreographers, but that programmers both in Europe and Africa often told Michael "did not fit her profile."²¹⁵ After that, "Michael wanted to "decolonize everything [she] had learned before."²¹⁶ That wish led to the creation of the *Coloured Swans Series*, in which Michael deeply explored the theme of her own identity. Van Assche clarifies that, although she does not intend to take Michael's case as representative for all Afrodiasporic artists based in Europe, she does believe that Michael's unique trajectory "reveals struggles worth discussing and conflicts that can to some extent be generalized."²¹⁷ Following her example, I will discuss Lisi Estarás' unique trajectory, not as representative for all Latin American diaspora artists based in Flanders, but as a revealing case nonetheless.

In my interview with Estarás, I asked her if she had experienced the weight of an exoticizing gaze. The dancer recalls that, when she first moved to Europe, after a year of constant auditioning, she was yet to be hired:

And when I went to an audition, for example, people would say to me: "Oh, but are you Argentinian? You don't look Argentinian." It's like that comment, that they expect to see, I don't know... a person, an Indian with feathers.²¹⁸ And in the end they get me, a blonde with green eyes. And what a downer, because we didn't want that, we wanted something else.²¹⁹

Throughout her existence, Estarás has been repeatedly accused of not looking Jewish enough, not looking Argentinian enough, and, when being in Argentina, of acting too European. She has had to change her artistic name "Lizi Estarás" (derived from her birth name: Elizabeth Estarás Roisman), to "Lisi Estaras," because everyone in Europe kept mispronouncing it and misspelling it. Her identity has been progressively organized around the feeling of being the other, the different, the one who is not from there.²²⁰ This recurring feeling of otherness has been one of the most influential forces in her choreographic practice. Many

²¹³ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 93.

²¹⁴ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 93.

²¹⁵ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 94.

²¹⁶ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 94.

²¹⁷ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 96.

²¹⁸ Estarás refers to the expectations of European gatekeepers by invoking the image of "an Indian with feathers": a typical racist stereotype associated with Native American identities. When Christophorus Columbus first arrived in the Americas, he was mistakenly convinced that he had reached the Indies. Thus, when he encountered indigenous people he referred to them as "Indians."

²¹⁹ Estarás, interview.

²²⁰ Estarás, interview.

critics have signaled that Estarás' work (just as Michael's *Coloured Swans Series*) revolves around questions of identity and/or otherness.²²¹ In her performances, she strives for representation in all shapes and forms.

Estarás dislikes the hypocrisies she detects in the process of trying to sell her work to programmers of the Flemish dance landscape, as she is constantly confronted with the limitations of their concept of "inclusivity." In her experience, selling performances that include queer and/or disabled dancers is easy, especially when they are South African and of color (which, again, resonates with Michael's case). In contrast, trying to sell her solo *#THISISBEAUTY* has proven incredibly difficult. Estarás says she has had to "make the programmers understand [...] why this solo is important: because you have a theater full of women my age. Why don't you have a performance with women my age?"²²² She feels as if the programmers were looking to check inclusivity boxes, rather than actually considering what representation on stage means. Her own aging body – a body that shows its foreignness in a lack of mastery of the Dutch language, but that passes for Western European and thus cannot be easily exoticized – is not as easily welcomed on the Flemish stage.

Nevertheless, when she was younger, the first European choreographer to see her potential turned out to be one of the founding figures of the Flemish contemporary dance landscape: Alain Platel. On stage, as one of Platel's dancers, Estarás was able to feel the so-often praised interculturality of the Flemish dance landscape. She remembers him using the multiculturalism of his ensemble to great dramatic effect in his performances: "But he uses it in a very clever way too. He doesn't do it at an exotic level, let's say. He does not exoticize. It comes to the emotional aspect of that identity."²²³ However, behind the scenes, Estarás' experience with Les Ballets C de la B was not free of frustrations in terms of ethnic tensions. Estarás recalls that, for a long time, Platel did not have a single Belgian dancer in his team. This, in my opinion, challenges the idea that the intention behind the multicultural ensemble was not exoticizing in any way. Especially because, among the team of choreographers, Estarás herself was the only foreign one; the first one in twenty years:

And in the meetings, they always spoke Flemish. Although I didn't speak it. Until at one point they started speaking English. And always... It was like something that bothered them a lot: me, that my Flemish is not good enough.²²⁴ But I came to the conclusion that even if my Flemish was good, I will never be accepted in this society. That's how I truly feel.²²⁵

²²¹ Some examples are: Marijn Lems in his review of *The Jewish Connection Project* (2018) for the Dutch Theaterkrant; Laura Falcoff and Mauro Cacciatori, in their reviews of *Vernáculos* (2019) for Argentinian media; and Evelyn Coussens in her review of *#THISISBEAUTY* (2022) for the Belgian newspaper DeMorgen.

²²² Estarás, interview.

²²³ Estarás, interview.

²²⁴ In her text "A phenomenology of whiteness," Sara Ahmed suggests that being "non-white" is not always about skin color or about having "the right passport." It can also be about other things that make someone stand out in a white space, such as having a non-Western name. In this case, Lisi becomes "non-white" in a white space because she does not fully master the language.

²²⁵ Estarás, interview.

She points out that that same feeling of the difficulty of inserting themselves in a Flemish society that appears to be more open than it actually is, motivated many of her colleagues to move to Wallonia and Brussels. Indeed, Argentinian dance maker Ayelén Parolín,²²⁶ for instance, is also active in Belgium, but she is associated with the francophone scene; not with the Flemish one. This point is interesting, because Walloon dance makers who were active during the innovative period of the Tachtigers are also left out of the origin myth of the “Flemish Wave.”²²⁷ For example, Michèle Anne De Mey was one of the founding members of the Rosas company,²²⁸ today solely associated with De Keersmaeker. This sort of segregation resonates with Michael’s statement that “looking at Flanders and Belgium through the lens of apartheid, the word Union becomes something very surreal and it’s everywhere. Systemic separation. Structural division. This is not a state of the union.”²²⁹ These cases support the idea that, rather often, the Flemish dance landscape seems to operate under a cultural extractivist logic of fetishization. In that logic, difference is welcomed insofar it can be perceived as exotic and/or fetishized as desirable. Otherwise, difference is treated with annoyance, dismissed as unimportant, or forgotten.

2.5. Cultural appropriation as a form of extractivism:

Activists Vásquez and Cojtí identify cultural appropriation as a form of extractivism of the intangible culture of indigenous communities.²³⁰ This practice is not uncommon in the dance world. According to Van Assche and Schaffer, it has long been assumed that contemporary choreographers are entitled to tap into all kinds of sources to later rework them into their dance material through their own artistic vision, without necessarily having to reference the context from which this new material originally comes from. The authors remark that this concept, so fundamental for contemporary dance as it is understood in Europe, has faced growing scrutiny in recent times. They explain that the kind of contemporary choreographer generally involved in this kind of procedure is most often a white artist with enough resources to study almost any kind of dance, taking inspiration from other actors that might be in less privileged positions. They summarize quite

²²⁶ Ayelen Parolin, “Ayelen Parolin: About,” Ruda, 2024, <https://ayelenparolin.be/en/about>.

²²⁷ In her text “Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018),” Charlotte De Somviele summarizes the idea of the Flemish Wave (Vlaamse Golf) as a movement in Flemish theater in the 1980s – with choreographers Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Wim Vandekeybus, Marc Vanrunxt and Alain Platel, as well as theater makers, writers and directors Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers, Ivo Van Hove, Jan Decorte, Guy Cassiers, and others.

²²⁸ Astragales, “Michèle Anne De Mey: Biography,” Astragales, 2024, <https://www.astragales.be/en/astragales/michele-anne-de-mey/>.

²²⁹ Michael, “State of the Union.”

²³⁰ Vasquez and Cojtí, “Cultural Appropriation.”

explicitly: “As such, the European contemporary dance market reproduces the extractivist logic of a colonial economy.”²³¹

A case that helps illustrate how this extractivist logic has operated in the Flemish dance landscape with regard to Latin American sources is the unauthorized staging of two indigenous cultural traditions from South America that took place in Brussels in the 2017 edition of the *KunstenFestivalDesArts*. This staging was framed as a work of contemporary dance by Hungarian choreographer Eszter Salamon under the name “*Monument 0.6: Landing (A Ritual of Empathy)*.”²³² In a text with clear aspirations of decolonial vindication, the festival’s brochure described it as an exploration of ritual dances that had been banished from the Western canon:

To open the festival, Eszter is offering us *LANDING*, a group ritual consisting of dances and songs of the South American Mapuche tribe. In the open air and with no technical devices, she shares a cultural expression that the West, in its great endeavour to standardise everything, has relegated to the rank of “quaintness”. [...] the choreographer identifies the flaws in the world’s dance and sows some symbolic new ground.²³³

The event was presented at the time as a beautiful example of interculturality; even as proof that non-Western worldviews were being noticed and valorized in the West. It was also canonized that way. In her overview of the contemporary dance scene in Flanders in 2018,²³⁴ De Somviele wrote about it as a concealed history and a new form of embodied knowledge that was being called to the attention of the Flemish audience:

In recent years, Eszter Salamon has presented performances based on tribal war dances and protest dances repressed by Western colonialists. The series, not coincidentally entitled *Monument*, proposes an alternative historiography of dance, and with it summarizes an urgency that lives more widely than just in the arts alone. How can we create a pluriverse, multi-epistemological society?²³⁵

However, in 2022, Latin American researchers Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, offered a very different analysis of Salamon’s *Monument*. In their view, *Monument 0.6: Landing* did not contribute to creating a pluriverse and multi-epistemological society; quite the opposite. They explain that this dance piece involved “the appropriation of [...] two cultural rituals of the Mapuche, a people indigenous to a region spanning parts of present-day Chile and Argentina: the *kawell tayil* sacred vocal expression and the *choike purrún* ritual

²³¹ Van Assche and Schaffer, “Flexible Performativity,” 211.

²³² Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 2.

²³³ Christophe Slagmuylder and others, “Brochure KFDA 2017,” *KunstenFestivalDesArts*, 2017, https://kfda.be/site/assets/files/3092/brochure_2017.pdf.

²³⁴ Last updated by the author in 2022.

²³⁵ De Somviele, “Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018).”

dance.”²³⁶ They draw on Spivak’s theory to explain that, within the curatorial discourse of international performance festivals, the current rhetoric about inclusion and diversity allows some “cosmopolites” to feel free to use racialized others as inspiration, while those others are not allowed to fully represent themselves. Consequently, the authors confront the ways in which this piece was presented in its official promotional material, with the ways in which the piece was received by Mapuche activists. While in 2017, Salamon and the festival felt free to stage sacred and ritualistic Mapuche practices, even framing this as a movement of resistance against unequal global power dynamics, in 2020, “Mapuche activist Moira Millán published a review of *Landing*, expressing her outrage about the Hungarian choreographer’s claims that the Mapuche practices were extinct and that the work was a much needed revival.”²³⁷ The scholars recount that, for Millán, the performance was offensive not only because it disrespected the heritage of the Mapuche people by appropriating sacred practices, but also because the European choreographer profited financially from it, and because it was inscribed within a broader recurring pattern of appropriation of indigenous practices by members of First-World countries. They summarize:

The *KunstenFestivalDesArts* program frames this performance as helping to “imagine a future caring for the common and the sharable.” Nonetheless, from the Mapuche perspective, “the common” and “the shareable” in this controversy were not as common and as shareable as Salamon and the festival intended them to be.²³⁸

The scholars show how the Mapuche practices were distorted and subjected to an “imposed secularization”²³⁹ in the way they were adapted for *Landing*; forced to fit into a frame that was palatable to postmodern European sensitivities, but opposed to the cosmological worldview that surrounds these ritual practices. They highlight that this occurred because the Mapuche people were not consulted for the performance, nor were they invited to participate, because in the Western world “some dances are deemed artistic and acceptable only when performed by white bodies.”²⁴⁰ But white artists are not the only target of objections with regard to cultural appropriation. Amanda Piña was confronted with the question of whether she had the right to embody indigenous dances as well:

After one presentation of Dance & Resistance by nadaproductions at HAU, a woman native from Samoa, living in Berlin, raised her voice in the artist talk to tell me that “only indigenous people can do indigenous dances”. I was in shock. The answer came to me late [...]: “Thanks for your comment, but I think what

²³⁶ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 4.

²³⁷ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 5.

²³⁸ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 8.

²³⁹ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 12.

²⁴⁰ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 14.

you are saying is comparable to the statement that only Germans should live in Germany.²⁴¹

Piña's answer is problematic, given that it equates the reactive protectionism of oppressed indigenous peoples to the exclusionary migration policies of a leading first-world country. Her reason to continue dancing indigenous dances is also not without controversy: "If I re-embody indigenous dances, they are not indigenous anymore, they become creolised, they become something else, and that is what is interesting for me to do. This work wants to go exactly beyond binary thinking."²⁴² Paradoxically, her description of creolization is very similar to the forced secularization of indigenous practices that Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado and Mendizábal associate with cultural appropriation. The difference between Piña's choreographic practice and that of Salamon, is that Piña actually has Mapuche ancestry herself, she is familiar with the original meaning behind indigenous practices (such as the Wixárika ritual art that inspired her performance *The Jaguar and the Snake*),²⁴³ and her artistic projects that involve indigenous knowledge also involve indigenous collaborators.

Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado and Mendizábal signal that, while Salamon (as an international post-conceptual choreographer) is entitled to explore foreign traditions, the Mapuche (as an indigenous group from South America) are only allowed into an international festival as a source of inspiration for people like Salamon, and not as artists themselves.²⁴⁴ I find this interesting, because Juan José Katira Ramírez –a Shaman in the Wixárika tradition that worked alongside Piña in *The Jaguar Talks*, the workshop on Wixárika dances, and *The Jaguar and the Snake*– was the only person not officially listed as a performer in the promotional texts of the performance, even though he did play a part at the end of it. It could very well be the case that Katira Ramírez did not want to be named as a performer, because he was not that much performing as sharing his usual self, but this information was not made available to the public. Piña does warn us against assuming that contemporary art collaborations with indigenous people are done without their consent, because they are perfectly capable of making their own decisions. She signals that, sometimes, exoticism lies in the eye of the beholder.²⁴⁵ Piña's approach to the inclusion of indigenous elements in her dance practice at least seems to be informed, thought about and collaborative, making it inherently more ethical than the case of *Landing*. She seems to be using the tools at her disposal to create performances that she considers decolonial in nature, but the fact remains that at least some people in the audience perceive the results as a form of cultural appropriation. In this sense, Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado and Mendizábal highlight the risk of embracing a discourse around

²⁴¹ Piña, "The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge," 66-68.

²⁴² Piña, "The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge," 68.

²⁴³ Piña, "The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge," 58.

²⁴⁴ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, "Forced Secularization," 15.

²⁴⁵ Piña, "The School of the Jaguar. Rehearsing an Ecology of Knowledge," 66.

progressive multiculturalism that can become a successful disguise for cultural appropriation if unequal geopolitical positions are not properly acknowledged.²⁴⁶

The risk they denounce resonates strongly with my own claim that the much praised multiculturalism of the Flemish dance landscape often works as a cover for a cultural extractivist logic. In fact, in her critique of *Landing*, Mapuche activist Moira Millán explicitly refers to both cultural appropriation and cultural extractivism as crimes associated with an exoticizing gaze, inscribed in “the European tradition of stealing.”²⁴⁷ The terminology around these issues is still evolving and may vary, but the intrinsic connection between colonization, cultural extractivism, cultural appropriation, exoticism and epistemic violence, seems to be accepted without question by all decolonial authors cited in this dissertation. Referring to that connection, Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado and Mendizábal declare: “While not necessarily evident to those involved, appropriation in dance resonates with larger arcs of colonial power and dispossession.”²⁴⁸ Therefore, they also admit that the material effort to change neocolonial dynamics in dance production exceeds the bounds of dance itself as an aesthetic field, and is a matter of “addressing the underlying conceptual, perceptual, and relational impediments to genuine cross-cultural engagement.”²⁴⁹ Indeed, dance as an aesthetic discipline does not have neither the power nor the responsibility to decolonize everything around it. However, this does not mean that nothing can be done to improve things specifically in the field of contemporary dance with regard to meaningful decolonizing practices and true interculturality.

In that regard, the authors urge European institutions to form partnerships with practitioners from developing countries to dismantle political and physical barriers hindering artists from the Global South. They stress: “This revision in curatorial practices must aim to end the colonial dynamics that keep fostering the dispossession of, not only fossil fuels and minerals, but also epistemologies, knowledge systems, and dance practices of minority groups.”²⁵⁰ The authors call for cultural institutions to acknowledge the unequal ground between various participants, by adopting an actively anti-racist and anti-appropriation stance in their guidelines and mission statements. They call for choreographers to carry their artistic explorations forward within frames of fairness and respect, acknowledging that embodied knowledge and dance are not only related to meanings and cosmologies, but also to political and economic struggles. To that end, they highlight the relevance of informed consent, attribution, and compensation for the use of ancestral cultural expressions, as well as of “the attention to the violent context in which such expressions survive.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 16.

²⁴⁷ Moira Millán, “Nación Mapuche. Moira Millán: “El extractivismo cultural es la sustracción de un saber o arte ancestral para destruirlo,” Resumen Latinoamericano, 2020, <https://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2020/02/24/nacion-mapuche-moira-millan-el-extractivismo-cultural-es-la-sustraccion-de-un-saber-o-arte-ancestral-para-destruirlo/>, my translation from Spanish.

²⁴⁸ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 18.

²⁴⁹ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 17.

²⁵⁰ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 21.

²⁵¹ Poveda Yáñez, Herrera Corado, and Mendizábal, “Forced Secularization,” 26.

Ultimately, they indicate the necessity of building cross-pollinated experiences of mutual learning in which indigenous people are active participants rather than passive sources of inspiration, so as to not be doomed to perpetually being represented by non-indigenous artists. Along the same line of thought, Vasquez and Cojtí argue: “In order to have a true collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, it is necessary to build a reciprocal relationship, where Indigenous Peoples can make decisions at the same level as the company.”²⁵² Although they refer to a literal company, manufacturing products inspired by indigenous cultures to sell for profit, their argument can be extended to a dance company, or to any kind of artistic collaboration involving the use of elements that do not belong to one’s own cultural identity.

²⁵² Vasquez and Cojtí, “Cultural Appropriation.”

3. The shiny red apple of the Flemish dance landscape:

To explain the growth of the Flemish dance scene and its international influx, T'Jonck mentions that the official recognition and support from the state to the emerging contemporary dance since 1993 provided the arts centers with substantial means. He states that these centers took it upon themselves to take care of the emerging, younger artists, and that, in the 1990s, these new choreographers to support "no longer originated exclusively from Flanders or Brussels, but also poured forth from all over the world."²⁵³ He attributes this phenomenon to two main reasons: "The first is that companies like Rosas, Troubleyn (Fabre), Needcompany, Ultima Vez and Les ballets C de la B were appealing workplaces for young dancers with ambition, because of their global reputation."²⁵⁴ The second is the foundation of De Keersmaecker's school P.A.R.T.S. in 1995: "The school recruits internationally, leading to largely [sic] international student body with only a handful of Belgians as part of each generation."²⁵⁵

He adds that from the 2000 onwards, workspaces such as De Beweeging²⁵⁶ in Antwerp, and Dans²⁵⁷ in Courtrai, made Flanders extra appealing for emerging choreographers, and "always were particularly generous toward foreigners."²⁵⁸ These reasons are true and they undoubtedly have a positive side to them. However, independent scholar Sara Ahmed is one of many decolonial theorists cited in this work who warn us against gestures that appear to be about inclusion and dialogue, but are not. Ahmed recurrently uses the metaphor of diversity as a shiny red apple with a rotten core: "It all looks wonderful but the inequalities aren't being addressed."²⁵⁹ I suspect that there are more complicated, more systemic reasons behind the international influx into the Flemish dance scene

²⁵³ T'Jonck, "Contemporary Dance from Flanders," 14.

²⁵⁴ T'Jonck, "Contemporary Dance from Flanders," 14.

²⁵⁵ T'Jonck, "Contemporary Dance from Flanders," 15.

²⁵⁶ Now known as "wp Zimmer."

²⁵⁷ Now known as "BUDA."

²⁵⁸ T'Jonck, "Contemporary Dance from Flanders," 15.

²⁵⁹ Sara Ahmed, "Embodying diversity: problems and paradoxes for Black feminists," *Race Ethnicity and Education* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2009): 41–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320802650931>, 44.

than the generosity and great appeal of its institutions. To find them, I will examine the two main reasons provided by T'Jonck through a decolonial lens.

3.1. Displacement of people within the extractivist model:

The first reason provided by T'Jonck is that, since the 1990s, the presence of the companies associated with the Tachtigers –the founding figures of the Flemish dance landscape– is appealing for young dancers with ambition, as these companies are now globally famous. To that he adds the importance of generous workspaces and well-funded arts centers that take care of young, emerging, artists; especially foreign ones. But T'Jonck's analysis does not address the underlying inequalities that dictate the field of opportunities for these emerging foreign artists. As part of this research, I have been documenting the statements that Kopano Maroga makes on their Instagram stories with regard to their own experience in the Flemish cultural sector. Academia does not offer a clear way to cite the ephemeral sources of the Internet, and yet, that is the medium in which the battles of the discourse around culture are being fought. Recently, Maroga explained why they accepted a job opportunity at VierNulVier,²⁶⁰ one of Flanders' most prominent arts center:

I remember a friend telling me when I arrived, 'You know you're just their token, right?' I knew. Regardless of my expertise or my accomplishments etc etc etc, the fact remained that I was a symbol, not a person. I accepted the terms because the job I was to do doesn't exist in my country of origin.²⁶¹

Maroga does not talk about an appealing or generous institution, but of the simple reality that they could not make a living as a dramaturg in South Africa. I also moved to Belgium because my prospects for a career in the arts in Argentina were more than bleak. This reality came up during my interview with my compatriot Lisi Estarás as well. I told her that often, what ends up defining where we stay or where we go, has more to do with the material opportunities we encounter. She answered:

Of course! Yes, yes. No, when I started working with Alain [Platel], well, I was still living in Holland. I kept living in Amsterdam, eight years, and then I came here. And I lived in Brussels and then I moved to Ghent. But throughout all of that, I

²⁶⁰ Formerly known as "Vooruit."

²⁶¹ Kopano Maroga (@kopano.maroga), "Statement on my situation" Instagram, January 28, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/kopano.maroga/?hl=en>.

stayed here because of Alain, actually. Because working with him, that became my life. Those twenty years could have been anywhere, it wasn't really a choice.²⁶²

She said it was never a conscious choice for her when she first moved from Argentina to Israel as a teenager, never to go back to live in her homeland. Nor was it a conscious choice when she moved from Israel to the Netherlands a few years later. Nor when she moved from the Netherlands to Belgium. It was always about where there was work for her –and later, about providing stability to her daughter– but it could have been anywhere.²⁶³ When I asked Fabián Barba why they moved to Belgium, I got a similar answer. Barba answered that it was the Argentinian dancer and dance historian Susana Tambutti who first suggested it:

And once she came to give a workshop in Ecuador and by then I already had the intention of going abroad to study. I was thinking of the United States –like, super Eurocentric– and then Susana Tambutti told me: "Oh, there is this school in Brussels..." Then I googled "P.A.R.T.S." and of course, I loved the website. I said: "I want to go." I went. I didn't even know until that moment that Belgium existed. I didn't know what language they spoke in Belgium. I thought: "They must speak Belgian."²⁶⁴

Barba's anecdote is endearing and revealing in equal parts. On the one hand, it shows the naivety of their younger self with regard to what awaited them in terms of uprooting and cultural shock. On the other hand, it demonstrates the deep conviction they had back then that in order to have a career as a dancer, they had to go to Europe or the USA. Barba is grateful for the vital transformations that were made available to them through the experience of migration;²⁶⁵ Estarás sounds grateful for the dance training she developed under Platel's wing;²⁶⁶ I am grateful for the doors my passage through UGent can open for me; Maroga must have been grateful for the chance of doing at VierNulVier the job they wanted to and could not do in South Africa. But I doubt any of us were overjoyed with the necessity of leaving our homes and our loved ones behind in order to have a successful professional career. This is a situation that might be difficult to understand for those who have been brought up in privilege. It is a feeling I found best described by the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who has also warned us against the danger of a single story;²⁶⁷ or, as I have called it in this dissertation, the danger of passing a tribally biased narrative as a universal truth. In her semi-autobiographical novel "Americanah," there is a scene in which

²⁶² Estarás, interview.

²⁶³ Estarás, interview.

²⁶⁴ Barba, interview.

²⁶⁵ Barba, interview.

²⁶⁶ Estarás, interview.

²⁶⁷ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The danger of a single story," TED Talks, July 2009, video, 00:18:32, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en.

Nigerian of color Obinze –who is an illegal immigrant in the UK– is having dinner with a group of white British people. He is suddenly overcome with alienation as the talk revolves around the need to let war refugees enter the country. He thinks to himself about the other guests:

[They] all understood the fleeing from war, from the kind of poverty that crushed human souls, but they would not understand the need to escape from the oppressive lethargy of choicelessness. They would not understand why people like him, who were raised well fed and watered but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else, eternally convinced that real lives happened in that somewhere else, were now resolved to do dangerous things, illegal things, so as to leave, none of them starving, or raped, or from burned villages, but merely hungry for choice and certainty.²⁶⁸

In Ecuador, Barba is a middle-class mestizo from the capital city.²⁶⁹ In Argentina, Estarás and I are light-skinned members of the highly-educated middle class. But in our interviews, we also talked of being conditioned from birth to look for real life elsewhere:

P- Besides... Well, being, let's say, "from the interior..."

L- Yes, it is something else.

P- You know that in Argentina everything that is not Buenos Aires is "the interior."

L- Yes, yes, yes.

P- Me too, I am from Rosario. And, in Argentina, we grow up feeling that life happens somewhere else, right? Life happens in Europe, life happens...

L- ...in Buenos Aires, yes, yes.

P- Exactly, life happens in Buenos Aires.²⁷⁰ Then, if you want to dedicate yourself to the arts...

L- ...you have to get out.

P- ...you have to get out.²⁷¹

In line with these experiences, Maroga admits: "To be an economic migrant from the so-called black emerging middle class comes with many contradictions. We accept what we cannot change and try to make the most of what leeway we can sequester."²⁷² Even if we were not thriving, even if some aspects of our identities made us belong to marginalized groups, we still had certain privileges in our countries of origin. Those less privileged than us most likely cannot even

²⁶⁸ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 280.

²⁶⁹ Barba, interview.

²⁷⁰ In her text "Cultural Production Beyond Extraction?," Serafini explains that, in Argentina, the perception of culture is embedded in a colonial mentality based in Western ideas of progress, with the contemporary art and cultural production of Buenos Aires being seen as 'global' and 'trendy' and therefore highly regarded, and the cultural expressions of the provinces seen as 'backwards.'

²⁷¹ Estarás, interview.

²⁷² Maroga, "Statement on my situation."

migrate. We, like the fictional character Obinze, left out of hunger for choice and certainty. How come people from very different corners of the world, all citizens of the Global South, came to the same conclusion that our opportunity for professional development was in Europe?

Former Minister of Energy and Mines of Ecuador Alberto Acosta, establishes a direct correlation between the extractivist model, the colonization campaigns led by European countries in the 16th century in the Americas, Africa and Asia, and the power relations still at play in the geopolitical landscape of today. He describes these unequal relations in the terms of the “paradox of plenty” or the “resource curse,” according to which the richer a country is in natural resources essential for industrial development and prosperity, the more the country seems to be condemned to underdevelopment and poverty. Acosta highlights from the start that the curse of plenty “is not inevitable and can be overcome.”²⁷³ Nevertheless, he does warn that, although in this century many progressive governments from the Latin American region have become aware of the trap of the extractivist model, “there is no clear sign that they are genuinely seeking to overcome this mode of accumulation.”²⁷⁴ He blames this reluctance to change the model to a meaningful degree to the rent-seeking mentalities and the commonplace practices of patronage and clientelism that come with an economic structure that places all income and wealth in only a few hands. The author declares:

In practice, extractivism has been a mechanism of colonial and neocolonial plunder and appropriation. [...] Extractivism has been a constant in the economic, social and political life of many countries in the global South. Thus, with differing degrees of intensity, every country in Latin America is affected by these practices.²⁷⁵

Acosta emphasizes the implications of this model beyond economy alone. According to him, while the extractivist model leads to economic growth in the Global North, it also invariably creates recurrent economic crises and serious social tensions in the Global South: the model offers very few job opportunities for the locals of the regions affected, leading to high levels of unemployment and poverty, and to increasingly unequal distribution of wealth. This in turn creates divisions in communities, indirectly causing crime and domestic violence to increase as well. Acosta contends that extractivism weakens the democratic institutions of Latin American countries, encouraging corruption and damaging the environment and the local communities alike: “Ever since they were founded, Latin America’s primary export republics have failed to establish a development model that would enable them to escape from the traps of poverty and authoritarianism.”²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Acosta, “Extractivism and neoextractivism,” 62.

²⁷⁴ Acosta, “Extractivism and neoextractivism,” 72.

²⁷⁵ Acosta, “Extractivism and neoextractivism,” 63.

²⁷⁶ Acosta, “Extractivism and neoextractivism,” 71.

Paula Serafini expands on why the extractivist economic model in Latin American countries results in perpetually poor societies where culture is never a priority. She highlights: “Historically in Argentina, as in other Latin American countries, there have been structural barriers to developing the creative industries, such as unstable economies and heightened vulnerability to external financial crises.”²⁷⁷ Serafini argues that extractive colonialism has shaped cultural imaginaries and practices as well as economic models in Latin American countries. She explains that, in Latin America, the socially produced discourse around development contains a geopolitical imagination and is rooted in Western, modern ideas of progress. I believe this is precisely why Latin American children grow up feeling like real life is happening elsewhere.

I argue that this imagination rooted in Western ideas of progress, combined with a lack of material opportunities –both created by the extractivist model– can influence the decision of non-Westerners to move to the West in the search of individual development. The ideas presented by these authors help fill in the blanks left by T’Jonck’s explanation of the international influx in the Flemish dance landscape: the countries caught in the paradox of plenty cannot yet escape the traps of poverty and authoritarianism, but some of their citizens can. Acosta’s analysis helps to understand why the structural inequality established during the conquest and colonization of the rest of the world by European powers still has very tangible consequences for the economies, cultural industries and societies of the Global South and the Global North today.²⁷⁸ Faced with underdeveloped creative industries in their countries of origin, individual creators may look elsewhere for available options. In that sense, T’Jonck is indeed enlightening when he explains that, due to the interest many cities had in hosting cultural events to showcase their regions, the status of the arts grew exponentially at the end of the 20th century in Europe:

The circuit of festivals and the associated group of ‘international’ artists, which started taking shape from the 1980s, reached its climax around 2000 and was highly visible. [...] Therefore ‘dance’ not only received a certain social recognition as a ‘profession’, there was also ‘work’ for those who were prepared to roll up their sleeves.²⁷⁹

Van Assche establishes multiple connections between the world of dance and the rules of labor and economy. She draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s discourse on the different forms of capital to show that dance makers have social and symbolic

²⁷⁷ Serafini, “Cultural Production Beyond Extraction?,” 55.

²⁷⁸ On a related note, although the average Belgian citizen seems to understand colonial surplus only in relation to the Belgian Congo, an entirely different dissertation could be devoted to studying the specific ways in which the territories known as Flanders and Brussels, which were under Spanish ruling during a period that largely overlaps with that of Spain’s colonizing endeavors in the American continent, were culturally and economically shaped by that connection. Alas, that question is once again too big for the scope of this investigation, but it is nonetheless worth mentioning in a thesis on the role of Latin American dance makers in the cultural landscape of Flanders and its official capital, the city of Brussels.

²⁷⁹ T’Jonck, “Contemporary Dance from Flanders,” 19.

capital.²⁸⁰ Serafini has warned us that, in some cases, the displacement of people can be understood in relation to the extractivist model, in which “culture risks becoming another resource for the extraction of value only to benefit those at the top.”²⁸¹ If the dance makers of the Global South have social and symbolic capital in the cultural sector, then they are also at risk of becoming a resource to be extracted. Perhaps the greatest extractivist endeavor in this regard in the Flemish dance landscape has been undertaken by De Keersmaecker’s school.

3.2. P.A.R.T.S.:

In the words of Van Assche and Schaffer, “current dancing subjectivities not only master a great adaptability, they also provide a performativity that brings to the work a personal movement style and a unique presence on the stage.”²⁸² Indeed, in our interview, Barba described an audition process in which P.A.R.T.S. was not looking for people with a strong command of dance technique. In fact, many of the students who entered had not received any traditional training in dance. Instead, the representatives of the school would tell the auditionees that they were looking for people with a particular artistic personality; with something beyond dance technique that would make them stand out on stage, something that other people would not be able to easily replicate:

I realize that that little something, like that special thing or that particular color that maybe they saw in me, was something that came from my dance training in Ecuador. And in a way that's what helped me get into the school. But it's as if they wanted that little nuance, that little color, without taking all the knowledge, the technique and the tradition that I came from, and that had created that color.²⁸³

Later, Barba came to understand that it had been the great value of the training received in Quito that allowed them to enter P.A.R.T.S., even if neither the school nor themselves had acknowledged it then. Barba explains that, once in the school, they and their classmates were all educated within the same canon, based on the techniques and productions of Europe and the USA. The teachers of P.A.R.T.S. explained to them that the school’s training was based on four pillars: “Trisha Brown, Forsythe, Pina Bausch and Rosas. So from the beginning you knew where you were going, right? And of course, they are obviously four pillars of the

²⁸⁰ Van Assche, *Dancing Precarity*, 3-276.

²⁸¹ Serafini, “Cultural Production Beyond Extraction?,” 59.

²⁸² Van Assche and Schaffer, “Flexible Performativity,” 207.

²⁸³ Barba, interview.

history of Western dance.²⁸⁴ When comparing the study plan of the period in which Barba attended P.A.R.T.S.²⁸⁵ with the current study plan of the school,²⁸⁶ it becomes apparent that these pillars have remained the same for the last twenty years. Then and now, the greatest load of study hours was devoted to contemporary dance techniques, classical ballet, and yoga or pilates as a warm-up. Non-Western traditions of movement, such as aikido or tango, sometimes appear in the program, but always with a much smaller teaching load.²⁸⁷

For Barba, the audition worked as a filter that allowed an eye-catching particularity to get into the school, but simultaneously left a decade-long dance tradition behind.²⁸⁸ Later, aided by Vázquez's concept of "translation as erasure,"²⁸⁹ Barba came to understand that filter as modernity's defense system during a process of intercultural exchange. For them, it shows how clever modernity is when taking something from another culture to incorporate it within its system, but without calling modernity itself into question.²⁹⁰ What Barba describes in those terms can easily be translated to the logic of extractivism as explained by Acosta: "This extractivism, which has appeared in different guises over time, was forged in the exploitation of the raw materials essential for the industrial development and prosperity of the global North."²⁹¹ In this case, extractivism takes the guise of dance culture. That eye-catching particularity, created by Barba's education in Quito, was the unrefined resource that P.A.R.T.S. wanted to extract. The training Barba received in Western traditions of movement was the production process of a manufactured cultural good.

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During our interview, I asked Barba what they thought the specificity of the Belgian context was in that scenario. I wanted to know whether, in their opinion, the experience could have been different elsewhere in Europe. Barba replied that maybe it would have been the same anywhere, because they have talked to people coming from outside of Europe who are doing dance elsewhere in Europe, and they all share similarities in their stories. Whether these foreign dancers work in Belgium, Germany or Switzerland, they all clearly recognize the same kind of colonial power relations.²⁹² However, Barba does recognize something special and

²⁸⁴ Barba, interview.

²⁸⁵ P.A.R.T.S. 2007. B 1 2 3 aanbod en studiebelasting. Provided by P.A.R.T.S. coordinator Steven De Belder.

²⁸⁶ P.A.R.T.S. 2022. Study Guide: BA Training cycle 2022-2025. <https://www.parts.be/study-guide>.

²⁸⁷ P.A.R.T.S. 2007. B 1 2 3 aanbod en studiebelasting.

²⁸⁸ Barba, interview.

²⁸⁹ Rolando Vázquez, "Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence," *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2011): 27-44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.2011.01387.x>.

²⁹⁰ Barba, interview.

²⁹¹ Acosta, "Extractivism and neoextractivism," 63.

²⁹² Barba, interview.

particular about P.A.R.T.S., that strongly resonates with the questions that ignited this research. In Barba's perception, what characterizes P.A.R.T.S. is its wish to expand; a desire to receive students from all over the world, to educate them within a European canon. Barba guesses that this particularity may be due to the fact that P.A.R.T.S. has had the capacity to bring students from many parts of the world to Brussels, something that perhaps other schools did not have.

According to Barba, what makes P.A.R.T.S. special is the effort it has put in diversifying the nationalities of the student body, without worrying about diversifying the school's curriculum.²⁹³ When confronting that idea with the information provided by the school itself, their hypothesis is confirmed. The study guide of P.A.R.T.S.'s Bachelor program states: "The school set out as an artistic project, and has from the start been international in its scope, attracting students and teachers-artists from all over the world."²⁹⁴ Yet it also explains: "The curriculum was designed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, aiming to provide education for dancers and choreographers together."²⁹⁵ While P.A.R.T.S. aims at having a student body as international as possible, the curriculum reflects the sole vision of a single Flemish dance maker. This dichotomy resonates with Estarás' memories of Alain Platel's dance company, in which all dancers but one were non-Belgian, and all choreographers but one were Flemish. Barba also thinks that this particularity exerts a major influence on the Flemish dance landscape, because many of the people who give shape to that scene are related to the school. In their view, the Flemish dance scene, just as P.A.R.T.S., is characterized by its aim at internationalization in dance:

So in a certain way it seeks a certain internationality, but it is a fictitious internationality [...] based on a European canon. But at the same time that internationality is closely linked to a Flemish cultural product. So, how can it be a Flemish cultural product that is also international? And at the same time it is the reproduction of a European canon?²⁹⁶

P.A.R.T.S. plays an important role in recruiting dancers for a dance landscape that cannot decide whether it wants to profile itself as Flemish, European, or international. And yet, Barba theorizes it in decolonial terms: "The colonial project can be sustained with good intentions too. And maybe the people participating are doing the best they can think of. But what they can think of is already given by a Eurocentric, imperialist universe."²⁹⁷ Barba perceives P.A.R.T.S.'s aspirations to multiculturalism in its student body as a sign of good intentions. After all, the idea of providing people from all over the world with the possibilities and resources offered at the school looks very nice on paper. But they explain

²⁹³ Barba, interview.

²⁹⁴ P.A.R.T.S. 2022. Study Guide.

²⁹⁵ P.A.R.T.S. 2022. Study Guide.

²⁹⁶ Barba, interview.

²⁹⁷ Barba, interview.

that, in practice, what happens is that the students are severed from their (dance) culture of origin, and educated within a Eurocentric culture instead.

I believe the idea that the colonial project can also be sustained by people with good intentions also holds true for the Flemish scholars whose views of the Flemish dance landscape I have been criticizing. That T'Jonck, Laermans or De Somviele offer analyses of the Flemish dance scene that invariably see its search for multiculturalism as a great thing (even one that breaks open the European canon),²⁹⁸ or that De Laet and Stalpaert present the dichotomy between modern dance and contemporary dance as an unquestionable given, does not mean that these authors have bad intentions or are trying to hide something. It simply shows that they were not conditioned to see the flaws of a system that benefits them. Barba argues that, if you have been raised in a dominant culture, you have never been forced to question the pillars that sustain that dominance. But when you have been raised in a culture that was being dominated, then you were forced to learn two languages (your own and that of the dominant culture). So for the people who belong to the dominant culture, the idea of resisting said dominance is a choice: there is nothing in daily life forcing that resistance.²⁹⁹ Privilege biases also invite analytical blind spots.

3.3. When dreams of the North go south:

Following Walter Mignolo's statement that coloniality's underlying logic is to make the (formerly) colonized subject feel inferior,³⁰⁰ Barba argues that the sense of self in modernity is linked to a seductive sense of superiority.³⁰¹ Under that logic, Barba used to dismiss their original dance education, probably due to the idea that the things learned in Latin America were inferior to those they could learn in Europe or the USA, and thus had no value. Today, they understand what they did not when they first arrived to live in Belgium in 2004: "I didn't consider myself a professional dancer, but I was already a professional dancer."³⁰² It was only after successfully going through the demanding audition process of the prestigious school P.A.R.T.S. that Barba realized the value of the dance training they had received from their Ecuadorian teacher Kléver Viera.³⁰³ This later recognition came accompanied by a sense of superiority, because they counted themselves among the very select group of students who had passed the audition.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ De Somviele, "Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018)."

²⁹⁹ Barba and Eliceche, "Dancing diaspora."

³⁰⁰ Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 214.

³⁰¹ Barba, "Modernity's Imaginary."

³⁰² Barba, interview.

³⁰³ Barba, interview.

³⁰⁴ Barba, "Modernity's Imaginary."

Sara Ahmed has argued that the institutions of the public space are orientation devices that point out the direction in which each body can go: bodies “move up” when their whiteness is not in dispute, while racialized bodies are stopped.³⁰⁵ Barba’s understanding of modernity’s seduction is similar: modernity smiles and opens the door to a person from a country deemed inferior by coloniality’s logic. That person starts working according to the logic of modernity. Because they question the non-painful parts of the process less, they think they have gotten to that place through their own merits (and not, for example, due to their intergenerational family history, their social privilege in their context of origin, or their former education). Yet, from the moment they go through the door, a process begins that Barba describes as “a slow-motion slap in the face”.³⁰⁶ they do not realize that they are being slapped, but they feel the impact of it nonetheless. It is an invisible but perceptible violence, because they got in, but once inside, modernity still suggests where they can go. It determines the direction of their movement.

Barba’s whole experience in the Flemish dance landscape is inscribed in that logic from beginning to end. The internalized feeling of inferiority created by coloniality was the very reason why Barba decided to move out of Ecuador in the first place. The first impact of modernity’s slow-motion slap in their face happened when they finally had the opportunity to prove themselves abroad. For the newly arrived international student, studying in P.A.R.T.S. was the process of becoming part of a new and different (dance) culture. This meant a massive cultural shock. Over the years, that initial cultural shock slowly turned into frustration. The discomfort was not limited to the experience within the school: Barba recognizes that the whole experience of migration allowed them to start seeing things that they did not see before in Ecuador, such as the confrontation with experiences of daily racism. Only after moving to Belgium did they realize how privileged a position they had enjoyed as a mestizo, middle-class citizen from the capital city of Quito. Their experience in this sense is not unique. Similarly, KVS dramaturg Gerardo Salinas explains:

Living in Flanders I went from being considered white in Argentina to being considered non-white here. And I started working in the arts and discovered that there is a great arts infrastructure, but there was very little room for people who had not been trained here, and who were not from here ethnically and culturally.³⁰⁷

Barba, like Salinas, also started recognizing power relations and acquiring new perspectives. For Barba, the experience of migration involved a vital transformation in the ways they saw the world, beyond the field of dance alone.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Sara Ahmed, “A phenomenology of whiteness,” *Feminist Theory* 8, nr. 2 (2007): 149-168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>.

³⁰⁶ Barba, “Modernity’s Imaginary.”

³⁰⁷ Mantilla, Tuyuc Velásquez, Salinas and Moffet, “When victims fight for justice: A conversation between arts, activism, academia and institutions,” my translation from Spanish.

³⁰⁸ Barba, interview.

They highlight that what P.A.R.T.S. does in the Flemish dance landscape has always been the role of education in the colonial system: “to educate you within the dominant culture in order to give you access to the resources of the dominant culture.”³⁰⁹ As I see it, the access that a school like P.A.R.T.S. provides to the resources of the dominant culture is limited. International students are welcomed into the Flemish dance landscape through the school, but having a student visa does not make them European citizens. They do not have access to the same range of benefits and protections as a European student within the same institution or dance scene. This means that, if they intend to remain a part of that scene after graduation, they will most likely have to make a much bigger –yet somehow invisibilized– effort to achieve that right. This was indeed the case for Barba. During the first years after graduation, obtaining a residence permit was Barba’s main concern; but to do so based on their work as an independent dancer was not an easy task. The artist recalls that this situation had a major impact on their choices, and a negative influence in their creative practice, as it infused their artistic work with stress. Throughout the years, it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to translate their complex theoretical ideas to the artistic medium of dance. But, nonetheless, they say that they mostly stopped making choreographic productions because modernity stopped seducing them. The whole experience of having to apply for visas had been soul-crushing for them, and extremely difficult to navigate even with the institutional support of the improvisation company ZOO. This led to a profound feeling of disenchantment with everything related to Europe and to contemporary dance.³¹⁰

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Estarás, Michael and Maroga have had similar experiences to that of Barba. When trying to navigate life in Belgium, they also faced more or less subtle forms of racist violence. Michael arrived in Europe in the late 1990s with the goal of becoming “one of the best African dancers in Europe.”³¹¹ That goal resonates with Barba’s concept of modernity’s seductive sense of superiority: “And that seduction is trying, well, that possibility of being part of the canon.”³¹² But Michael, like Barba, also seems to have felt the impact of modernity’s slow-motion slap in her face, when she began to notice how her body and cultural identity were fetishized in the dance world.³¹³ Her frustrations led up to her *Coloured Swan Series* and to her State of the Union speech. Maroga’s experience in Flanders was similar: “I spent four years trying to become fluent in a completely different grammar of violence. A syntax of racism so implicit you might not even catch it if you didn’t pay enough attention. Often, I didn’t. Or, perhaps, more shamefully, tried not to.”³¹⁴

³⁰⁹ Barba, interview.

³¹⁰ Barba, interview.

³¹¹ Van Assche, “Coloured Swan,” 93.

³¹² Barba, interview.

³¹³ Van Assche, “Coloured Swan,” 93.

³¹⁴ Maroga, “Statement on my situation.”

Barba's disillusion with modernity's seductive dream was worsened by the market rules of the dance scene in which they were trying to create new productions;³¹⁵ the same market rules that Estarás³¹⁶ and Michael³¹⁷ have often found frustrating. After having dealt with the bureaucracy of border-crossing, the perspective of having to convince the gatekeepers of the cultural sector of the value of an idea in order to get funding was more than overwhelming for Barba. These discouraging factors could have been challenged if Barba had had the feeling that their choreographic production was having its desired effect, but this was also not the case: "With *Wigman* and with *Slugs' Garden* I felt that these works were very easily incorporated into the dance network I was working on, without producing any major disturbance, right? And a little bit without my vital questions taking center stage."³¹⁸

In the meantime, Barba became a Belgian citizen. For them, this changed everything. Presently, they are able to travel freely across Belgian and Ecuadorian borders. Similarly, in her speech, Michael states: "As a Belgian Citizen now, I have the right documentation and legally I'm entitled to be present on this stage."³¹⁹ The income of an average Belgian salary allows Barba to live in Ecuador with little financial worries. For the first time in their life, they are able to produce the kind of work around dance they want to do, on their own terms and at their own rhythm. Today, they choose for an intellectual rather than corporeal work.³²⁰ At Kaaistudios, when Barba was asked by a member of the audience whether there is a sadness to not creating dance for the stage anymore, they answered "No. It is a relief."³²¹ Nevertheless, when comparing their present situation with that of other people who try to make a living out of dance in Ecuador, Barba recognizes their immense privilege: "that migration to Europe marked a field of possibilities that I would not have had if I had not emigrated."³²²

But experiences of migration do not always end on such a happy note. In 2023, Maroga was fired from VierNulVier after speaking out against the verifiable instances of racism and sexual harassment they had suffered within the institution. In consequence, their visa was affected; they were rendered undocumented and forced to leave Belgium.³²³ During the period leading to their deportation, Maroga used their influence to denounce the instances of racism, queerphobia, and sexual abuse suffered by themselves and others in the cultural sector, and to advocate for solidarity with Palestine, trying to mobilize prominent cultural institutions into taking a stand by formally endorsing the BDS

³¹⁵ Barba, interview.

³¹⁶ Estarás, interview.

³¹⁷ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 104-108.

³¹⁸ Barba, interview.

³¹⁹ Michael, "State of the Union."

³²⁰ Barba, interview.

³²¹ Barba, "Modernity's Imaginary."

³²² Barba, interview.

³²³ Kopano Maroga (@kopano.maroga), "Statement on disposability" Instagram, December 28, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/kopano.maroga/?hl=en>.

movement³²⁴ and joining BACBI.³²⁵ Being a very charismatic and knowledgeable person willing to speak their mind, Maroga became simultaneously a symbol of decolonial resistance for some and a public enemy of the Flemish cultural institutions for others.

3.4. The institutions of the Flemish cultural sector:

In relation to cases such as Maroga's, Michael denounces that the gatekeepers of the Flemish cultural sector keep talking about creating "enabling environments" within their institutions, while refusing to create them in practice. In alignment with Barba's idea that the colonial project can also be sustained with good intentions,³²⁶ Moya urges the Flemish gatekeepers to understand that, despite their overload of good intentions, they have to deal with very different stories and memories of people joining in from the other side of the premise and functions they institute. Michael denounces the troubling contradictions in Flemish institutions:

I hear talk about inclusion, but you know that there is no change without 'real action'. Where is our solidarity when two women with burnouts are fired at your city theatre in Antwerp? When a lot of POC³²⁷ programmers or cultural workers are stuck in a revolving door? When a city poet resigns because their work has been labelled as polarising when it questions inequalities?³²⁸

Understanding that dealing with difference is necessary should not be too difficult for the gatekeepers of a scene that defines itself as multicultural, international, and full of diversity. Yet, Sara Ahmed wonders: "How does the institutional desire for diversity relate to what practitioners do?"³²⁹ And she answers: "We could describe diversity as a politics of feeling good, which allows people to relax and feel less threatened, as if we have already 'solved it', and there is nothing less to do."³³⁰ She shows that the term "diversity" is appealing in that it gives organizations a better image, without really having to challenge organizational culture. What is then the organizational culture of the institutions of the Flemish dance landscape?

³²⁴ Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

³²⁵ Belgian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.

³²⁶ Barba, interview.

³²⁷ People of color.

³²⁸ Michael, "State of the Union."

³²⁹ Ahmed, "Embodying diversity," 46.

³³⁰ Ahmed, "Embodying diversity," 46.

In 1999, Tema Okun composed a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture which typically show up in Western organizations. The author clarified that these characteristics are damaging to people of color and white people alike, because they promote white supremacy thinking while simultaneously being used as unnamed, unbiased norms and standards. In it, she named the *right to comfort* and the *fear of open conflict*. The former represents “the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort [...] scapegoating those who cause discomfort.”³³¹ This explains why, when Maroga tried to engage with cultural organizational representatives to garner support and coalition around the global BDS movement, they were told: “We do not appreciate your tone therefore we will not support the movement.”³³² The fear of open conflict functions similarly: people in power are scared of conflict; they try to ignore it or run from it. Therefore, “when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem.”³³³ According to Okun, organizations that uphold white supremacist values put an emphasis on being polite. This explains why, when confronted by the artistic community with a call to position themselves against the genocide in Gaza, almost all Flemish cultural institutions responded by hanging a polite white flag for peace at their doorsteps.³³⁴ As Maroga put it: “Here, the white flag stands for white supremacy. Here, the call for “peace” is, in fact, a call to relent to the pacifying logic of Western imperial domination.”³³⁵

Ahmed points out that, for white institutions, the appeal of diversity is that it can function as an orientation that obscures the inequalities that lie at their rotten core, while shielding them from accusations of institutional racism: “The commitment to diversity gets translated into a prohibition on the use of the word ‘racism’.”³³⁶ Indeed, on its website, VierNulVier exhibits a good-looking statement regarding diversity policies:

We are aware that VIERNULVIER's team does not sufficiently represent the diversity of society. Our internal work processes are still too often aligned with mainstream, white, ableist and neurotypical normativity. This has led to an environment in which colleagues, past and present, have been hurt and are being hurt. Although VIERNULVIER is a responsible employer with an active

³³¹ Tema Okun, “White Supremacy Culture,” *Dismantling Racism Works*, 1999, https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf.

³³² Maroga, “Statement.”

³³³ Okun, “White Supremacy Culture,” 5.

³³⁴ Artists4Palestine, “Laat die witte vlaggen maar hangen,” *Rekto:Verso*, 2024, <https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/laat-die-witte-vlaggen-maar-hangen>.

³³⁵ Kopano Maroga (@kopano.maroga), “Statement on the white flags.” Instagram, December 26, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/kopano.maroga/?hl=en>.

³³⁶ Ahmed, “Embodying diversity,” 44.

integrity policy, proper care and attention is still sometimes lacking, and the translation of the policy into action is still lacking.³³⁷

The statement becomes laughably performative when put back to back to Maroga's retelling of their own disposability at the hands of the organization:

You can fire a black migrant worker and render them undocumented, in full public view, for speaking out about the verifiable instances of racism spanning a four year period and sexual harassment they have experienced. [...] And you can do this because there are no consequences. The lives on the other side of your negligence are disposable and dismissible and forgettable.³³⁸

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I was not present when Michael performed her State of the Union speech in 2022. People who were –including Michael herself– have told me that it was received with a standing ovation, and never spoken of again.³³⁹ Almost as if the politically correct thing to do for the Flemish audience was to applaud it in the moment, but the politically intelligent thing to do for them was to have it forgotten as soon as possible, before it made any waves. I was, however, present when Ntando Cele –who also grew up in South Africa under apartheid– made some similar statements in her performance *SPAfrica* in 2023. I was there to see how her accusations made the sea of whiteness in the audience look noticeably uncomfortable (even if they too, at the end, applauded very enthusiastically). In *SPAfrica*, Cele said: “We all celebrate diversity while the system hasn’t changed.”³⁴⁰ Similarly, in her speech, Michael concluded: “We know that without real redistribution of power we do not want to be included in a broken system.”³⁴¹ Maroga was born in Benoni, South Africa, in 1994;³⁴² the same year in which the first democratic elections were held in the country, putting an end to the four-year period of negotiations to formally end the apartheid. If three different performers of color from a country that knows the miseries of systemic, institutionalized, omnipresent racism as well as South Africa, are telling us the same things about the Flemish art sector, I think we should listen. Their stories urge us to question the narrative we have been hearing about this context and its institutions.

³³⁷ VierNulVier, “Working towards an anti discrimination policy at viernulvier,” VierNulVier, 2024, <https://www.viernulvier.gent/en/pQoYWfw/working-towards-an-anti-discrimination-policy-at-viernulvier>.

³³⁸ Maroga, “Statement on disposability.”

³³⁹ Moya Michael and Joachim Ben Yakoub, “Revisiting the ‘State of the Union’,” (research seminar, OPEK, Leuven, April 25, 2023).

³⁴⁰ Hetzel and Cele, *SPAfrica*.

³⁴¹ Michael, “State of the Union.”

³⁴² Kopano Maroga, “Jesus Thesis and Other Critical Fabulations: Poems by Kopano Maroga,” Google Books, 2020, https://books.google.be/books/about/Jesus_Thesis_and_Other_Critical_Fabulati.html?id=vekKzgEACAAJ&source=kp_author_description&redir_esc=y.

Flemish authors such as Laermans,³⁴³ De Somviele³⁴⁴ and T'Jonck,³⁴⁵ all highlight the importance that cultural centers –such as Kaaitheater in Brussels, DeSingel in Antwerp, STUK³⁴⁶ in Leuven, BUDA in Courtrai, and VierNulVier in Ghent– have had in the formation, establishment and internationalization of the Flemish dance landscape; but only Van Assche points out that such alleged internationality does not seem to reach the institutional staff. When discussing the idea of Brussels as a central hub of dance in the European Union, she says:

[...] this scene is far from inclusive. In fact, Afrodiasporic artists have been and are to this day underrepresented as protagonists on the Belgian stages. Furthermore, the cultural and ethnic diversity present in Brussels is not reflected in the homogeneous institutional staff in the dance sector, neither in dance programming, nor in the public funding outcomes tethered to the city.³⁴⁷

When talking about their experience working for VierNulVier, Maroga mentions that the only other people of color they saw working there were part of the cleaning crew.³⁴⁸ To make their point, Maroga refers to a picture that is proudly exhibited on VierNulVier's website under the rubric "Who's who," in which the sea of whiteness that constitutes the center's staff is blatantly obvious (Img. 11).³⁴⁹ VierNulVier, like most institutions of its same caliber in Flanders and Brussels, approaches institutional decolonization from a very superficial reading. As indicated in a recent study by Nienke Swinnen: "Their [decolonial] gestures at times linger at a too theoretical level or at merely the level of representation, sometimes causing them to lose validity."³⁵⁰ Blind spots in their approach stem from an all-white staff, leading to a flawed understanding of decolonization that represents the perspective of white European people in positions of power. From that point of view, a person like Maroga should feel lucky enough to have the opportunity to work at the institution, and stay grateful and silent.

³⁴³ Laermans, "Impure Gestures," 406.

³⁴⁴ De Somviele, "Contemporary dance from Flanders and Brussels (2018)."

³⁴⁵ T'Jonck, "Contemporary Dance from Flanders," 9.

³⁴⁶ Formerly known as "Stuc."

³⁴⁷ Van Assche, "Coloured Swan," 96.

³⁴⁸ Kopano Maroga (@kopano.maroga), "Statement on Queer March Ghent" Instagram, February 28, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/kopano.maroga/?hl=en>.

³⁴⁹ Image 11: VierNulVier, *Who's who*, s.d., photograph © VierNulVier, 2024, <https://www.viernulvier.gent/en/pQ7aiZ/who-is-who>.

³⁵⁰ Nienke Swinnen, "Exploration of whiteness and decolonization in the arts sector: Case-study VIERNULVIER" (master's dissertation, Ghent University, 2022), 3.



Image 11: VierNuVier, Who's who.

A superficial interpretation of institutional decolonization in this context translates into the expectation for decolonization to be polite and non-confrontational, and for white Europeans to be able to retain their exclusive position as gatekeepers of the cultural sector, with exemptions such as Maroga functioning as a token who proves their progressiveness to the world. In this reading, the fact that a person like them can get access to VierNuVier should be more than enough to prove the institution's achieved equality. In Ahmed's words: "When our appointments and promotion are taken up as signs of organisational commitment to equality and diversity, we are in trouble. Any success is read as a sign of an overcoming of institutional whiteness."³⁵¹

In practice, a much more thoughtful socio-political reading of institutional decolonization would be needed in order to achieve meaningful decolonizing practices in an arts center like this. Real decolonization requires challenging Eurocentrism and addressing power imbalances in decision-making processes. It demands more disruptive questions, such as: what does it mean when a dance scene assumes itself as internationalist (i.e., a scene that advocates cooperation and intercultural understanding), but remains Eurocentric (i.e., a scene that ultimately promotes Western European values) in practice? What does it imply when the Flemish cultural sector attracts foreign creators, but does not offer them structural support to stay there, as if they were disposable? What kind of power relations it betrays to put racialized bodies on stage and in the cleaning crew, but not in the decision-making staff? In what ways do the institutions of the Flemish cultural sector still uphold colonial values? And, importantly, can those colonial values ever be overcome while the vast majority of the staff remains white, straight, cisgender, and European?

³⁵¹ Ahmed, "Embodying diversity," 41.

Conclusion:

My questions are always too big for the scope of the investigation. But I still believe they are worth asking. I asked Barba if the acquisition of the elusive Belgian passport made a dent in their identity. They answered that, at first, it felt almost like a matrimony: as if Belgium was now responsible for them, and they were now responsible for Belgium. The newly acquired rights of a first-world citizen felt to them as a newly acquired responsibility, that of understanding what it means to belong to a colonial country: “How this colonial project makes possible the daily reality we live in Belgium, including dance production, right?” they said. In this thesis, I have shown that the colonial project makes dance production possible in Belgium in several ways. I have asked: “In what ways is the concept of cultural extractivism relevant for a decolonial analysis of the Flemish dance landscape?”

Aimed by the ideas of several decolonial authors, I came to the following conclusions: there is a Eurocentric, modern philosophical project of the West that is sustained by an extractivist, colonial economic model on a global scale. That model began to be established five centuries ago, with the colonization of the Americas, Asia and Africa by European powers, and it still has tangible consequences for the societies, economies, and cultural industries of the Global South and the Global North today. That philosophical project produces a sense of identity that is associated with ideas of white supremacy and Western superiority in Westerners, and a sense of inferiority that is associated with those same ideas in non-Westerners. Within the extractivist model, modern ideas of progress flow from north to south, and in consequence, natural, human, and aesthetic resources flow from south to north.

I have demonstrated that what characterizes contemporary dance as it is understood in Flanders is the exploration of the identity of the dancer, but as the vast majority of dancers active in Flanders are not Flemish, these identities function as resources extracted from other cultures. Therefore, the Flemish dance landscape seems to operate under a cultural extractivist logic of fetishization: difference is welcomed insofar it can be perceived as exotic and/or fetishized as desirable. Otherwise, difference is treated with annoyance, dismissed as

unimportant, or forgotten. I have also illustrated how, when indigenous people are treated as passive sources of inspiration rather than as active collaborators by contemporary choreographers, cultural appropriation operates in the field of dance as a form of extractivism.

Thus, I have found that the concept of (cultural) extractivism is relevant for a decolonial analysis of the Flemish dance landscape in that it helps to understand, not only the colonial origin of the material wealth that has allowed this cultural scene to exist, but also current dynamics related to: cultural appropriation and exoticization in the field of dance; displacement of people from the Global South to Flanders (especially to its capital city of Brussels); and displacement of ideas from the Global North to the Global South. I have also illustrated that these facts are not well known in the Flemish dance landscape, because the official discourse around it has been primarily produced by tribally biased Flemish authors. This discourse functions as a shiny red apple with a rotten core: most sources take the internationality and cultural diversity of the Flemish dance scene as its defining characteristic, but they celebrate this fact without addressing the inequalities it implies. At the rotten core of those inequalities lies the white supremacy culture which typically shows up in Western organizations. The institutions of the Flemish dance landscape often declare to uphold values of diversity and inclusion that are not effectively met in their practice beyond superficial, performative gestures. This lack of correlation between discourse and action has real, sometimes life-shattering consequences. The gap between practice and discourse is mostly caused by the fact that these institutions expect for “decolonization” to happen on their terms: for it to be polite and non-confrontational; and for white Europeans to be able to retain their exclusive position as gatekeepers of the cultural sector, with some exemptions functioning as a token who proves their progressiveness to the world.

But I have also tried to show that Western culture is not a determining sentence of an incurable white supremacist identity. The colonial project can also be sustained by people with good intentions, because privilege biases invite analytical blind spots. Being born and raised in the dominant culture, especially when embodying other identities that also enjoy a position of power in society (such as masculinity, whiteness or heterosexuality), inevitably comes with a certain set of values and beliefs. But those can be unlearned. For the people who belong to the dominant culture, the idea of resisting said dominance is a choice, but that choice *can be made*. Minds and hearts *can* be decolonized, one value or belief at the time. However, real decolonization demands true interculturality, beyond PR stunts, tokenist representation and performativity. It requires for the gatekeepers of the Flemish cultural sector to surrender much more than only one seat at the table, and for the Flemish scholars to ask questions instead of assuming answers when it comes to a scene that they themselves define as primarily marked by its international influx.

The people who have been underprivileged are more prone to search for the rotten core inside the shiny red apple. Once Barba started profiting from its consequences, they felt the need to learn more about the colonial history of

Belgium with the Congo. Non-Westerners in the Flemish dance landscape are always asking: “How can we position ourselves?” Our position was given to us at random, before we were even born. We have just been fighting to change it. It is very tiring. Throughout this thesis, I have searched for my sources in feminism, decolonial studies, queer studies; the entire woke agenda. I have negotiated with the inevitable tradition of white, male, first-world thinkers. I have thought from anger and searched for beauty, and I spoke the nuanced original thoughts I managed to develop that may bring us hope. More than anything I have found stories, personal stories, life experiences. I have done my best to accurately retell the stories of Fabián Barba, Lisi Estarás, Moya Michael, and Kopano Maroga; recontextualizing them as examples of a structural problem of the Flemish dance landscape, in an academic source that will be available for the next person who goes researching.

Their stories have shown us that the interaction in the Flemish context between the members of a formerly colonial power, and the ones of a formerly colonized territory, is multifaceted. On the one hand, it allows for unique creative opportunities and access to a high quality of life. On the other hand, it can lead to forms of racism so subtle and yet so pervasive, that they can push a foreigner to move out, to feel forever othered, or to stop wanting to create dance there. These stories were all subjective mini-universes that both confirmed my suspicions and forever surprised me. What has surprised me the most from them is the incorruptible commitment with which these artists fight to grant others the inclusion that was so often denied to them. They have made me feel hopeful about what the arts sector could mean to society. This is why shedding light on untold or incomplete stories is important. When I was writing this thesis, I came across Gerardo Salinas’ story; one last story that perfectly summarizes all of it:

One of the things that I had to go through when I arrived in Europe was to feel guilty. Because, apart from being victims, we feel responsible. Because our bodies, they are political subjects. We are not just people. We have the responsibility to do something with what happened to us. To ask myself what my role is in Belgium. In what way am I contributing to the struggle of my colleagues in Argentina, in South America, in Africa, in Asia? And I looked for it, and I thought about it, and my feeling about living here was that there are European cities that, because of the colony –because of the colonial relations that still exist, especially logistics-wise, where the riches of the world come and continue to come to a section of the world– they function like campfires in the middle of the desert; where people from all over the world come to seek security. To seek a better future, to seek knowledge. Following the means, the natural resources of their own land, almost instinctively. And we gather in these cities that can be Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Madrid... and in these cities –perhaps for these reasons of the colony, but– we still meet. And what is the first thing a person does when they reach a campfire? They tell a story.³⁵²

³⁵² Mantilla, Tuyuc Velásquez, Salinas and Moffet, “When victims fight for justice: A conversation between arts, activism, academia and institutions.”

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List of Images:

Image 1: Amanda Piña, Yoan Sorin and Lina María Venegas performing *The Jaguar and the Snake* at Fondation Cartier Paris.

Image 2: Left: Mara'akame Juan José Katira Ramirez in installation at DeSingel, Antwerp. | Right: Katira Ramirez closes the performance *The Jaguar and the Snake* by singing a Wixáritari song.

Image 3: The set for the performance *The Jaguar and the Snake*.

Image 4: Left: Amanda Piña, *The Jaguar and the Snake*. | Right: Martha Graham, *Letter to the World*.

Image 5: Left: Amanda Piña and Lina María Venegas, *The Jaguar and the Snake*. | Right: Martha Graham, *Clytemnestra*.

Image 6: Amanda Piña's *Exótica*.

Image 7: Re-exoticization in *Exótica*?

Image 8: Ntando Cele wearing the mask of a white man (modeled after Julian Hetzel's face) in *SPAfrica*.

Image 9: Ntando Cele without mask in *SPAfrica*.

Image 10: Lisi Estarás in *#THISISBEAUTY*.

Image 11: VierNulVier, *Who's who*.

Annex I. Interviews in English (translation):

I.I. Fabián Barba (dance maker and researcher), interviewed by Paulina Rosa (Ghent University student), February 2023:

Paulina- Well, first of all, thank you very much for agreeing to this interview.

Fabián- Yes. And you are studying for a degree there?

P- Well, actually my career is a bit... In Argentina I already was a licentiate and a professor in Fine Arts and I came to Ghent to do a Master's degree in Art History, Musicology and Theater Studies. What I am doing now is not yet the Master's degree, it is a kind of preparatory program. It's all the subjects of the Bachelor that it is considered that I did not have in my original degree in Argentina. So they are subjects from the first year, second, third year of the Bachelor... And a new thesis. *Laughs* There is no choice but to write a new thesis.

F- Yes... *Laughs* And how many pages do they ask for? Or, what is the length of the thesis?

P- Well, nothing, I mean, compared to what it is at the Argentinian university, it seems like a paper to me... Because the Bachelor theses here are 30 pages long. Which in a certain sense is also more complex, because you have to know how to summarize, you have to narrow down and be able to address a topic that is broad in a few pages. And in that sense, the thesis project has to do precisely with creators, dance creators of Latin American origin who are working mainly in Belgium, Brussels and the Flanders area. I don't deal much with the Wallonia area because I have less information and because I think there is also less cultural production in general. And the original question of this research was "What is the role of these creators of Latin American origin in what we call 'the Flemish canon' (let's say) of dance?" That was the original research question that obviously was modified a little later with the different feedback sessions. Side questions were opened. I was interested in knowing, for example, if there are certain traits of a

common Latin American heritage in the work of different creators. I was interested in this idea of whether there is a power dynamic, let's say, between these nations... A nation that used to be a colonizer and these nations that used to be colonized even though the link is not direct, because obviously Belgium did not colonize America but still I imagine that these power dynamics can appear anyway.

F- *Nods*

P- Then I read your texts, "*The local prejudice of contemporary dance*,"¹ I read "*Research into corporeality*"² and "*Impure transmissions*."³ And in those texts you talk a lot about that, let's say.

F- Totally, of course!

P- And well, in some way these are texts that are very useful to me because they also help me understand and contextualize my own experience as an international student. But it's also a little challenging because there are times when that post-colonial dynamic feels so overwhelming, so omnipresent that it kind of discourages you in a certain way.

F- Yes.

P- I was very interested in having this talk with you. I think you are a super interesting person based on those texts. But also, I was talking about it yesterday with my best friend, I said: "How to tackle this from a serious academic approach and not saying: "Tell me that there is light at the end of the tunnel, that there is hope!"" Let's say, it's a bit of that search, also. *Laughs*

F- *Laughs* Of course, of course. No, I think it's very nice. I mean, the question seems very relevant to me, very pertinent. It's something that I had also thought about a little bit, so it's cool that you're taking the plunge.

P- I think of it a bit as a first step and perhaps in the Master's thesis to do it a little more in depth. Because obviously for a thesis under these circumstances you have to reduce a lot. I chose three main cases that are well, yours, Amanda Piña's and Lisi Estarás'. I don't know if you're familiar with their work...?

F- With Amanda yes.

P- Good.

¹ Fabián Barba, "The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance," *Documenta* 34.2 (2016): 46-63; <https://doi.org/10.21825/doc.v34i2.16385>.

² Fabián Barba, "Research into Corporeality," *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 54 Issue 1 (2022): 82, <https://doi.org/10.5406/danceresearchj.43.1.0083>.

³ Fabián Barba. "Impure Transmissions: Traditions of Modern Dance Across Historical and Geographical Boundaries," in *Transmissions in Dance: Contemporary Staging Practices*, edited by Lesley Main. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

F- And who was the third person?

P- Lisi Estarás. She is a bit older. She works at, well, she has worked a lot at Ballets C de la B here in Ghent. And then she made her own company called Monkey Mind. She is also Argentinian like me.

F- Ah, cool!

P- And I also plan to talk to her probably this week. But well, this is the first interview I'm doing.

F- Nice, nice.

P- So well, I have those three cases. And in the different feedback sessions with my promotor –who, as I mentioned, is Annelies Van Assche– and with another teacher called Leonie Persyn, I don't know if you know her...

F- No... Maybe by her face.

P- Maybe by her face.

F- Yes because with names...

Laughter

P- That's how the research project took shape. These three case studies were defined. And I somehow tried to put together a structure of past, present and future in which I analyzed by focusing, for example: "Past", what do I mean by "past"? I refer to education. To the time of training of... of a person who ends up producing dance in Flanders. The present: what productions are being made at the moment? And the future: what are the projects that are coming? With that I made a focus on each artist. Focusing in your case on that first past of training, precisely because your texts talk a lot about that. About that contrast between what was training yourself in Ecuador and then training in Brussels. But also obviously the idea is to apply that structure of past, present and future a little also to each artist individually. Let's say, what is your present? What is your future in dance in Belgium? So maybe the first thing would be to ask you precisely about that trajectory. I am already somewhat familiar with what you propose in those texts, but I don't know what happened next. The last thing you mentioned is your 2009 project, I think *A Marie Wigman Dance Evening*. and after? I know you studied at P.A.R.T.S. and then at WP Zimmer, but I don't know how your career continued from that moment on.

F- Yes. And maybe I can tell you a little bit about some things that are important to me about that first migration to Belgium, which I haven't written about, okay? And one of those is that for me it is very important to emphasize that when I arrived in Belgium –I didn't know it then– I didn't consider myself a professional

dancer, but I was already a professional dancer. And then arriving in Belgium... Well, first there is one thing there: that is that when I went to audition... Yes, in the end I was very happy to have been accepted to the audition. An audition that was not easy. But I also realize after something that someone pointed out to me when I passed the audition, who told me: "Ah, but your training in Ecuador was very good then." It made me recognize that I had received something from Ecuador that was very valuable. And that it was that, which was very valuable, that allowed me to finally enter P.A.R.T.S. And that that something that had a lot of value in Quito was never really recognized. And even I didn't recognize it at certain times. But one thing also happens there –which is what I think now– and that is, when we arrived at the audition in Brussels it was a little difficult, because they weren't looking for people with a lot of technique. I mean, I remember that I had classmates who were not educated in traditional dance techniques and they were still accepted at the school. And one of the things that the school said was that they were looking for people who had something like an artistic personality or a particularity. Like something beyond technique that would make that person a strong presence on stage, that couldn't be easily replicated by other people. That's more or less what I understand they were looking for in the audition. I realize that that little something, like that special thing or that particular color that maybe they saw in me, was something that came from my dance training in Ecuador. And in a way that's what helped me get into the school. But it's as if they wanted that little nuance, that little color, without taking all the knowledge, the technique and the tradition that I came from, and that had created that color. That particularity. So yes, I had that particularity like many of my classmates, we were all educated within the same Eurocentric canon. Very based on the techniques and production of the United States and Europe. So there is first a issue of a filter. Like a membrane that lets certain things through, that is, a particularity that is interesting to see, but that leaves out an entire tradition of many decades. Exactly, a knowledge of many decades, like, that doesn't enter. So for me the process of studying at P.A.R.T.S. was a process of being part of a culture, another dance culture. And that is what I speak of and have discussed in those texts.

P- And do you think that when evaluating that somewhat nameless quality there was a certain exoticizing gaze as well?

F- It's hard to say... it's hard for me to say. In relation to the school and in relation to the audition it is difficult. But later, when I did *A Marie Wigman Dance Evening* in 2009, there was an exoticizing issue. And what the exoticizing issue did was to hide a certain ignorance. And the ignorance is given by the fact that for many people it was a little difficult to make sense of the fact that a person who came from Ecuador was interested in Mary Wigman's dances. So I remember that they advertised it as "a young Ecuadorian dancer." And "a young Ecuadorian dancer" had an element of surprise. Like an element of there being something halfway

attractive, but you couldn't make sense of it. And without ever really wondering what it means that a person from Ecuador is doing Mary Wigman's dances. What's there? So it remained very much on the surface, like a curious fact. And as long as my coming from Ecuador remained a curious fact, which was worth mentioning but not investigating, there was an exoticizing issue. Because no one ever cared to investigate: What was the motivation? What was the deep reason? That is the reason why I wrote the text. So there I look at that exoticizing issue. But in P.A.R.T.S. I didn't feel it. Maybe it's me who didn't see it, but I didn't feel it very strongly, no.

P- In that sense, maybe go back a little further and ask you precisely: Why did you choose Belgium? And why did you choose P.A.R.T.S.? Was it a question of...?

F- *Nods*

P- And why stay too, right?

F- Yes well, I don't know if you know Susana Tambutti?

P- No.

F- She, well, she's a dancer. Also a dance historian from Buenos Aires, from Argentina. Well, she is not from Buenos Aires but she works in Buenos Aires. And once she came to give a workshop in Ecuador and by then I already had the intention of going abroad to study. I was thinking of the United States –like, super Eurocentric– and then Susana Tambutti told me: “Oh, there is this school in Brussels...” Then I googled “P.A.R.T.S.” and of course, I loved the website. I said: “I want to go.” I went. I didn't even know until that moment that Belgium existed. I didn't know what language they spoke in Belgium. I thought: “They must speak Belgian.”

Laughter

F- And I arrived. And yes, the audition strongly captivated me. There were five days of auditions in many very nice workshops. And I said, “That's the school I want.” Then I went to a school to audition in Rotterdam, but I already realized it was P.A.R.T.S. I knew what captivated me at the audition. I thought I would only be there for a year, but then... Hey, there is a text that I am going to send you as a manuscript but it will be published in April, in which I talk a little about that seduction. That in that year that I arrived in Brussels there is a seduction that grabs me. And that seduction is trying, well, that possibility of being part of the canon. And that's what grabbed me and what made me stay for the four years in the end.

P- And in that sense, one of the suggestions that was made to me during these feedback sessions was the question of examining the educational programs of

these institutions in which these Latin American artists were trained here in Belgium. And in that sense, you joined .P.A.R.T.S. in 2004 if I'm not mistaken...

F- *Nods*

P- And, is it possible to access the school's study plans at that time? From the training you received at that time.

F- Yes. It wasn't very difficult, I mean, for example, they had technique classes and what teachers had been there... That there were composition classes, that there were theater classes, that there was musical analysis... I mean, that's how they gave you that. As a not very specific overview. And from that overview we actually received many things. There was one that we didn't. I think when I checked the website they said they gave Aikido classes for example, something like that. Yoga and Aikido, and when I arrived we only had Yoga, we did not have Aikido. But it's like it's the only thing I remember that...

P- ...that didn't match.

F- Otherwise the rest was more or less explained, yes.

P- Good.

F- Yes. And of course I also very clearly remember that they said: "There are three pillars in the school." No, "there are four pillars": Trisha Brown, Forsythe, Pina Bausch and Rosas. So from the beginning you knew where you were going, right? And of course, they are obviously four pillars of the history of Western dance. No?

P- Yes, without a doubt. Good. So going back to the first question: you had this four-year training experience in school. Then you had this experience of frustration in some way with this previous training that was not being fully recognized or valued. You developed your process, your graduation project, right? And then the texts that explain that whole process. And what happened next? What happened after that?

F- So after that... Because while I was in school I had a student visa. I left school and I wanted to continue living in Belgium and working in Belgium. So those first years the most difficult issue was getting a residence permit. And I didn't want to get married or do something like that, get a visa that way. So I wanted to get a work visa. To get a work visa I had to get a job. And as an independent dancer that's very difficult. So well, during the first years I was very focused on... in fact, on getting a job and getting payslips, you get it? So that also had a lot of influence on what I was doing. And it also influenced my artistic work in a way that I didn't like. It added a lot of stress to the artistic work. So after *Wigman* –which was also lucky because no one expected it and neither did I, but it was quite well received– then I managed to tour that work a lot and touring alone financially is very beneficial. So

thanks to that I was able to have the work permits I needed. I was able to get the employment contracts. Also because at the same time I started working with Zoo, which is an improvisation company based in Belgium, in Brussels. And Zoo is also a very important part of my artistic career as a dancer. And then I was there like, well, with Zoo and with *Wigman*, what I was achieving a little bit was solving that issue of work permits. And after a moment I had to do a new performance. A little bit because it had been two years since I did *Wigman* and in a way if you want to stay fresh and...

P- ...relevant...

F- ...and visible, aha, two years is a considerable time to make a new creation. And also because that helped me, it allowed me to have subsidies and finally it is a source of work. I started making another creation called *A Personal and Collective History*. The topics of that investigation were very similar to those of *Wigman*, but there was a lot of pressure. And I felt a lot of pressure. On the one hand because *Wigman* had attracted a lot of attention and on the other hand because although these questions were important to me, I still couldn't find a way to articulate them and above all to articulate them choreographically. Speaking them, writing them seemed easier to me than articulating them choreographically. But I put pressure on myself –but also a pressure that was there in the context– to make a new performance. That was good as a learning process, but not... for me it was not a work that I like to return to very much. It was very complex, I realized that some of the presuppositions of that work did not hold up well. And it was also a work that I did a little under pressure, so it is not a work I like to consider... if I could forget about it, I would forget. And that was probably in 2011, 2012. Then, by 2014, I think I had already sorted out my residence permits a bit. So I was a little more relaxed in that sense. And there I made a creation with a friend from Ecuador called *Cultivo de Babosas or Slugs' Garden*. It was a performance installation and that was a very nice performance. Because it had one of the things... Also the starting point in that work with Esteban, who is my friend, Esteban Donoso, we started a little because we wanted to investigate the history of dance in Ecuador. The memory of dance in Ecuador, right? We did a performance that had been done in the nineties, by a man named Paco Salvador, who had done a lot of research on Andean dances and who wanted... who was doing an Ethno-contemporary ballet. So he took everything he had already learned about Andean dances and took them to the stage... to the stage of a theater. So we wanted to get a little closer to that. But the questions that this raised in us in relation to us as mestizo people of the capital... our complex relationship with the Andes. That was already a very difficult universe. But then considering that we were going to create it in Europe and that it was a work that was going to tour in Europe, it became much more difficult. Not to sacrifice the Andean culture, not to appropriate it, not to sell it for our benefit... So they became very very difficult questions. And one time we said: "We close our eyes and try to get closer." And a bit the idea of closing our eyes was

to close that intellectual, rational question, to try to approach it in a more sensitive way. That dance by Paco Salvador. How... how it affected us physically. And there it took us to another place. It was the practice of the slugs' garden, which was a matter of closing your eyes, lying on the ground and starting to touch everything around you including yourself to... And the idea was, in that tactile relationship with the world, not to name, not to try to recognize or not to try to visualize what you encountered. But to focus on the sensations of the stimuli, on the textures, temperatures, densities, weights, etc. So that's like the basis for doing *Slugs' Garden*. The practice of the slugs' garden. But in *Slugs' Garden* there is a very sensorial, very sensual issue. For me, it took me a lot to the lessons I had done with Klever, with Klever Viera in Ecuador. So in *Slugs' Garden* there was all this corporeal, technical issue. In relation to the concentration you need, the perception... Letting yourself be carried away by sensations. It was work that I had done a lot with Klever. So in *Slugs' Garden*, that entire Klever universe is very present there. But it is combined with many of the improvisation tools that I had learned to work with with Zoo. So *Slugs' Garden* in a certain way brings together those two universes: that of improvisation with Zoo and that of the sensorial-sensual of Klever. And for me that, there, those two universes begin to coexist within my work. And for me that was very important, but for example that is something that I never talked about in *Slugs' Garden*. In *Slugs' Garden* I didn't want to talk, I wanted... for the work to be there and for people to relate physically to the work and to stop telling. So that's also why there is almost nothing written about that work on my part. After... or do you have any questions there?

P- No, I was thinking about this issue, for example, yesterday I saw *West Side Story*, the new musical, the Spielberg version. The protagonists are Puerto Rican but I think the actress is of Colombian origin and I thought that for Hollywood everything Latin American is more or less the same... and for us too, in some way. I say, for example: "I am Argentinian," at this moment I am wearing a sweater made in the north of Argentina... Rosario in the center of the country has nothing to do with the north of Argentina. Or as you say, Ecuador, the capital, does not necessarily have anything to do with the Andean world. So, it is a very Latin existential dilemma: "Where do I belong? What is my identity? What are the limits of that identity?" Somehow. Because I also believe that for the most part we recognize a certain Latin American identity in common, but at the same time there are regional differences that are very specific and that generate those doubts like the one that your partner and you had, let's say: "Do we have the right to dance these dances? How? How can we in some way pay respect or homage to the origins of these movements?" I think it is one of the most interesting things about this research. How each person approaches these existential problems, let's say, of the Latin American.

F- Sure. Of course, yes. And it is also because you started talking about the colonial relations between Europe and Latin America that are there. But also

within Latin America, within each region, within each city, those colonial relations are reproduced. And as we begin to realize the density of those colonial relationships, how do we move through this reality? It's an important question.

Laughter

P- Yes. You were telling me then, after this project, how your career continued.

F- Yes. Well, then it was 2014. And also at that time when I did the work with Esteban, I also started to do a performance with Mark Franko. Who is the dance historian who lives in the United States. And he had a solo that he had also created for himself, I don't remember when, it must have been in the '80s, I should check it out, yeah. At the end of the '80s. And he proposed to transmit that solo to me. So we did a version where we both danced the solo and talked a little about the transmission process. And there again, for me, very important was that, even if I was taking Mark Franko's solo, what gave body to that solo for me was not Mark's universe, but rather it was Quito's dance universe. For me it was everything I had learned about corporality with Klever that allowed me to give body to Mark's dance. And it had been in a similar way that it had allowed me to give body to Wigman's dances. So we also did that in 2014, and yes, I'm only telling you because it resonates a little, it's not a work that we presented a lot. And well, later with *Slugs'* we also continued working a little more, I think we presented it in 2016, as part of the Kunstenfestivaldesarts, which was cool. But at the same time, that was the last time I did anything choreographic or anything on stage. Since then I have dedicated myself much more to trying to write about these experiences, these reflections. And very importantly, I started teaching classes in dance schools. But the classes I teach are not so much related to technique or composition, but rather we get together to talk. We get together to talk about... For me it is important... What I try to talk to students about is for us to understand the historical production of these constructions of race, gender, class... and how they are related. And also to talk a little about modernity-coloniality. That is, modernity but also seen from its most hidden side. Which has to do with how the genesis of modernity is related to the colonization project of the Americas. And how that has been uniting the histories of Europe and America for 500 years. They are separate but they are histories that were interwoven. And these are things that I talk about with the students, a little too so that we know what world we are living in and how the dance we do is not dissociated from that history and that reality. To see how as dancers we can face history, try to question it. But for example, for me, that happens more through the use of words than through dance, through artistic creation.

P- There I received the notification that in about 8 minutes this call is going to be cut off, so I will send you a new link again when that happens.

F- Okay, yes.

P- But this was precisely something that was discussed in the feedback sessions regarding my research project. Because I was very interested in your case, but at a certain point the teachers asked me if Fabián Barba should be a case study as a creator, as a choreographer in Belgium, or should they be part of the theoretical framework. Because precisely what they had... the idea they had was that you were no longer doing choreographic productions, but that you were just dedicating yourself to more theoretical work. To the research, to the workshops, to the talks about this type of... And I told them: "But that's it for me." That is the most interesting thing about the situation, let's say, I understand that from the Theater Studies degree performance analysis is central, it is inevitable... But I do not believe that dance is simply the work presented. I believe that dance is a process, a creation that comes from a previous training and that in the case of these creators in many cases that training began on another continent. So for me this situation of how you went, in some sense, from dance to dance theory, for me it was very interesting. For me, I'm interested in knowing if, for example, that was a voluntary transition, so to speak, or if the context pushed you toward that. If choreographic production is something you miss. If it is something that you chose, let's say, how that process occurred, how you live it.

F- Yes. So at the beginning, when I left P.A.R.T.S. in 2008 and after doing *Wigman* in 2009, like these questions were there and living in my mind. But I didn't have the conceptual tools and vocabulary to be able to make sense of that experience, of those questions. So an issue that was very frustrating for me in Brussels in 2008-2009 and before, is that sometimes I tried to say: "This is happening to me. I'm feeling this." But I felt like no one was listening to me. I felt that what I was saying didn't make sense. So from there, reading, I read a book by Walter D. Mignolo, "*Local Histories/Global Designs*," and it was like: "Yes! That's what I'm talking about..." Then I googled "Walter D. Mignolo" and I found out that he was teaching in Holland, a summer school, a decolonial summer school.⁴ I went there in 2011, I think, because I wanted to talk to Walter. And there I met Rolando Vazquez, I met María Lugones, I met Ovidio... They are people from the decolonial summer school. And when I told them my story and I told them my questions, they understood me immediately. They told me: "Sure, that's it." In other words, "Your story makes total sense." And then I started going every year, because the following year they invited me to give a two-hour session in which I told about my experience and how I was making sense of it. So since 2011 the decolonial summer school in Holland was my school to be able to think about all these things. And so in a sense, yes, on the one hand there was a need to find a way to share those questions with other people. And that didn't necessarily have to conflict with continuing with the choreographic production. If that happened in 2011, until 2014, 2016 I tried to do choreographic work. But there was also something that happened to me, that although when I arrived in Brussels, at

⁴ Decolonial Summer School Middelburg.

P.A.R.T.S., there was this process of seduction, that I said: "I want to be part of that canon." By 2009-2010 and especially after that experience of having to get visas that was very hard... I mean, at times it is a process that is made to dishearten you. In other words, the bureaucracy is there so that you don't get those permits, so that you won't. I had institutional support to achieve it and it was still very difficult. It was by... a moment around 2014, I went through a process of completely... a complete disenchantment with everything that had to do with Europe. With everything that had to do with contemporary dance. And I believe that it is partly that disenchantment that does not allow me. Or that I was no longer seduced by the idea of making choreographic productions. So that is an important issue. And the other important issue is also that in order to do artistic work in Brussels you have to do it with funding. With a budget. You have to start playing with some market rules. To generate a project more than a year before you go to the studio. To articulate it, to start convincing people and then... I don't know, it's like it's very difficult for me to make an artistic creation in that context. And also since it was already happening and I was already kind of disenchanted with all this, I didn't even want to try it anymore. And also because I felt... I couldn't find a way to make an artistic work that was... Because, for example: With *Wigman* and with *Slugs' Garden* I felt that these works were very easily incorporated into the dance network I was working on, without producing any major disturbance, right? And a little bit without my vital questions taking center stage. So to me it's like... Well, on the one hand, that disenchantment, then this issue of not wanting to play with the rules of that... market. From that dance network. And then I also felt that it was not the most appropriate mechanism for me to do what I thought I had to do.

P- The meeting is going to be cut off there, I cut it and send you a new link.

F- Yeah, I think we can use the same link if you want.

P- Oh, is it really possible? I didn't know. Good.

F- Sure, see you soon.

P- There it goes again.

F- Hello!

P- Good. You hear me, right?

F- Yes, perfect.

P- Yes. Precisely yesterday I was rereading some of these texts of yours in which you developed several ideas related to the concepts of contemporary dance, of historicism... And which lead me to think that the current cultural context in relation to dance is one that is thought about and it is experienced from those

neocolonial relations. And it seems as if Eurocentrism and the remnants of the colonization of America generated a kind of macro-narrative of the history of the arts in which it seems that Latin Americans are always observing what is happening in Europe –and sometimes in the United States– and we react to that. And in that narrative, the art produced in Latin America would always be a kind of copy adapted with some input from local traditions. And by the time those innovations reach Europe, they are invariably perceived as irrelevant, as outdated. So I had the feeling that there is a kind of vicious circle in which Eurocentrism and historicism feed off each other in such a way that their precepts always end up seeming true. Do you think this is so? Do you think there are ways to resist this purely and exclusively from dance and not from its theorization? Or the conclusion you have reached is that it can only be resisted, let's say theoretically, from the word...?

F- Yes, for me, to talk about that it is very... The work of María Lugones, who is a thinker from Argentina who emigrated to the United States and spent a long time there, helps me a lot. And she is a philosopher, feminist and very involved with decolonial thought. And she says that it is important to cultivate a double gaze. So, on the one hand, to see how power perceives the world. And in this sense of how power perceives the world, it's what you described. Productions made in Latin America will always be seen as a copy or an appropriation of the European canon, a little reworked with a local aesthetic. And yes, that is the way power perceives those artistic creations. Because perceiving them this way allows you to prove the superiority of the European artistic professions. In a certain way. And María says: "it is important to see that." Because that is how power articulates a certain reality and there we have to see how power is articulating that reality. But she says: "We also have to see what power does not see." And what does power not see? It's how those productions that we are making, that people are making in the Americas, although influenced by the European canon...? –because the European canon finally prevails, that is the colonial problem. It is an imposition. And when faced with an imposition you cannot say: "I don't want you to impose it on me" or "yes I want you to impose it on me." They don't ask you, they impose it on you. Once they impose it on you, what do you do with it? How do you respond to that imposition? There is an agency of creativity that escapes power, the control of power. Then María says: "we also have to look at those answers." How we are appropriating it. How we are modifying it. How are we taking certain things that perhaps serve us and leaving others. And then it is also important to read how dance production in Latin America is never a direct copy. But there is a certain transformation there. There is a certain creativity. There is something new that is generated. So it would be important to see those two things and then, for example, looking at the Klever case –I kind of think I talk about that in *Impure Transmissions*– I see it as the case of Klever, although he is influenced by modern dance from Europe and the USA, there is also another aspect that nourishes his

work that is an Andean aspect. And Klever's own work recreates those aspects. Creating something new from that mix of traditions. And for example Klever did it through his dances. Through his techniques, the classes he gave, the workshops and his choreography. And then I see it very very clearly in Klever. And they continue to be... But, the problem is that if the theory remains Eurocentered, it will only see how power operates by imposing a Eurocentered canon on Klever's work. And if the theory does not see that other subversive work that Klever is doing of bringing an Andean tradition to converse with modern Eurocentered traditions, if that is not made visible –it may be there in Klever's work, I believe it is– but if they are not made visible, it is more difficult to give them collective value. So I think maybe it's a job... It can't be one or the other, but rather it's one feeding the other. Between choreographic creation and a more discursive creation.

P- In that sense, I was wondering if you were familiar with the work of other people of Latin American origin who make choreographic productions in Belgium. Do you think there are common factors in these productions? This mestizaje that you speak of, do you see it present in those works?

F- Yes, let me think... There is this work that Cecilia is doing... Cecilia Lisa Eliceche. But... the work or works I saw of her were also more discursive although they were on stage. From the work of Esteban Donoso who is my friend from here, from Ecuador and also lived in Belgium for some time... But it is also a work that is much more discourse than dance, let's say. Even if it was performative, it was on stage... But yes, there I must admit my ignorance.

Laughter

F- Yes, I'm not very familiar here.

P- No, not that... Well, I also think it's not that much... Let's see, one part is ignorance and the other part is what you say, the lack of visibility. Let's say if not... When I thought about developing this thesis I realized that there is nothing. Nobody knows who these artists are, nobody knows what they are doing, where they study... I had to start googling, let's say, unearth them... Eh, looking precisely at the people who are associated with P.A.R.T.S., the people who are associated with different dance institutions... And by name: "this name sounds Hispanic to me, so I google it and check it out." Let's say, it was a job that evidently is... also that. Lack of information about that.

F- Yes.

P- But another doubt arose in my mind, because in the texts that compiled the production, execution and reception of your dances about Mary, you talk a lot about the differences between the field of contemporary dance in Ecuador and in Europe. And I wanted to ask you what you think is the specificity of the Belgian

context in that panorama. In your opinion, could it have happened differently elsewhere in Europe? Would any European country have been the same?

F- The training in contemporary dance?

P- Yes. That situation of, in some way, finding a certain resistance to your previous training and a certain exoticist view of your production. Do you think it is something that happened in a certain way exclusively in Belgium? Would it have been the same in Germany for example? Would it have been the same...? Do you have experience in other places?

F- Maybe. Because I have spoken with people who do dance in other places in Europe and who come from outside Europe, and in a certain way we share similarity in our stories, although the particularity is different. But yes, colonial power relations are clearly there. I mean, I have... I remember people telling me about their education in Germany and it was also problematic. Also in Switzerland. But there is an issue that is a particularity with Belgium and with P.A.R.T.S. And P.A.R.T.S. has –or at least in its exception and in the way I perceive it– P.A.R.T.S. has an expansive issue. Like a desire to receive students from all over the world, to educate them within a European canon. So that particularity of P.A.R.T.S., the effort they have put into diversifying the nationalities of the student body, without worrying about diversifying the school's curriculum. It is a peculiarity that I have seen only in P.A.R.T.S. And a little because P.A.R.T.S. had the ability to bring students from many parts of the world, which perhaps other schools did not –did not care to do, or did not have the possibility to. There is a peculiarity there that is very... that for me has to be studied, I don't know how to make much sense of it. And I think that that influences the Flemish dance scene a lot, because in the end P.A.R.T.S. influences that scene a lot. Finally, many of the people who make up the Flemish dance scene are related to P.A.R.T.S. I don't know if you agree with that, but that's the way I perceive it. So there is something there that has to be studied. Because in the end, the Flemish scene is also constituted by being an international dance scene. So in a certain way it seeks a certain internationality, but it is a fictitious internationality. Because ultimately, it is an internationality based on a European canon. But at the same time that internationality is closely linked to a Flemish cultural product. So, how can it be a Flemish cultural product that is also international? And at the same time it is the reproduction of a European canon? There is a triangle that needs to be analyzed there.

P- I have experienced a... Well, a similar appreciation... As part of this training, of this program, I also have to do an internship. And I am doing it in what today is laGeste, which is a fusion between Kabinet K and Ballets C de la B, that is, two large dance companies from Ghent... I'd say, perhaps the largest ones, that they have merged. And the project I am working on as an intern has to do with Palestine, with dancers of Palestinian origin, with the political situation in Palestine... And I have had moments in which the choreographers in charge say

things like: "Well, what happens is that the dancers come with an idea of *what they think is dance* and... And so that's why we like to work with children, because it's easier to mold them towards what we want them to do on stage, the type of muscular work..." and I have told them: "Well, I think that if you are going to work with people from other cultures you will inevitably have to negotiate with the knowledge and ideals of that other culture" and they have responded to me: "They want to learn." That's the vision, let's say. That they come with... with what is the *true dance* to somehow make the rest of the world literate, let's say. Is that.

F- Clearly. It is a postcolonial project.

Laughter

P- Totally. But at the same time presented as you said, as if it were not. As if it were an internationalist, politically correct issue... Or a question of political interest in this case in the situation of Palestine, or in the postcolonial situation in Latin America... There is a certain rationalization that "colonizing is wrong, so we should somehow fight it" but in practice... It is very difficult, I think, from that place... From the place of power to deconstruct that same power. And by not giving voices to the people who could help deconstruct it, that project is also frustrated before it begins, let's say...

F- Of course, yes, yes... The colonial project can be sustained with good intentions too. And maybe the people participating are doing the best they can think of. But what they can think of is already given by a Eurocentric, imperialist universe. I mean, it is part of our imagination. Well, when we want to do something good, we get a reproduction of the system. I think that also happens in P.A.R.T.S. I mean, like: "That people from all over the world can come here to study at this school, that they have these resources, that they have these opportunities" is nice. I mean, as a good intention it's nice. But what ends up happening? That they separate us from our culture of origin, our dance culture. We are educated in a Eurocentric culture. That is what was happening... Which has been the role of education in the colonial system in so many manifestations. From here in Ecuador with formal education in indigenous communities, Canada with the boarding schools that are horrible.

P- Yes.

F- They have many more horrors like that, but it is the same logic: to educate you within the dominant culture to give you access to the resources of the dominant culture, but... *Shakes their head*

P- Yes, an access that is also limited, let's say. Because, in some way my research questions in relation to your case and to the majority of cases, have to do precisely with how the educational and dance production institutions here in Flanders and in Belgium have allowed, influenced, determined, limited your practice. As a

dancer, what effect has this had on your career and how much of that has to do, let's say, with your Latin American origins. But in reality, obviously, those are very broad questions that are not easy to answer either in an-hour-and-a-half interview, nor in a 30-page thesis. Because they are precisely the reflection of a much broader system and that, as you say, does not begin in P.A.R.T.S.; does not begin in the field of Flemish dance... It begins in the cradle, let's say, and in the educational system of Ecuador itself and in that of Argentina in my case... Because Eurocentrism does not begin when one arrives in Europe, let's say. That... The very fact that we feel the need to come to study in Europe already speaks of that, it is a symptom of that too. And there is also always the doubt, let's say, of how much of this search is about a professional search, and how much of it is a search for materially superior living conditions, let's say. That too, what you were talking about, for example, the visa system, how it is designed so that one cannot stay... I live it too. I live the same way, with a student visa. In some way the system is planned to make you feel that you always have to put in more effort than the people around you to access the same places, let's say. So it's complex, let's say... I don't expect you to be able to answer all those questions, let's say, in... in this little while. But maybe a reflection, or something you want to comment on it.

F- Yes. Maybe not directly the questions, but there are two things that came to mind. The first one is actually like a previous question, which was when I was trying to explain to you why at some point I stopped doing choreographic production. Part of it was because it stopped seducing me and on the other hand I found it very difficult to do critical work through that. There is a text by Rolando Vázquez called "*Translation as erasure*,"⁵ –I can send it to you– and there he writes very well how in the translation processes, which are necessary in these intercultural encounters, how ingenious is modernity to take something of another culture, but to incorporate it within that system of modernity, without questioning modernity itself. So processes of cultural appropriation, of... I don't know, I don't quite remember how he explains it but this text is incredible. And that is one of the issues that I felt: that doing choreographic work in Brussels, in a certain way that work was always going to end up being swallowed up by modernity without questioning modernity. And when I told you, for example, about my experience auditioning for P.A.R.T.S., I think that happened. There was something that I brought that was particular to my dance training in Ecuador, that other people, other candidates at the audition did not have, that is what they wanted. That something that brought a new color, let's say. But they left everything else. All this... "We take this little bit, but we leave all this here." So there is this process of the capacity that modernity has to continue sustaining itself. Always, because it is always finally in contact with other cultures. But how can it avoid that other cultures affect it in a way that transforms it at the core? And the

⁵ Rolando Vázquez, 'Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2011): 27-44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.2011.01387.x>.

other, I had to do with... Because a while ago you said it was something like... Also what possibilities or how it has affected my ability to work, that is, how having migrated to Belgium has affected my working conditions? After going through all those visa issues which were horrible, I finally got the Belgian passport. So now I'm Belgian, and that changes everything. That is to say, right now I can travel whenever I want. I must buy a ticket, I must not ask for visas. I don't have to ask anyone's permission, I just go. But also, in Belgium, I am... I think they consider me poor. That is, legally, they have like those categories of the poverty line, and I am under that poverty line in Belgium. The other day I went to the Partenamut, to the mutuality, they told me: "Ah, you can ask for this status." And with that status I have free public transportation... (Oh wait, my camera is a little bad, can you hear me correctly?).

P- Yes, I hear you well. *Communication is cut off* There, it was cut off.

F- Yes, ah but now we are coming back I think.

P- Yes, yes.

F- It's already recording, right?

P- Yes. You were telling me about this status, about free public transportation, that's as far as I got.

F- Aha. And they give me tax money back, for example, I always receive tax money back. I am, in Brussels, I count as poor. But then, finally having access to European standard salaries, when I come here to Ecuador that allows me to live well. In Ecuador, with the money I earn in Europe, here I am someone from a well-off middle class. Which means that, every year, I have five to six months where I don't need to work for anyone. Because with the money I earned in Belgium I can live well. And not having to worry about rent and food gives me a lot of time to do my job, which is a job that I want to do. Without having to ask for funding, without having to talk to co-producers; without having to give anything to a market, without having to respond to the demands of a market. And it allows me to work on what I want, at my own pace, and yes, with incredible freedom. So even if right now I am not doing choreographic work, I continue working thinking about dance, thinking about the body, thinking about history and thinking about colonial relations. But all that work is possible because I have access to that European labor market. And I see, for example, that the people who make a living from dance here in Ecuador, they cannot work in the luxurious conditions in which I work. So there is also something there: that migration to Europe marked a field of possibilities that I would not have had if I had not emigrated. Yeah.

P- Yes, and to a large extent it translates precisely into material and economic conditions. Obviously beyond that... Without underestimating, let's say, the artistic and educational training, which is real too. Let's say, your time in Europe did not

simply open doors at a professional level, but it must also have totally influenced your way of understanding your own body and your own way of doing dance, but... But it is not from there, let's say, the change in the end, the one with the most strength seems to be the other. The, let's say, the question of...

F- Sure. Yes. Yes, and I think it's important that you mention this. Because beyond the education that I received at P.A.R.T.S. and all that, the click, the migration experience, allowed me to see things that I did not see when I lived in Ecuador. Like everyday racism, for example. Because in Ecuador I am middle class, a mestizo from the middle class of the capital. There were experiences of racism, but *a millares surgir*...⁶ Because I didn't see them as racism. It's only after I migrate to Europe that I say, "Ah, this is racism." And I start to see all those other manifestations that I didn't see. The same with other forms of power relations. So there is also something in that migration, beyond the material, that also kind of opens up a different perspective to perceive the world. And that's beyond the field of dance. It's almost like a vital question.

P- And a perhaps a little more personal question, I don't know what influence it has on academics, let's say. But, now that, let's say, you always speak from your condition as Ecuadorian, let's say, but, now with your Belgian passport, do you feel Belgian? Do you feel identified with that identity?

F- It's strange... When I received the passport, I felt like it was like a marriage, you get it?

Laughter

F- Like... Belgium had to take care of me, as much as I had to take care of Belgium. And maybe it's not so much a belonging as... cultural. As if to say: "I am Belgian." But knowing that I am a Belgian citizen, that is, a first world citizen, gives me a certain responsibility to understand what that implies, and how I am benefiting from being part of a colonial country. And there is, for example, the responsibility to learn more about the colonial history of Belgium, its debt to the Congo for example. How does this colonial project make possible the daily reality that we live in Belgium, including dance production, now? So there are questions that I know that now I can no longer say: "they have nothing to do with me." They have a lot to do with me. In that sense there is a change. But like, "do I feel Belgian"? No, not at all.

Laughter

P- Yes, perfect. Well, for my part, the talk has been super enriching. It has gone... Let's say, beyond my questions it has gone to places that are very useful for me on an analytical level, let's say, to think about it. To continue developing. So I thank

⁶ The expression "a millares surgir" to indicate large quantities, is a reference to the Ecuadorian national anthem.

you very much for this opportunity. You have also given me several texts that are useful for putting together the theoretical framework as well. So for my part I have no more questions. If there is anything else you want to add, of course that's perfect. And if not just thank you.

F- Let me see if there is anything I left out there... No... If I remember and see that it's important, I'll let you know.

P- The only thing left to ask is, since I had told you at the beginning about this structure of the past, present and future: what are your future projects? Do you plan to continue doing the same thing you have been doing? Do you have any ideas for the future that you haven't developed yet?

F- Yes. Well, for me... Because in recent years I have been spending a lot, half of the time in Belgium and half of the time in Ecuador. So one of the main questions is that I can continue doing it for many more years, perhaps, but then I want to settle in a place. And I don't know if it's going to be Belgium or if it's going to be Ecuador. I mean, a question... that I imagine many migrant people share. And what I would do professionally would also depend a lot on that. So one of the options is to do a doctorate, and a little, honestly, it would be to have a scholarship. A scholarship for four or six years would be a dream. And that would be in Belgium. Because in Ecuador I am not going to get scholarships like that. And then if I did this doctorate there in Belgium, the question would be, what would it be about? And one of the possibilities –and one that resonates a lot with what you are doing– has to do with investigating the production of a Flemish subjectivity through this contemporary dance that is intended to be international.

P- Yes.

F- Right? What is the relationship between this contemporary dance and the production of a feeling of being Flemish? Of, “Flanders, capital of dance”. That is a very very interesting question that I would like to approach. And it is a question, although taken from theory, well, a very corporeal question. It's how you feel Flemish. And in that corporeal dimension I think there is an issue that would bring me very close to dance. So yes, it is not the dance of dancers on stage, but the construction of our bodies. Of our bodies-objectivities. So it would maybe be one of those future projects.

P- What if you chose Ecuador?

F- Oh... I think also... Maybe the question would be more directed to issues of sexuality. Aha. Also because in sexuality the body is central. So the tools that I have –or that I have taken– to understand the body from dance, I think they could also be used to understand the body from sexuality. Because sexuality and dance are both bodily practices. And of course, there are dissident sexualities and things like that. Okay, and that would be if I stayed like this, here.

P- Perfect. Well, now yes then. No more questions. I thank you very much for this talk, for this opportunity. Obviously, anything you have pending, that you remember later, I am always willing to receive. And well, let's keep thinking about these things. To continue trying to decipher them, I think it is the only path we have proposed ourselves, let's say. It's the only way to try to make some sense of this game board that we were presented with and where we have to do what we can.

F- Yes, yes, yes. No, thank *you* very much. Anything, if you have any questions or anything let me know. And we continue talking.

P- Perfect. Well, when the thesis is finished I will send it to you.

F- Oh yes, please, I would love to.

P- Well, thank you very much.

F- Thank you very much, take care of yourself. Bye!

I.II. Lisi Estarás (dance maker), interviewed by Paulina Rosa (Ghent University student), February 2023:

Paulina- So I'm working with those cases, let's say. Those three cases. And, in some way, I also had to give a structure to the work and I thought a bit about this structure of past, present and future. In the sense that the choreographic production that one sees on stage is the result of a process, let's say.

Lisi- *Nods*

P- It's not just the result and that's it. And that's a little bit what I wanted to talk to all of you about, let's say. A little bit about what are your life paths, that kind of thing. But also in some way, the three cases are ordered in that "past, present and future" format. Because for example, Fabián today no longer does choreographic production and has almost all theoretical production, let's say, about dance. And what they have done on a theoretical level has to do with their experience training here in Belgium. So, in that sense it is the "past", let's say. I was seeing the "present" with Amanda's case. From the point of view that now her work was being presented, let's say, in Ghent. The last one she did was *The School of the Jaguar* and she did it at KASK. And yours is the future in the sense that you are preparing a work that has not yet been presented, let's say. With #THISISBEAUTY. I don't know if it's already premiered, let's say.

L- Which one?

P- #THISISBEAUTY?

L- Yes. That one already premiered. It would be in the past.

P- Sure, but you still have dates left, right?

L- Yes. In May in Belgium.

P- Sure. Well, I'm definitely going to go to that one.

Laughter

L- May 24.

P- May 24, yes, great. Okay, so, let's see... Let's go then. If you want, you can start by telling me a little, let's say, about your journey and especially how you ended up in Belgium, let's say. And why you chose to stay too.

L- Good. Well, I come from Córdoba. Where I trained at the San Martín Theater in classical dance. And I also danced for a period in the Official Ballet, Official Youth... With the pointe dancers, let's say.

P- Sure.

L- Well, and then I went to Israel... I was in a way, looking for things. Like, other things. Because I felt that there was something more than ballet... And that Graham, for example. That was the only thing there was in Córdoba at that time. Also at the time my aesthetics didn't match that of a prima ballerina... It was like I didn't fit in well. I felt that lack.

Laughter

P- That also happened to me in dance.

Laughter

L- Like it's always missing.... Like technically something wasn't working. And then I went to Israel to visit a family and there was an audition for a school.

P- Your family?

L- Yes. In the hall of the music and dance academy,⁷ which is a university, I auditioned there and they gave me a scholarship. So I stayed. I left with a plan to stay a month and I stayed... I never really came back. Well, in Argentina I spent... I did seminars at the Colón, that kind of thing. But I never worked in Buenos Aires. And well, in Israel I was at that academy for a year and then I was at Batsheva. After the audition I left, I didn't like that school...

P- *Laughs*

L- I have difficulty with schools, with...

P- Of course, with the institutions.

L- With the institutions, yes. Like, I've never finished anything... Institutional let's say. Well, then I was in Batsheva. And then, at one point, it became difficult for me to continue there. Also because of the society.

P- That's what I was going to tell you, because it's very... It's an important cultural shock, let's say, from Argentina to Israel.

⁷ Jerusalem (Rubin) Academy of Music and Dance.

L- Yes, yes... But hey... It's less. The shock is less than here I would say. Because people from the Middle East, we Latins are not so different. Let's say, they are very different, but the proximity is greater than with northern Europe, let's say.

P- Right.

L- But well, let's say that I started my career there, in Batsheva. Also my professional career, because well, I was already part of a company. And well, and later, I also came to Holland at one point, and I had a friend who was also a dancer. And I also stayed, like... I was always... Like I let myself go where life was taking me...

P- Following the opportunities.

L- Yes. But in Holland it was quite difficult for me, like I was there for a year and it was difficult for me. I went to a lot of auditions but no one would hire me. And then I found out about an audition with Alain Platel, and that's where I came and it was actually my first job in Europe. Working with him. And I stayed there, let's say... twenty years.

P- Right.

L- But doing it in parallel. I have like a career eh... I have always looked for things outside of where I am. I have that problem or that virtue, of always being curious about other things. So while I was Alain's performer, later I was his choreographer, for Ballets C de la B. But I also did things on a freelance level. At the same time I always liked the freelance world. Like this happened in the history of the institutional. It is something that is important, but in general let's say, later, my normal career as a choreographer... My career as a choreographer began as if by chance. Let's say, it's not that I decided to be a choreographer, but that it just happened, let's say. Well and then like that over time... I started MonkeyMind Company. I've only had it for a couple of years, but let's say, I already started my career as a choreographer ten years ago. Yes, a little more.

P- And that is your first project that is yours, let's say?

L- Officially it is a company. Like, let's say, established. It kind of has a structure that is small, but it is a structure.

P- Right.

L- Because before I was always with Ballets C de la B, and I was one of the producers, like an executive producer, so it was all with them. I left, so now I have that company. But I'm still freelancing, let's say. I work outside the company a lot. And with my company I produce small things.

P- Good.

L- That is a bit of the journey until today. And well, I always have an eye on Argentina and South America, on an artistic level and at all levels. I am very interested in leaving Europe... I am very interested in leaving Europe. Create outside Europe. South Africa is another place I have... I've already been three times. And like... I produce there too, with people from there. Leaving Europe is very important to me. Because today the artist, let's say, the way of producing and the artistic go together. It's not that "now I do the artistic work for you and the production we'll see..." It's like they go together. That's why I say, you can do a performance in one day or you can do a performance in six months. You can do a performance with a million euros or with ten euros.

P- Yes.

L- I mean to say that the production has an effect on the artist. For me that is a plus, it is not a negative thing. The limitations for me are a plus for us to think. In general my aesthetic is very... I invest a lot in the body. In what is on stage. Live. And less in other things. Like... Let's say that in general, nowadays... Well, I started with that idea of -I'm going to talk about the artistic now- with MonkeyMind... I started to develop it... I started with that idea of, in MonkeyMind, developing my choreography trying to... in reality it was something very casual, which was to speed up the movements. So, when the thought is disconnected from the body somewhere... And it also allows the facial expression and the sound... The speed is from now on... A quality, let's say. And that's how I started, like... I started to be interested in the line of the body and thought. And how they go their separate ways or together. And that is, to this day, my research. It is something that I worked on a lot, focusing on the speed of movement, on what is fast, gestural staccato... Something recognizable, repetition... And now I am very attached to what is text. It's like, nowadays a work that has no words, I can't stand it.

Laughter

L- And well, and that's me... Where I am today, let's say.

P- Where are you today. Because I read, when I was researching your work and I didn't know anything, I read an article by Mauro... What's his name? "Cacciatore," could it be? Yes, about *Vernáculos*.

L- Aha.

P- And at the beginning in that article it said...

L- Ah, about Buenos Aires! Yes Yes Yes.

P- Yes, about Buenos Aires. And that article is called "*Identity as a process*" and he presents it as if identity had always been a central theme in your work. Do you identify with that? Do you think it is like that? Is it still like this...?

L- Yes, I think that I use identity, which is a search. Identity for me is not something... My identity, I don't have a defined identity. It is not something fixed and it is like... the search for identity. It is true that my first works were closely linked to my experience as an Argentinian. Let's say, Latina, Argentinian, Latina. Looking for something in relation to Argentina or what I'm missing from Argentina. And with my Jewish identity, those two poles. Which are still present, but more in the details. Not so outspoken. Like *Patchagonia*, it is a work that I put on in Buenos Aires that toured quite a bit here. That it was called *Patchagonia*, and that it was really... It had to do with culture, with the search for a culture...

P- Look, you anticipated my next question, which was precisely: "What place does the Argentinian or the Latin American have in that search for identity?"

L- And yes, for me it is always present, actually. It's like, departing from language: how I write the texts for the performances. For example, the language difficulty for me is... Yes, a difficulty. A path too. How I write in a language, in English... In general I write in English and then I translate it into Spanish for example.

P- Right.

L- As in *Vernáculos*. But now I am preparing this work for Buenos Aires, I wrote it in Spanish. And it's like the first time... Well, for me a language is very important. It's like the signature of identity too.

P- Yes, it models our thoughts, without a doubt.

L- Totally. And well, for example Ydis, which is a dead language, for me it also has like... a base. Like, ...how? Not rescuing that language, but why did it die? Maybe. Yes, I'm curious. It makes me curious. Also because I did research on Wittgenstein⁸ with a philosopher. I could send you that, those philosophy articles in which she analyzes my work through an eye... How the word and the gesture are related. But identity, yes, is a continuous search. For me, especially... Not especially, but always, let's say it's a door that opens and then you can go on that journey. Identity is not something that I can... I think that people who have not traveled, have not left where they were born, have other types of difficulties than those who left their place at a very young age. As there is a loss and then a gain. But the feeling is always that of wondering. But it is not a conflict. Like, I don't have... I'm not really rooted. I could actually live in a hotel. Like I don't feel... My house is like a... I don't have like a base.

P- Today you have a daughter, was she born here?

L- Yes, my daughter was born in Belgium. And the father is Dutch and French but we separated, and well. We are both here for her.

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein (889-1951) was an Austrian philosopher who investigated the philosophy of language.

P- For her, of course. Of course, because that is also a process, right? Raising someone in a place you were not born in yourself.

L- Sure, I'm raising someone, not in my language, and I don't speak the language she speaks. As a mother tongue she speaks Dutch for example. My Dutch is very bad. But well, no... The otherness on a foreign level, I feel it all the time. I've felt it all my life, I'm used to it actually. It happens to me in Córdoba too.

P- Yeah, because by now, it's like not completely belonging anywhere.

L- Of course. Then it is something I am very used to, being "the other." The different one, the one who is not from there. Now it is no longer something conflictive for me.

P- And in that sense, the works that you have done, more oriented towards the search for your Argentinian, Latin American identity, have you done them for Argentina, or have you done them for here, to present in Europe?

L- No, no, I made them here. And well, I have been to FIBA with those works... Coincidentally, they have invited me, but that is not why I did them. I did a work called *The Jewish connection project*, which is more recent... And well, that's like... It really investigates the problem of Jewishness, from a totally secular point of view. And after that play actually... I wasn't traumatized, but it was quite traumatic because... The perception of the Jew today, with all the political conflicts with Israel, is very complicated. Very. And for example, once, a person told me "We like the work but you can change the name." Because people... Like "*The Jewish connection project*" has a negative side to it. Like, kind of anti-Semitic. But that was the whole joke, the name of the play. I'm not going to change it. And then like, telling me: "No, we already have works with Jewish things in this festival." Like that... And then, things have happened... We performed in Switzerland, I don't know... And we used Wagner's music in that performance, and there were people who were Holocaust survivors. That later they wanted to have a conversation with us. And well, at one point you ask yourself: «Is it that my work...? Is what I do so important that a person in the audience feels, like... Everything that happened to them in their life? Let it come again... Is what I do so important as to make someone who is watching suffer?» And then, with that topic of the Jew, I put it aside now. But now, my path to identity, how it was... It made me think a lot. At the level of what we do and who sees it, and who it can also affect. Like sometimes you say: «Oh, I want to express myself!» but maybe that wasn't the most important thing.

P- Of course, yes.

L- And well, after that work, we stopped doing it because it was already so... Heavy, carrying that, which also made me question myself and well. And well, I think that was the last time I was very hooked on identity. Anyway, if you see my works, you

will always see references to Argentina, to Latin things, always. Jewish things will always be there. Not as a close-up, but you will always see the references. Also because at one point, I got really hooked on the theme of malambo. From folklore, from the rhythmic issue, because my material is very rhythmic. I think it comes from a certain memory of folklore or things that I experienced. And before now, at one point –but that was like twenty years ago– I started studying malambo with tap shoes... That well, there's a lot of that now. And also those references of certain rhythms, which come from folklore, are very present. Well, tango, I did that performance with tango... I always like it... Because identity for me is just that, it is the mixture of everything, of elements.

P- And in some way it also sneaks into your work from the corporal, let's say, from the physical.

L- Totally.

P- From dance.

L- From the dance, yes, the rhythmic issue... Well later, musically... This, the Jewish thing is also always present.

P- Because, for example in Fabián's work, it sneaks in more from the conceptual perspective perhaps.

L- Yes.

P- And not necessarily from the physical, or yes, but you have to make the theoretical connection of where the connection is from the physical. On the other hand, if you take a rhythm that comes from Latin America, the connection is clear. Let's say, it's obvious.

L- Yes. Yes. Mine is more instinctive, not conceptual.

P- It is not conceptual.

L- Because I actually work a lot on emotion. Which is what... How emotion is produced, translated in the body and comes back, let's say. It is circular. And for me, that is also why the word comes to confess something... That it is not possible not to say it, let's say. Because before I worked a lot –but this comes from Alain too– like the urgency of the body. How the body reaches a place where words can no longer express it. And then the body takes action, let's say that is my school with Platel. Now, I made that journey and now I return to the word in reality. Like when the body hides behind. It hides behind the dance so it doesn't have to say the word. So, it's like...

P- Yes, a round trip, let's say. Yeah.

L- Yes. For me now, I work on the urgency of the word that comes from the body. It's always physical actually. The word indeed comes to express and say something that the body can no longer express.

P- Right. And the productions that you have done in Europe for example, that had to do with this type of search, more from the Latin, the Argentinian, how has the reception of those works been? Have you ever noticed an exoticist look of your work? How has it been integrated? Let's say.

L- Well, my latest experience is with tango. That play I did at the Opera, *A Bigger Thing*. Which is all with music by Rovira. That Rovira... It is delusional to do a contemporary dance work with Rovira's music. Yes... Yes and no really, like now people, well... What happens is that, for example, tango, which is very well known. Like, one comes just... What that work did is that people say "tango music" and what you are seeing has nothing to do with that, there is no reference. There is nothing that resembles tango. Like, I heard it... You hear the music differently too. Because there is no reference, physically or dramaturgically, or in anything that has to do with tango. So for me it is grabbing something, a structure, like a tango –that is two people with a certain understanding, where one manipulates the other, but the other also improvises at the same time– where there are very fixed rules. So, grabbing that rule and breaking it, in fact. That's what I did at least with this performance. Beyond the fact that there were performers who were not professionals, and that it was a huge work of sixty people and people with disabilities, well... But for me, the encounter, let's say, I took the theory of tango, in the dance of tango, and broke it, let's say.

P- Sure. And that eh... Well, the other day I went to your workshop, you told me that for some time now you have been working on the topic of inclusion.

L- Yes. Yes, I started in 2016. With Platform K, which is this company that is now quite flourishing, let's say. That they are from here. That started out super small. And they asked me to make a performance for them. I said no, but I told them that I was going to do workshops with them. And I started at one point, I don't know, after a year, I said: "Well, let's do a play."

P- What was the name of the company?

L- It's called Platform K.

P- Ah.

L- Platform K, and the performance is called *Monkey Mind*. And with that performance we toured a lot. But it was a time when there was nothing. It's not like now. It was a time when there were no people with Down syndrome on stage, or there were but from a very naïve point of view. Let's say, social. And this like... It was a performance where I had incredible dancers with Down syndrome, who

were with others who did not have Down syndrome, and well... It was a very very successful work.

P- That caught my attention in your workshop. That, I went without any idea of anything, and what I saw in terms of quality of movement, I said: "This is contemporary dance."

L- Yesterday the show, you don't know what it was, they were amazing.

P- Exactly!

L- Anyway, yes. I thought, because there were people... There was that girl who... Did you see that she was... Who couldn't speak, nothing. And in the five times I saw her, how she progressed, and the show was great. It was very good.

P- I really didn't... I didn't notice any condescending attitude at all, I mean, on the contrary.

L- I work with them like with everyone, actually. I don't work differently.

P- And that's also how those results are produced, let's say.

L- Yes, but it could happen that... Well, like that girl who grabbed a... She got kind of violent at one point. If you are not afraid, actually, and you do not want to be politically correct, I recommend working with your tools and without adapting. But it's the same when I work with amateur people, or... It doesn't matter. With the people who are sitting here. I mean, it is also more than anything the spoken language that you have to simplify, but not the work itself, let's say.

P- Right.

L- And well, and that's where I started with that performance *Monkey Mind*. And from there, I created relationships with those dancers with Down syndrome, who to this day, I bring them along. I took them to South Africa, I take them to other proposals. Because it seems to me that they contribute a lot in the professional circuits, let's say. It's different, like, being a partner with a person with... Like your fantasy is different. Their way of being on stage is different. And I find it very enriching. And let's say that, nowadays, making non-inclusive works doesn't interest me much. Unless, a request... Something very specific. But if not... If it's not inclusive, only professional dancers, I don't think it's something that would interest me. Unless it's me. A duet or something by myself. Something like that. But if not... I lost interest.

P- It's like you're always running away from the hegemonic, let's say.

L- Yes.

P- You run away from what Europe and Eurocentrism are. You run away from what it is... Well, able... Ableism, I don't know how to say it in Spanish.

L- Yes.

Laughter

P- It's like... That happens already... You see that one forgets the words in the mother tongue.

L- Yes! That happens.

P- It's tremendous. But... But of course, it's like you're always working, let's say, on the peripheries, in some way.

L- Yes, I am interested... Yes, the view of the periphery interests me. And that's why I need to leave Europe to create. Because if not, I feel that one is very... Especially in Belgium where there is so much, it is so good and so... but I always feel that you have to see how other people produce. Totally. In Argentina, well, and in South Africa... And well, inclusive work, like now... It is my interest. Yeah.

P- Sure, it's your interest.

L- It is my interest.

P- But... This work that you present, well, that you present again in May, #THISISBEAUTY, that's just you.

L- That's a solo, yeah. I did a solo for my 50th birthday, and now I'm 52. But... Actually, I decided to make a solo when I was going to do a 50th birthday party, and then also because I started to think: "Why aren't there people from my age on stage?" Why are there no women my age on stage? Since the majority of the audience are women between fifty and sixty years old, why are they not represented? Why are they not represented on stage? Why did dance transform...? Dance is not a sport. Let's say, there is the virtuosity, and the technique and the athleticism... But dance for me is not that. So I said: "Well, since no one wants to do it, I'll do it." I also talk about menopause, which is a topic that also concerns me.

P- Yes, but it is also very taboo.

L- That it is very taboo and that I have never seen a dance work that talks about menopause. Then I also said: "Well, I'm going to bring it myself, then." And well, above all that, how to revalue other bodies, let's say. Up to a certain age. Also because in Europe there is a very big focus –especially here in Belgium– on young creators. It seems to me that it is something very positive, that the youth obviously has the word, but it also seems to me that it is very easy. Because

everything is the new... the new. Like... Given that everything is so disposable in our society...

P- Yes, and apart from that the environment makes you feel in some way, it happens to me: everything is up to the age of thirty. I turn thirty in December and I say "That's it, I'm running out of opportunities."

L- Are you turning thirty years old?

P- Yes... And it's like: What, everything is up to here? Aimed at young Europeans, and nothing more than that, then...

L- I see that as a big flaw. A great loss. And I like it a lot... I mean, in the play at the Opera there was a woman who was a dancer, who is now, I don't know... eighty years old. And to see that woman on stage is like a gift. The same with people with disabilities. It's like... You give yourself the luxury. It's not that you act like... It's not that you do anything for them. On the contrary, you have the luxury of looking at them. And well, and that was the story of the solo, let's say.

P- And how has that work been received?

L- That work had very good reviews in Flanders... In newspapers, in De Morgen it had a very good review. Besides that, it is a very difficult work to sell because it is in English, as it is very verbose. And it has a lot of text. It's like it's not dance and it's not theater. So, it's like too much, too much theater...

P & L- Too much theater for dance and too much dance for theater.

P- Sure.

L- And it falls into a place that is performative, let's say, which is what I like nowadays. Yes, it is performative, there are words, there is humor... And it is like it says profound things, but in an ironic way, or also laughing at things. Because humor is another topic... Menopause and humor are topics that interest me. Humor in dance is something that is quite essential to me. It always seemed to me that dance, it seems to me that it takes things so seriously... And that's why I always understood it when the public says: "No, I don't want to go see that because I'm not going to understand anything." Because yes, it's super like... hermetic too.

P- Abstract.

L- Abstract and hermetic. In any case, poetry occupies a great place in my work. The abstraction of poetry. But I like the combination of elements.

P- Yes, in fact, that happened to me: that I chose cases of dance choreographers, and in reality the three cases end up being more towards performance, towards the performative than towards "Dance," let's say...

L- Pure dance, let's say.

P- Let's say, what even is dance today?

L- Yes, it's like today a lot of what is has been erased... Maybe choreographic writing is also very important to me, like choreographic language.

P- *Nods*

L- But all these elements have to be there: the choreographic language, the humor, the performative, the word... Like, they are all ingredients for me. But, it is true that choreographic writing has to be there: How do you say it? With what material? The material has to be specific.

P- And in that sense, does your core training come from classical dance and modern dance?

L- Yes, mostly in classical, and then, my material... Because with Alain, everyone always develops their own material. I developed all my material, let's say, within his works. I started like this. Like, developing my material, and it became what my material is now.

P- Right.

L- But I started, let's say, there. In his performances, I designed a lot of group things. If you see their videos you will recognize my material. But in general, he always asked me: "Do like... phrases." I make many sentences, almost written. And well, that's where I also started my way of writing phrases: very numerical, like, nothing to do with what you see, but it is very written. But yeah, now it's like... Yeah, that's pretty much where I am now. Then, the work itself... It went well for me. It's going well for me and it's going badly for me. Because it's hard for me to sell it, but for very specific places where it works very well, it's fine. Like Julidans, I'm going there in Amsterdam too. But it's true that I can't go to perform in... I don't know, Gentbrugge, I mean: a place where people don't speak English, I can't. It is written in English.

P- Right.

L- I did it in French, but no... It didn't convince me, really. Like... It has no rhythm. The language has no rhythm, and well. No... I would like to do it in Spanish. I'm thinking of a Spanish version. But it's the mother tongue, so maybe...

P- And do you think that the performance is modified when you change the language?

L- Totally. It's like another character. Another language is another person. But... It can say the same thing, but it says it from another side. The language is like...

P- That's interesting.

L- Yes, yes, it's nice. It's interesting.

P- Yes, I just read a text for this thesis, a text that talks about... How translation has helped shape the modern project. In the sense that, when translating, things are also erased.⁹

L- Many, because there are like... Let's say that things... That's why in poetry for example, like in Pizarnik,¹⁰ which is translated very little. Because how do you translate that? It is untranslatable. It is untranslatable, her concepts are... There are no words for... Then obviously there are writers, like Borges¹¹ who, well, obviously, he translated Conrad,¹² what do I know? Great writers but... He was a writer. So he could reformulate something.

P- And well, do you start the solo narrating your origins in Córdoba as well?

L- In this one, #THISISBEAUTY?

P- Yes.

L- Eehm... No, I don't know? I don't remember. I don't know.

P- I mean, I saw the trailer, I haven't seen the performance yet.

L- Ah! Okay.

P- And it began by saying "I was born in..." you are talking about this place in Córdoba...

L- Ah, yes! That trailer. That trailer... Not so much the performance, but it is true that the trailer is like that.

P- The trailer points more to that.

L- Oh yes! Because at the end there is a monologue that says that, it's true. I forgot. Which says: "I was born on this day, I lived on this street... My mother's name was that, my father's name was that..." Yes, yes.

P- Yes, I remembered that.

L- This is how the work actually ends.

P- Ah! So it's not that it starts from there, but that it returns to the origin.

⁹ Rolando Vázquez, 'Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2011): 27-44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.2011.01387.x>.

¹⁰ Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-1972) was an Argentinian poet, essayist and writer.

¹¹ Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) was an Argentinian writer, poet and essayist.

¹² Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) was a British-Polish novelist.

L- No, it ends there. Yes Yes.

P- Well, a bit, I also wanted to ask you, how is the context of...? Because you went to many places, but in the end you stayed somewhat established here in Ghent.

L- Yes.

P- In what would be the field of Flemish dance.

L- Yes.

P- And this idea always arises a little bit that Flanders assumes itself as an international scene, because in fact, almost all the dance creators here in Flanders are not...

L- They are not... There are very few, yes.

P- But at the same time there is always talk of "the Flemish canon," of "the Flemish identity," let's say... How do you experience that contrast? Let's say, where is your place on that map?

L- Well, what happened is that... Well, there is Vandekeybus, Anne De Keersmaeker and Platel, as they are the founders of "the wave." That is, let's say, of Flemish dance. It began, let's say, with them and all their disciples, who are... They are the ones who are there now. It's true that, for many years with Platel, there was never a Belgian dancer on the team, ever. Until there was one, and that is the only one that remained to this day and is there. It's like... The relationship we had with people from here was very little. Then as a creator, as a choreographer, yes, I am in Flanders and the support comes from Flanders. And many of my colleagues went to Wallonia and Brussels. They went to the other side. Many of them. Because here, it seemed very difficult for them to insert themselves into Flemish society. It seems like it is very open, but in reality it is not.

P- I think they think they are more open than they really are.

L- Totally. And it was very... I think that if I were Flemish I would be more famous, if that's the case. I would have many more opportunities for sure. And it was very clear that there came a moment when I realized that they are trying to raise... Let's say, so that the people, the Flemish, have more possibilities. They... Like... Voluntarily. I see that there are theaters that have only Flemish choreographers. There is something like that. I don't know, maybe a couple of years ago, that I started to feel that way. That if I were Flemish I would do better.

P- And has that also limited...? Or has it also guided you to seek to produce in other places? Or was it a parallel search?

L- Yes, it was parallel. It's like I always had support from here, and well, my company is Flemish, and there I am with LaGeste and well, I have plans with

them... Actually, when I was in Ballets C de la B as a choreographer, I was the only foreigner. And it was the first time in twenty years that they had someone like that. And in the meetings, they always spoke Flemish. Although I didn't speak it. Until at one point they started speaking English. And always... It was like something that bothered them a lot: me, that my Flemish is not good enough. But I came to the conclusion that even if my Flemish was good, I will never be accepted in this society. That's how I truly feel. It's not because of the language, it's because it is like that. Because I am not, I will never be part of this society. Neither of this idiosyncrasy nor of this society.

P- And in that sense, when I spoke with Fabián, that feeling, Fabián not only has it from a personal perspective, but also from a dance perspective. As if their training from Quito was never fully assimilated... As if in some way, they wanted to take the color, the exotic, the special thing that they brought, without taking... All the tradition from which that came, let's say.

L- Sure.

P- You, that... I don't know how you experienced it. Because perhaps coming from classical dance, it is a training that already tends more towards the European, let's say. I don't know how you experienced that in... Specifically in dance, let's say.

L- No, more than anything... I remember a lot, like moments... Because I'm blonde, I could be European... I mean, European in color. And when I went to an audition, for example, they told me: "Oh, but are you Argentinian?" "You don't look Argentinian." It's like that comment, that they expected to see, I don't know... a person, an Indian with feathers. And in the end they get me, blonde with green eyes. And what a downer, because we didn't want that, we wanted something else. Then yes, in the... Latinity, in the humor, in the way I move, there is something very Latin. Like... For example, Platel, he uses that a lot. The identity of... If you see his works you see where each one comes from, like... a Maori, an African, a Latina... It is very categorized. An Islander who speaks Hebrew... I mean, it is very clear that the people are not from here. But he uses it in a very clever way too. He doesn't do it at an exotic level, let's say. He does not exoticize. It comes to the emotional aspect of that identity. Like, what is your identity emotionally? And... Like yes and no. Like... It's the same comment: "You don't look Jewish," "You don't look Argentinian," "You don't look..." Or, in Argentina they tell me: "Oh, yes... You already look like a European." But Europe is big, like, «European from where?» Of course, they say: "Ah, that's very European," they mean the European... the German, the Swiss.

P- Sure, like that notion of "first worldish," let's say.

L- Right. "You're very like..." But well, it's something I'm used to also. But it is true, that, especially in the '90s in Holland, it happened to me a lot, that they told me:

"You don't look Argentinian." Like... It's something very violent, because, how? «You were never in Argentina then.»

P- Of course yes. Yes, yes, yes.

L- It's the same when they say, in Argentina they say: "Yes because, something like Switzerland..." As if Switzerland... «But you were never in Switzerland!» So to say "something like Switzerland" is to say, it is because it is something pretty, like Switzerland. But Switzerland actually... It's not pretty, I mean, you understand? It's like... The conceptions of things are distorted.

P- They are prejudices, let's say.

L- Prejudices, yes.

P- Yes. Yes, yes.

L- But that of the Flemish, yes. That is, it is assumed that I will never be... That in the end I will never be able to... Even though I am on the scene as a choreographer and I receive subsidies –not always, but I do– I don't really feel totally welcome.

P- No, and also... "The choreographer Lisi" never appears in the newspaper either. "The Argentinian choreographer Lisi" appears.

L- Yes, that's always the case. And it also always says "Belgium-Argentina", it never says "Belgium".

P- Right. And you, in that sense, do you have European citizenship?

L- I have a Dutch passport.

P- And when you went to Israel, did you already have it?

L- No, no. I got married in Holland.

P- Right. Because that's another topic, let's say... That, many times, the professional career, although it pulls... What ends up defining where you stay, or where to go, has more to do with material opportunities.

L- Of course! Yes, yes. No, when I started working with Alain, well, I was still living in Holland. I kept living in Amsterdam, eight years, and then I came here. And I lived in Brussels and then I moved to Ghent. But throughout all of that, I stayed here because of Alain, actually. Because working with him, that became my life. Those twenty years could have been anywhere, it wasn't really a choice.

P- Of course. Yeah.

L- A conscious choice. It wasn't either when I went to Israel, nor was it when I went to Holland. It wasn't when I came here, nor is it now. I mean, I live here because, for my job and because, well, I have my daughter here. But... It's not a choice. It could be anywhere.

P- Besides... Well, being let's say, "from the interior"...

L- Yes, it's something else.

P- You know that in Argentina everything that is not Buenos Aires is "the interior."

L- Yes, yes yes.

P- Me too, I'm from Rosario. And, there is a bit of that situation that in Argentina, we grow up feeling that life happens somewhere else, you see? Life happens in Europe, life happens...

L- ...in Buenos Aires. Yes Yes.

P- Right, life happens in Buenos Aires. So, if you want to dedicate yourself to the arts...

L- ...you have to get out.

P- You have to get out.

L- But the good fortune of the people from the interior is that, by not passing through Buenos Aires, we come directly to Europe. Do you understand? Because it is different, people from the interior go to Buenos Aires, and well... In Buenos Aires you obviously have opportunities. Many more. But people who don't go to Buenos Aires go to Europe directly, there are many creators who leave... Especially in dance, [...]¹³ Don't mention that.

Laughter

L- I'm not really sure but... I mean.

P- No, but it is a reality, let's say, that... You say: "How much of your career was determined by your artistic/professional search, and how much by saying «I don't want to stay living in Córdoba because...»?"

L- Yes, I actually studied Social Work at university. And that for me, yes, obviously has to do with inclusive work.

P- Sure.

L- It was already... Something that interested me. And then, outside of the social sphere of the province of Córdoba, what, I am going to retire at 65 doing pointe? I

¹³ One comment was omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.

mean... Outside of that in Córdoba there was nothing. And now there are few things about freelance life but, let's say, not much.

P- Sure. Yes. And well, and in that sense, what you said before: "I'm going to put on stage an older artist," who turns fifty, let's say. Do you feel that there is a future here for a dancer/choreographer over fifty, or do you have to create that future for yourself?

L- I think I have to create it. I mean, there are no opportunities for people... For dancers over thirty, there are no opportunities. For choreographers, in mid-career –like me– few. Very few. Only if you already have it, you're very famous, okay, that's something else. But if you are like me in the middle, if you are known but you are not Alain Platel, like... few. Like... You have to create them yourself. And make the programmers understand, for example with this solo, why this solo is important: because you have a theater full of women my age. Why don't you have a performance with women my age?

P- Of course. Yes, that's true.

L- It seems like that to me. Now you not only have to sell them the performance, make the performance, sell them the performance, and give them a context so that they understand why that performance exists. That's not because I'm in a hurry to talk about myself as a fifty-year-old, but because it's important that there are fifty-year-old women in the programming! I mean...

P- Of course. Yes, totally. Yes, that need to see...

L- It is relevant.

P- ...other bodies on scene. It doesn't matter, let's say, not only from disability, from queerness... But this too.

L- Or queer, well, there are a lot of those... But that's because now, European funds are destined for that, for inclusion... Inclusive works, for example, about disability and queer.

P- Sure.

L- And well, but... It's okay, I mean. There in this performance that I am going to do in Buenos Aires, I have that. It is a large work with many dancers on stage doing virtuoso or hip hop things, queer, inclusive... of course. And then, the people who are not even... It's just that, here they are like... Okay, this... This checkbox...

P- That's it, yes.

L- This checkbox is checked... And well, if that checkbox has already been checked, they won't put you in. And yes, maybe there is a checkbox missing from your programming, so it's like...

P- Yes, in reality it is also like the illusion of inclusivity. But in reality, if the interest were that it would not matter that there is already another Jewish work, that there is another Latin work, let's say...

L- Obviously. Apart from that, for example, with that work, with *MonkeyMind*, everyone wanted it. Like, now I'm going to do a performance with people from South Africa, with South Africans with disabilities... Disability, the same here, a mix. Everyone wants that performance. Do you understand? Because they are disabled black people. You have two...

P- Yes, you check two boxes in one. Oh yes, it's tremendous.

L- And I say: "No, I don't want to sell that work. I want them to buy my solo." Do you understand? But everyone wants that performance, but I'm not going to sell that performance. Because that's easy to sell, I don't want to sell that. Do you understand? Like everyone wants that, because that's well, black... And they're all black with all that on top of them. Let's say...

P- Yes, yes. No, and let's also say, if you fall into that logic, too, how much integrity is left in your own work? Let's say...

L- Obviously. Obvious, obviously. Why would you want something like that? No... I'm quite... rebellious, in a way. Like... And also because I am, I am fifty years old and I already know well how the scene moves. It's not... I'm not offended, I don't care, I don't really care. I care and I don't care. But yes, integrity matters to me. It's one of the few things I have left. Integrity at work.

P- Do you have to go?

L- No, no... In around twenty minutes.

P- Perfect, because I have only one question left.

L- Do you have anything else?

P- No, simply asking if you were familiar with the work of other people of Latin American origin who are also working in Belgium.

L- Yes, yes yes.

P- And you, do you feel that there is some Latin heritage? Anything in common that you see? Or not?

L- And... Well, I don't know. There was Ayelén –I'm talking to you about people of my generation– Ayelén... She has a side that it may have something there, but not in what she is doing today.

P- What is the last name?

L- Ayelén Parolín.

P- Ah, Ayelén...

L- Ayelén Parolín... She has more, her works, when she was on stage, for example, there, yes, she has humoristic things, which yes, for me they have to do with a Latin identity. With not taking yourself so seriously, that topic for example. I think her latest work is called "*Simple*." There is also a lot of humor there. Not in the material itself, no. But in terms of humor, for example, it is something that I do see that Latinas have more like... Less difficulty laughing at themselves, to put it more easily. Ayelén... Besides that, who else? And I don't know, like, Amanda Piña and all that is more conceptual. From the conceptual, more political side, let's say. It's not so much what I do.

P- Right.

L- It's not so much what I focus on. With that... with that vibe, less so. But, I don't know who else. If you name me people I can...

P- No, no. It's a bit... What I also noticed when I started researching this is that there isn't much knowledge, precisely. I mean, even when I raised this topic it was the same: "How interesting, how good," but not even my teachers knew who these Latin American choreographers are, where they are working... I mean, I had to google it in some way.

L- Right.

P- And a little bit in the interviews I'm noticing the same thing. Which is a question of lack of information circulating... Which, I am a little happy to say: "Well, the search is relevant."

L- Yes, yes yes.

P- No, that's just it. I have another question that is totally practical.

L- Aha.

P- Is your last name written with an accent or not? Is it "Estarás"?

L- Well, actually yes. But I removed the accent, because nobody puts it and... it's a mess.

P- Right.

L- So sometimes I leave it and sometimes I don't... I don't know, whatever you want really.

P- But it is in the last one, it is "Estarás."

L- Estarás, like the verb.¹⁴ It's with an accent, but here... Generally they put it backwards, so I took it out.

P- Of course, yes, I imagined that it would have something to do with that, but it caught my attention that sometimes I found you with an accent and sometimes not.

L- Yes, I also changed the "Lisi." It was with "z" and I changed it to an "s," because otherwise the French call me "Lizi" and I don't like it.

P- Ah! Oh really?

L- And I didn't like it and I changed it, and now I'm "Lisi" and "Estaras", that's it. Yes, I simplified the name, because otherwise...

P- *Laughs* That is so hardcore. From a conceptual point of view it is very strong. To...

L- ...to be able to survive. Otherwise they would call me "Lizi," which was an unbearable thing, and I changed it. And I put "s."

P- Of course, oh wow!

L- And "Estarás" the same, I removed the accent because they put it backwards.

P- Wow. No, for me... I had no more questions. The talk was super enriching. And I would love to see you in May.

L- In May, let's do it, remind me and I'll leave you a ticket.

P- Ah well, but that doesn't matter.

L- That's right, the theater is called Corso.

P- Good, perfect.

L- Yes, it is a nice theater. And it's a double bill with another performance, a young girl. I think what she does is cool. Yes, with pleasure, come. And then eh... What else is there now? No, I have the thing in Buenos Aires... And then... In June I have the Antwerp Conservatory there, I'm going to do a performance there too. With students, and also inclusive, with people with disabilities.

P- And what you are doing in Buenos Aires, is it a completely different thing?

L- It's a solo. Another.

P- It's another solo, okay.

¹⁴ "Estarás" as in the future tense of the verb "estar" (to be) in Spanish. "Estarás" means "You will be" in the singular second person.

L- But specific for this place, for Fundación Cazadores. It is a cycle of three choreographers and well, I am one of the choreographers. Yes, a short performance and yes, I have to finish it.

P- Good.

L- But it is a small place, for forty people, very intimate.

P- Very intimate let's say, of course.

L- Yes, yes yes.

P- Sure, that's good.

L- It's like one of the things I do to have fun in my life.

Laughter

P- Well, very good Lisi. I don't know if there is anything you want to add? That's it for me.

L- No, and then what are you going to do with this material?

P- Well, what am I going to do with this material? Let's say, the idea is that the Bachelor's thesis is the kickoff for the Master's thesis, in which we can cover a little more. Because it is a very broad topic, very little researched, and I would like to continue delving into it. Let's say, the main topic of the thesis is: What is the role of these artists of Latin American origin in the dance field here?

L- The topic is very good.

P- The topic is very good, and I notice that there is a lot to cover. So in this first thesis the idea is to do a little, a screenshot. Understand these specific cases a little and what connections they have or what differences they have. But in thirty pages... You can't do miracles either, let's say. It's a bit... of a start. And perhaps also use it as a basis for the Master's thesis to delve a little deeper.

L- And now what do you have to do? How do you have to...?

P- Sure, well. The idea is to deliver it in June, which is, now. I mean, there's no time left until June. And we'll see if I arrive, the idea is to arrive.

L- Yes!

P- Yes. But hey, that's precisely why I wanted to have the interview. Because if I trusted to see your work in May, you see, from May to June there is little time to...

L- Yes.

P- ...to analyze. That is why I wanted the focus of this case to be more on the word.

L- Well, if you want the video, the video is good, I say. Well, it's very... Like...

P- Great. Yes of course!

L- What you see, like it is very well done and it's better, is very clear.

P- Perfect. I didn't know it was recorded. I can ask you that, and you had also told me about some texts that talk about your work.

L- Yes, about Wittgenstein, by Carla Carmona.¹⁵

P- Perfect. Perfect. Yes, those two things would be super useful.

L- Oh yes, yes, yes. And I have everything around my inclusive work too.

P- Great.

L- I made an article for this... Send me an email or a message so I remember.

P- So you remember, perfect.

¹⁵ Carla Carmona, "Champagne!-champagne!!, or 'A bigger thing!'" Sara Vanderieck, 2022, <https://www.saravanderieck.be/?p=3841&lang=en>.

Annex II. Interviews in Spanish (original):

II.I. Fabián Barba (coréografe e investigador), entrevistado por Paulina Rosa (estudiante de la Universidad de Gante), Febrero 2023:

Paulina- Bueno, muchas gracias por acceder primero que nada a esta entrevista.

Fabián- Sí. ¿Y tú estás estudiando para una licenciatura allá?

P- Bueno, en realidad mi trayectoria es un poco... Yo en Argentina ya era Licenciada y Profesora en Bellas Artes y vine a Gante a hacer una Maestría en Historia del Arte, Musicología y Estudios Teatrales. Lo que estoy haciendo ahora no es todavía la Maestría, es una especie de programa preparatorio. Son todas las materias del Bachelor que se considera que yo no tuve en mi carrera original en Argentina. Así que son materias de primer año, segundo, tercero del Bachelor... Y una nueva tesis. *Risa* No queda otra que escribir una nueva tesis.

F- Sí... *Risa* ¿Y cuántas páginas te piden? o ¿Cuál es la extensión de la tesis?

P- Bueno nada, o sea, en comparación a lo que es en la universidad argentina a mí me parece un trabajo práctico... Porque las tesis de Bachelor aquí son 30 páginas. Que en cierto sentido también es más complejo, porque hay que saber resumir, hay que acotar y poder abordar un tema que es amplio en pocas páginas. Y en ese sentido, el proyecto de tesis tiene que ver justamente con creadoras, creadores de danza de origen latinoamericano que estén trabajando principalmente en Bélgica, en Bruselas y en la zona de Flandes. No me ocupo mucho de la zona de Valonia porque tengo menos información y porque creo que también hay menos producciones culturales en general. Y un poco la pregunta de origen de esta investigación era "Cuál es el rol de estos creadores de origen latinoamericano en lo que llamamos 'el canon flamenco' (digamos) de la danza?". Esa era la pregunta original de investigación que obviamente luego con las

diferentes sesiones de feedback se fue modificando un poco. Se fueron abriendo preguntas laterales. A mí me interesaba saber si por ejemplo hay ciertos rasgos de una herencia latinoamericana en común en el trabajo de diferentes creadores. Me interesaba esta idea de si existe una dinámica de poder digamos, entre estas naciones... Una nación que solía ser colonizadora y estas naciones que solían ser colonizadas a pesar de que el vínculo no sea directo, porque obviamente Bélgica no colonizó en América pero aún así me imagino que esa dinámicas de poder pueden llegar a darse de todos modos.

F- *Asiente*

P- Después leí textos tuyos, "*The local prejudice of contemporary dance*",¹⁶ leí "*Research into corporeality*"¹⁷ e "*Impure transmissions*".¹⁸ Y en esos textos hablaste mucho sobre eso, digamos.

F- Total, ¡claro!

P- Y bueno, de alguna manera son textos que a mí me sirven mucho porque también me ayudan a entender y contextualizar mi propia experiencia como estudiante internacional. Pero es también un poco desafiante porque hay veces que esa dinámica post-colonial se siente tan abrumadora, tan omnipresente que un poco te desanima también de cierta manera.

F- Sí.

P- A mí me me interesaba mucho tener esta charla con vos. Creo sos una persona súper interesante basado en esos textos. Pero también, lo hablaba ayer con mi mejor amigo, decía: "¿Cómo abordar esto desde un enfoque académico serio y no diciendo «¡Decime que hay luz al final del túnel, que hay esperanza!»" digamos, un poco es esa búsqueda también. *Risa*

F- *Risa* Claro, claro. No, me parece muy lindo. O sea, la pregunta me parece muy relevante, muy pertinente. Es algo que también yo lo había pensado un poquito, así que entonces chévere que te estás lanzando.

P- Yo lo pienso un poco como un primer paso y tal vez en la tesis de Maestría hacerlo un poco más en profundidad. Porque obviamente para una tesis de estas circunstancias hay que reducir mucho. Yo elegí tres casos principales que son bueno, el tuyo, el de Amanda Piña y el de Lisi Estarás. ¿No sé si estás familiarizado con el trabajo de ellas...?

¹⁶ Fabián Barba, 'The Local Prejudice of Contemporary Dance', *Documenta* 34.2 (2016): 46-63; <https://doi.org/10.21825/doc.v34i2.16385>.

¹⁷ Fabián Barba, 'Research into Corporeality', *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 54 Issue 1 (2022): 82, <https://doi.org/10.5406/danceresearchj.43.1.0083>.

¹⁸ Fabián Barba. 'Impure Transmissions: Traditions of Modern Dance Across Historical and Geographical Boundaries', in *Transmissions in Dance: Contemporary Staging Practices*, edited by Lesley Main. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

F- Con Amanda sí.

P- Bien.

F- ¿Y cuál era la tercera persona?

P- Lisi Estarás. Es un poco más grande. Trabaja en, va, ha trabajado mucho en Ballets C de la B aquí en Gante. Y luego hizo su propia compañía que se llama Monkey Mind. Ella es también argentina como yo.

F- Ah, ¡chévere!

P- Y con ella también tengo pensado hablar probablemente en esta semana. Pero bueno, esta es la primera entrevista que hago.

F- Chévere, chévere.

P- Así que bueno, tengo esos tres casos. Y en las diferentes sesiones de feedback con mi directora –que como te mencioné es Annelies Van Assche– y con otra docente que se llama Leonie Persyn, no sé si la conoces...

F- No... Tal vez de cara.

P- Tal vez de cara.

F- Sí porque con nombres...

Risas

P- Así fue tomando forma el proyecto de investigación. Se definieron esos tres casos de estudio. Y yo de alguna manera intenté armar una estructura de pasado presente y futuro en la que analizada haciendo foco por ejemplo: "Pasado", ¿a qué me refiero con "pasado"? A la educación. Al momento de formación de... de una persona que termina produciendo danza en Flandes. El presente: ¿qué producciones se están haciendo en este momento? y el futuro, ¿cuáles son los proyectos digamos que vienen? Con eso hice un foco en cada artista. Enfocándome en tu caso en ese primer pasado de la formación, justamente porque tus textos hablan mucho sobre eso. Sobre ese contraste entre lo que fue formarte en Ecuador y luego formarte en Bruselas. Pero también obviamente la idea es aplicar esa estructura del pasado, presente y futuro un poco también a cada artista individualmente. Digamos, ¿cuál es tu presente?, ¿cuál es tu futuro en la danza en Bélgica? Así que un poco tal vez lo primero sería preguntarte justamente por esa trayectoria. Yo ya estoy familiarizada un poco con lo que planteas en esos textos, pero no sé qué pasó después. Lo último que mencionás es tu proyecto del 2009, me parece *A Marie Wigman Dance Evening*. ¿Y después? Sé que estudiaste en P.A.R.T.S. y luego en WP Zimmer, pero no sé digamos cómo continuó tu carrera a partir de ese momento.

F- Sí. Y tal vez igual te puedo contar un poquito de algunas cosas que para mí son importantes desde esa primera migración a Bélgica, de las que no he escrito, ¿ya? Y una de esas es que para mí es muy importante recalcar que cuando yo ya llegué a Bélgica –yo no lo sabía– yo no me consideraba un bailarín profesional, pero ya era un bailarín profesional. Y entonces llegar a Bélgica... Bueno primero hay una cosa ahí: que es que cuando yo voy a hacer las audiciones... Sí, al final yo estaba muy feliz de haber sido aceptado a la audición. Una audición que no fue fácil. Pero también me doy cuenta después de algo que alguien me hizo notar cuando yo pasé la audición, que me dijo: “Ah, pero tu entrenamiento en Ecuador era muy bueno entonces.” Me hizo reconocer que yo había recibido algo de Ecuador que era de mucho valor. Y que era eso que era de mucho valor lo que permitió que yo ingrese a P.A.R.T.S. finalmente. Y ese algo que tenía mucho valor en Quito nunca fue realmente reconocido. E incluso yo no lo reconocí en ciertos momentos. Pero también sucede ahí una cosa –que es lo que yo pienso ya– y es, cuando llegamos a la audición en Bruselas era un poco difícil, porque no es que buscaban gente con mucha técnica. O sea, yo me acuerdo que tenía compañeros que no fueron educados como en técnicas tradicionales de la danza y que aún así fueron aceptados en la escuela. Y una de las cosas que la escuela decía era que buscaban gente que tenga como una personalidad artística o una particularidad. Como algo más allá de la técnica que hiciera a esa persona una presencia fuerte en el escenario, que no pudiese ser replicada fácilmente por otras personas. Más o menos eso es lo que yo entiendo buscaban en la audición. Yo me doy cuenta que ese pequeño algo, como esa cosa especial o ese color particular que tal vez vieron en mí, era algo que venía dado por mi formación de danza en Ecuador. Y de cierta manera eso fue lo que me ayudó a entrar a la escuela. Pero es como si quisieran ese... Ese pequeño matiz, ese pequeño color, sin tomar todo el conocimiento, la técnica y la tradición de la que yo venía y que había creado ese color. Esa particularidad. Entonces sí, yo tenía esa particularidad como muchos de mis compañeros, todos fuimos educados dentro del mismo canon eurocentrado. Muy basado en las técnicas y en la producción de Estados Unidos y de Europa. Entonces ahí hay primero una cuestión como de un filtro. Como una membrana que deja pasar ciertas cosas, esta como particularidad que es interesante de ver, pero que deja fuera toda una tradición de muchas décadas. Un conocimiento exactamente de muchas décadas, como que eso no entra. Entonces para mí el proceso de estudiar en P.A.R.T.S. fue un proceso de formar parte de una cultura, de otra cultura dancística. Y eso es lo que yo hablo y he hablado en esos textos.

P- ¿Y crees que a la hora de evaluar esa cualidad un poco sin nombre había una cierta mirada exoticista también?

F- Es difícil decir... es difícil decir para mí. En relación a la escuela y en relación a la audición es difícil. Pero después cuando ya hice *A Marie Wigman Dance Evening* en el 2009 sí había una cuestión exoticista. Y la cuestión exoticista lo que hacía era esconder una ignorancia. Y la ignorancia está dada por el hecho de que para

mucha gente fue un poco difícil de dar sentido al hecho de que una persona que venía de Ecuador se interesara en las danzas de Mary Wigman. Entonces yo me acuerdo que anunciaban como “un joven bailarín ecuatoriano”. Y “un joven bailarín ecuatoriano” tenía como un elemento sorpresa. Como un elemento de que hay algo medio atractivo pero que no le podías dar sentido. Y sin nunca llegar a preguntarse qué significa que una persona de Ecuador esté haciendo las danzas de Mary Wigman. ¿Qué hay ahí? Entonces quedaba muy a la superficie, como un dato curioso. Y en el rato que mi providencia de Ecuador se mantenía con un dato curioso, que valía la pena mencionar pero no indagar, sí había una cuestión exotificante. Porque nunca nadie se preocupó de indagar: ¿Cuál era la motivación? ¿Cuál era la razón profunda? Esa es la razón por la que escribí el texto. Entonces ahí miro esa cuestión exotificante. Pero en P.A.R.T.S. no la sentí. Tal vez sea yo que no la vio, pero no la sentí de forma muy fuerte, no.

P- En ese sentido tal vez volver un poquito más atrás y preguntarte justamente: ¿Por qué elegiste Bélgica? ¿Y por qué elegiste P.A.R.T.S.? ¿Fue una cuestión de...?

F- *Asiente*

P- Y ¿por qué quedarte también, no?

F- Sí bueno, ¿no sé si conoces a Susana Tambutti?

P- No.

F- Ella bueno, es una bailarina. También una historiadora de la danza de Buenos Aires, de Argentina. Bueno ella no es de Buenos Aires pero trabaja en Buenos Aires. Y una vez ella vino a dar un taller en Ecuador y para entonces yo ya tenía esa intención de salir a estudiar afuera. Yo pensaba Estados Unidos -como super eurocentrado- y ahí Susana Tambutti me dijo “Ay, esta escuela en Bruselas...” Entonces yo puse en Google: “P.A.R.T.S.” y claro, la página web me encantó. Dije: “Yo quiero ir”. Fui. Yo ni siquiera sabía hasta ese momento que Bélgica existía. No sabía qué idioma hablaban en Bélgica. Yo pensaba: “Deben hablar Belga”.

Risas

F- Y llegué. Y sí, la audición me cautivó fuerte. Fueron cinco días de audición en muchos talleres muy lindos. Y dije: “Esa es la escuela que quiero”. Después fui a una escuela a hacer una audición en Rotterdam, pero yo ya me di cuenta que era P.A.R.T.S. Sabía lo que me cautivó en la audición. Yo pensaba estar ahí solo un año, pero después... Eh, hay un texto que te voy a mandar como manuscrito pero va a ser publicado en abril, en el que hablo un poco de esa seducción. De que en ese año que yo llego a Bruselas hay una seducción que me atrapa. Y la seducción es intentar, pues esa posibilidad de formar parte del canon. Y eso es lo que me atrapó y lo que me hizo quedar los cuatro años finalmente.

P- Y en ese sentido eh, una de las sugerencias que me hicieron durante estas sesiones de feedback fue la cuestión de examinar los programas educativos de estas instituciones en las que se formaron estos artistas latinoamericanos aquí en Bélgica. Y en ese sentido, vos ingresaste a P.A.R.T.S. en el 2004 si no me equivoco...

F- *Asiente*

P- Y, ¿es posible acceder a los planes de estudio de la escuela en ese momento? De la formación que vos recibiste en ese momento.

F- Sí. No era muy difícil, o sea tenían así por ejemplo clases de técnica y qué profesores habían estado... Que había clases de composición, que había clases de teatro, que había análisis musical... O sea, así te daban así. Como un overview no muy específico. Y de eso muchas cosas recibimos. Había una que no. Creo que cuando yo revisé la página web decían que daban clases de Aikido por ejemplo, una cosa así. De Yoga y de Aikido, y cuando yo llegué solo teníamos Yoga no teníamos Aikido. Pero es como es la única cosa que yo me acuerdo que...

P- ...que no coincidía.

F- Sino el resto estaba más o menos explicado, sí.

P- Bien.

F- Sí. Y claro también muy claramente me acuerdo que dijeron: "Hay tres pilares en la escuela". No, "hay cuatro pilares: Trisha Brown, Forsythe, Pina Bausch y Rosas". Entonces de entrada tú sabías a dónde ibas. Y claro, obviamente son cuatro pilares de la historia de la danza occidental, ¿no?

P- Sí, sin duda. Bien. Entonces volviendo a la primera pregunta: Tuviste esta experiencia de cuatro años de formación en la escuela. Luego tuviste esta experiencia de frustración de alguna manera con esta formación previa que no estaba siendo del todo reconocida o valorada. Desarrollaste tu proceso, tu proyecto de graduación, ¿verdad? Y luego los textos que explican todo ese proceso. ¿Y qué pasó luego? ¿Qué ocurrió después con eso?

F- Entonces después de eso... Porque mientras yo estaba en la escuela tenía una visa de estudiante. Salgo de la escuela y yo quería seguir viviendo en Bélgica y trabajando en Bélgica. Entonces esos primeros años la cuestión más difícil era conseguir un permiso de residencia. Y no quería casarme o hacer eso, conseguir una visa de esa manera. Entonces quería conseguir una visa de trabajo. Para conseguir una visa de trabajo tenía que conseguir trabajo. Y como un bailarín independiente eso es muy difícil. Entonces bueno, durante los primeros años estuve muy enfocada en... En sí, en conseguir trabajo y en conseguir sueldos, ¿cachas? Entonces eso como que influyó mucho también lo que estaba haciendo. E influyó también en mi trabajo artístico de una forma que no me gustó. Añadía

mucho estrés al trabajo artístico. Entonces después de *Wigman* –que también fue una suerte porque nadie se lo esperaba y yo tampoco, fue bastante bien recibida– entonces logré girar esa obra mucho y girar solo económicamente es muy beneficioso. Entonces gracias a eso yo pude tener los permisos de trabajo que necesitaba. Pude conseguir los contratos de trabajo. También porque a la par empecé a trabajar con Zoo, que es una compañía de improvisación basada en Bélgica, en Bruselas. Y Zoo también es una parte muy importante de mi trayectoria artística como bailarín. Y entonces estaba allí como bueno con Zoo y con *Wigman*, un poco lo que estaba logrando era solucionar esa cuestión de los permisos de trabajo. Y después de un momento tenía que hacer una nueva obra. Un poco porque ya habían pasado dos años desde que hice *Wigman* y de cierta manera si quieres mantenerte fresco y...

P- ...relevante...

F- ...y visible, ajá, dos años es un tiempo considerable para hacer una nueva creación. Y también porque eso me ayudaba, me permitía tener subsidios y finalmente es una fuente de trabajo. Me lancé a hacer otra creación que se llama *A Personal and Collective History*. Los temas de esa investigación eran muy similares a los de *Wigman*, pero había mucha presión. Y sentí mucha presión. Por un lado porque *Wigman* había llamado mucho la atención y por otro lado porque estas preguntas aunque eran importantes para mí, todavía no encontraba una forma de articularlas y sobre todo no articularlas coreográficamente. Hablarlas, escribirlas me parecía más fácil que articularlas coreográficamente. Pero me puse yo mismo la presión –pero también una presión que estaba ahí en el contexto– para hacer una nueva obra. Que estuvo bien como un proceso de aprendizaje, pero que no... Para mí no fue una obra a la que me gusta volver mucho. Fue muy compleja, me di cuenta que algunas de las presuposiciones de esa obra no sostenían bien. Y también fue una obra que hice un poco bajo presión, entonces no es una obra me gusta considerar... Si pudiese olvidarme de ella, me olvidaría. Y eso habrá sido en el 2011, el 2012. Después, ya para el 2014, creo que ya había solucionado un poco mis permisos de residencia. Entonces estaba un poco más relajado en ese sentido. Y ahí hice una creación con un amigo de Ecuador que se llama *Cultivo de Babosas* o *Slugs' Garden*. Que es una instalación performance. Y ese fue un trabajo muy bonito. Porque tenía una de las cosas... También el punto de partida en ese trabajo con Esteban que es mi amigo, Esteban Donoso, empezamos un poco porque queríamos investigar la historia de la danza en Ecuador. La memoria de la danza en Ecuador, ¿ya? Hicimos un trabajo que había sido hecho en los noventa, de un señor que se llama Paco Salvador, que ha investigado mucho danzas andinas y que quería... Que estaba haciendo un ballet Etno-contemporáneo. Entonces tomaba todo lo que él ya había aprendido sobre las danzas andinas y las llevaba al escenario... Al escenario de un teatro. Entonces queríamos acercarnos un poco a eso. Pero las preguntas que eso nos despertó en relación a nosotres como personas mestizas de la capital... Nuestra relación

compleja con los Andes. Eso ya era un universo muy difícil. Pero después considerando que íbamos a hacer la creación en Europa y que eso era una obra que iba a girar en Europa se volvió mucho más difícil. De no sacrificar la cultura andina, de no apropiarla, de no venderla para nuestro provecho... Entonces se volvieron preguntas muy muy difíciles. Y un momento dijimos: "Cerramos los ojos e intentamos acercarnos". Y un poco la idea de cerrar los ojos era cerrar esa cuestión intelectual, racional, para intentar acercarnos de una forma más sensible. A esa danza de Paco Salvador. Como... Cómo nos afectaba corporalmente. Y ahí ya nos llevó a otro lugar. Era la práctica del cultivo de babosas, que era una cuestión de cerrar los ojos, acostarse en el suelo y empezar a topar todo lo que está alrededor incluyéndote a ti misma para... Y la idea era, en esa relación táctil con el mundo, no nombrar, no intentar reconocer o no intentar visualizar lo que topabas. Pero concéntrate en las sensaciones de los estímulos, en las texturas, las temperaturas, las densidades, los pesos, etcétera. Entonces esa es como la base para hacer el cultivo de babosas. La práctica del cultivo de babosas. Pero en eso del cultivo de babosas hay una cuestión muy sensorial, muy sensual. Que para mí, me llevaba mucho a las clases que había hecho con Klever, con Klever Viera en Ecuador. Entonces en el cultivo de babosas había toda esta cuestión corpórea, técnica. En relación a la concentración que necesitas, la percepción... Dejarte llevar por las sensaciones. Era un trabajo que yo había hecho mucho con Klever. Entonces en *Cultivo de Babosas* todo ese universo Klever está allí muy presente. Pero se combina con muchas de las herramientas de improvisación que yo había aprendido a trabajar con Zoo. Entonces *Cultivo de Babosas* de cierta manera junta esos dos universos: el de la improvisación con Zoo y el de lo sensorial-sensual de Klever. Y para mí eso, ahí, esos dos universos como que empiezan a coexistir dentro de mi trabajo. Y para mí eso fue muy importante, pero por ejemplo eso es algo que yo nunca lo hablé en *Cultivo de Babosas*. En *Cultivo de Babosas* yo no quería hablar, yo quería que... Que la obra estuviese allí y que la gente se relacionase corporalmente con la obra y parar de contar. Entonces también por eso es que no hay casi nada escrito sobre esa obra de mi parte. Después... ¿O tienes alguna pregunta allí?

P- No, estaba pensando en esta cuestión eh, por ejemplo, ayer vi *West Side Story*, el musical nuevo, la versión de Spielberg. Los protagonistas son puertorriqueños pero la actriz creo que es de origen colombiano y pensaba como para Hollywood todo lo latinoamericano es más o menos lo mismo... Y para nosotros también, de alguna manera. Yo digo, por ejemplo: "Soy argentina", en este momento tengo puesto un suéter hecho en el norte de Argentina... Rosario al centro del país no tiene nada que ver con el norte de Argentina. O como vos decís, Ecuador, la capital, no necesariamente tiene nada que ver con el mundo andino. Entonces, es un dilema existencial muy latino eso del: "¿Dónde pertenezco? ¿Cuál es mi identidad? ¿Cuáles son los límites de esa identidad?" De alguna manera. Porque también creo que en su mayoría reconocemos una cierta identidad

latinoamericana en común, pero al mismo tiempo hay diferencias regionales que son muy específicas y que generan esas dudas como la que se plantearon tu compañero y vos digamos, de: "¿Tenemos derecho a bailar estas danzas? ¿De qué manera? ¿Cómo de alguna manera rendirle respeto u homenaje a los orígenes de estos movimientos?" Creo que es una de las cosas más interesantes de esta investigación. Cómo cada persona se acerca a esos problemas existenciales digamos de lo latinoamericano.

F- Claro. Claro, sí. Y es también porque tú empezaste hablando de las relaciones coloniales entre Europa y Latinoamérica que están ahí. Pero también dentro de Latinoamérica, dentro de cada región, dentro de cada ciudad, se reproducen esas relaciones coloniales. Y al rato que empezamos a darnos cuenta de la densidad de esas relaciones coloniales, cómo nos movemos a través de esta realidad. Es una pregunta importante.

Risas

P- Sí. Me estabas contando entonces, luego de este proyecto, cómo continuó tu trayectoria.

F- Sí. Bueno, entonces fue el 2014. Y también en esa época cuando yo hice el trabajo con Esteban, también empecé a hacer un trabajo con Mark Franko. Que es el historiador de danza que vive en Estados Unidos. Y él tenía un solo que había también creado para sí mismo no me acuerdo en qué época, habrá sido en los 80, debería revisar, ya. A finales de los 80. Y él me propuso transmitirme ese solo. Entonces hicimos una versión en la que los dos bailábamos el solo y hablábamos un poco sobre el proceso de transmisión. Y ahí de nuevo para mí muy importante era que, incluso si yo estaba tomando el solo de Mark Franko, lo que le daba cuerpo para mí a ese solo no era el universo de Mark, sino que era el universo de danza de Quito. Para mí era todo lo que había aprendido, la corporalidad con Klever me permitía dar cuerpo a la danza del Mark. Y era de una forma similar que me había permitido dar cuerpo a las danzas de Wigman. Entonces también hicimos eso en 2014, y sí, te lo cuento solamente porque resuena así un poco, no es una obra que la presentamos mucho. Y bueno, después con *Slugs'* también continuamos trabajando un poco más, creo que la presentamos en el 2016, ya como parte del Kunstenfestivaldesarts, que fue chévere. Pero al mismo tiempo, esa fue la última vez que hice algo coreográfico o algo escénico. Desde entonces me he dedicado mucho más como a intentar escribir sobre estas experiencias, de estas reflexiones. Y muy importante, empecé a dar clases en escuelas de danza. Pero las clases que doy no son tanto relacionadas con técnica o con composición, pero más nos juntamos a hablar. Nos juntamos a hablar sobre... Para mí es importante... Lo que intento hablar con los estudiantes es que entendamos la producción histórica de esas construcciones de raza, género, clase... Y cómo están relacionadas. Y también un poco hablar sobre la modernidad-colonialidad. Es decir, la modernidad vista también desde su lado más oculto. Que tiene que ver

con cómo la génesis de la modernidad está relacionada al proyecto de colonización de las Américas. Y cómo eso ya desde hace 500 años une las historias de Europa y de América. Son separadas pero son historias que se entretajeron. Y son cosas que hablo con los estudiantes, un poco también para que sepamos en qué mundo estamos viviendo y cómo la danza que hacemos no está dissociada de esa historia y de esa realidad. Para ver cómo como bailarines podemos afrontar la historia, intentar interpelarla. Pero por ejemplo eso para mí ya pasa más por el uso de la palabra que por la danza, por la creación artística.

P- Ahí me llegó la notificación de que en unos 8 minutos se va a cortar esta llamada, así que te vuelvo a mandar un link nuevo cuando eso ocurra.

F- Dale, sí.

P- Pero justamente esto fue algo que se habló en las sesiones de feedback respecto de mi proyecto de investigación. Porque yo estaba muy interesada en tu caso, pero en cierto momento me plantearon las docentes si Fabían Barba debería ser un caso de estudio como creador, como coreógrafo o coreógrafe en Bélgica, o debería ser parte del marco teórico. Porque justamente lo que tenían... La idea que tenían era que ya no estabas haciendo producciones coreográficas, sino que justamente te estabas dedicando un trabajo más teórico. A la investigación, a los workshops, a las charlas sobre este tipo de... Y yo les dije: "Es que para mí es eso eso". Eso es lo más interesante de la situación digamos, yo entiendo que desde la carrera de Estudios Teatrales el análisis de obra es central, es inevitable... Pero no creo que la danza sea simplemente la obra presentada. Creo que la danza es un proceso, una creación que viene de toda una formación previa y que en el caso de estos creadores en muchos casos esa formación se empezó en otro continente. Entonces para mí esta situación de cómo pasaste en algún sentido de la danza a la teoría sobre la danza, para mí era muy interesante. Para mí, me interesa saber si por ejemplo esa fue una transición voluntaria por decirlo de algún modo, o si te fue empujando el contexto a eso. Si es algo que extrañas la producción coreográfica. Si es algo que elegiste vos, digamos, cómo se dio ese proceso, cómo lo vivís.

F- Sí. Entonces al principio, cuando yo salí de P.A.R.T.S. en el 2008 y después de hacer *Wigman* en el 2009, como que estas preguntas estaban ahí y viviéndome. Pero no tenía las herramientas conceptuales y el vocabulario para poder dar sentido a esa experiencia, a esas preguntas. Entonces una cuestión que para mí era muy frustrante en Bruselas en el 2008-2009 y antes, es que a veces yo intentaba decir: "Esto me está pasando. Estoy sintiendo esto". Pero sentía que nadie me escuchaba. Yo sentía que lo que yo decía no tomaba sentido. Entonces de ahí, leyendo, leí un libro de Walter D. Mignolo, "*Local Histories/Global Designs*", y fue como: "¡Sí! Por ahí va..." Entonces googleé "Walter Mignolo" y me enteré que estaba dando clases en Holanda, una escuela de verano, una escuela decolonial

de verano.¹⁹ Yo fui allá en el 2011 creo, porque yo quería hablar con Walter. Y ahí conocí a Rolando Vazquez, conocí a María Lugones, conocí a Ovidio... Que son gente de la escuela decolonial de verano. Y cuando yo les conté mi historia y les conté mis preguntas, me entendieron de una. Me dijeron: "Claro, eso es." O sea, "Tu historia tiene total sentido". Y entonces empecé a ir cada año, porque al siguiente año me invitaron para que yo dé una sesión de dos horas en las que contase mi experiencia y como yo le estaba dando sentido. Entonces desde el 2011 la escuela decolonial de verano en Holanda fue mi escuela. Como para poder pensar sobre todas estas cosas. Y entonces en su lado sí, por un lado había como esa necesidad de encontrar una forma de compartir con otras personas esas preguntas. Y eso no necesariamente tenía que entrar en conflicto con seguir con la producción coreográfica. Si eso pasó en 2011, hasta 2014, 2016 intenté hacer trabajos coreográficos. Pero también había algo que me pasó, que si bien cuando yo llegué a Bruselas, a P.A.R.T.S., hubo este proceso de seducción. De que dije: "Yo quiero formar parte de ese canon". Para el 2009-2010 y sobre todo después con esa experiencia de tener que conseguir visas que fue muy dura... O sea, en momentos es un proceso que está hecho para despecharte. O sea, la burocracia está ahí hecha para que no consigas esos permisos, para que no. Yo tenía apoyo institucional para lograrlo y aún así fue muy difícil. Fue de un momento, ahí por 2014, pasé por un proceso de completamente... De un completo desencantamiento con todo lo que tuviese que ver con Europa. Con todo lo que tuviese que ver con danza contemporánea. Y yo creo que es en parte ese desencantamiento lo que no me permite. O que ya no me sedujo la idea de hacer producciones coreográficas. Entonces esa es una cuestión importante. Y la otra cuestión importante también es que hacer trabajo artístico en Bruselas tiene, para poder hacerlo con funding. Con presupuesto, tienes que empezar a jugar con unas reglas del mercado. De generar un proyecto más de un año antes de que vayas al estudio. De articularlo, de empezar a convencer a gente y después... No sé, es como que para mí es muy difícil hacer una creación artística en ese contexto. Y además como ya pasaba y ya estaba como desencantado con todo esto, ya ni siquiera quería intentarlo. Y también porque yo sentía... No podía encontrar la manera de hacer un trabajo artístico que fuese... Porque por ejemplo con *Wigman* y con el *Cultivo de Babosas* yo sentía que esas obras fueron muy fácilmente incorporadas a la dance network en la que yo trabajaba, sin que produzcan ninguna perturbación importante. Y un poco sin que mis preguntas vitales tomasen central stage. Era como: "Ah, que lindas estas danzas". Pero como yo sentía que no tenían la eficacia que yo buscaba, como para llevar esas preguntas al centro. Entonces a mí como que... Bueno por un lado ya ese desencantamiento, luego esta cuestión de no querer jugar con las reglas de esa... ¿De mercado no? De esa dance network. Y luego también yo sentía que no era el mecanismo más apropiado para mí, para hacer lo que yo pensaba que tenía que hacer.

¹⁹ Decolonial Summer School Middelburg.

P- Ahí se va a cortar la reunión, la corto y te mando un link nuevo.

F- Ya, creo que podemos usar el mismo link si quieres.

P- Ah, ¿en serio se puede? No sabía. Bien.

F- Claro, ya nos vemos.

P- Ahí va de nuevo.

F- ¡Hola!

P- Bien. ¿Me escuchás, verdad?

F- Sí, perfecto.

P- Sí. Justamente ayer releía algunos de estos textos tuyos en los que desarrollás varias ideas relacionadas a los conceptos de danza contemporánea, de historicismo... Y que llevan a pensar que el contexto cultural actual en relación a la danza es uno que se piensa y se experimenta a partir de esas relaciones neocoloniales. Y parece como si el eurocentrismo y los resabios de la colonización de América generaran una especie de macrorrelato de la historia de las artes en la que pareciera que los latinoamericanos siempre estamos observando lo que pasa en Europa –y a veces en Estados Unidos– y reaccionamos a eso. Y en esa narrativa, el arte producido en Latinoamérica siempre sería una especie de copia adaptada con cierto aporte de las tradiciones locales. Y para cuando esas innovaciones llegan a Europa, invariablemente son percibidas como irrelevantes, como anticuadas. Entonces me daba la sensación de que hay una especie de círculo vicioso en el que el eurocentrismo y el historicismo se retroalimentan de manera tal que sus preceptos siempre terminan pareciendo verdaderos. ¿Vos crees que esto es así? ¿Creés que hay formas de resistir esto pura y exclusivamente desde la danza y no desde su teorización? ¿O la conclusión a la que has llegado es que sólo se puede resistir digamos desde lo teórico, desde la palabra...?

F- Sí, para mí, para hablar de eso es muy... Me ayuda mucho el trabajo de María Lugones, que es una pensadora de Argentina que emigró a Estados Unidos y estuvo mucho tiempo allá. Y es filósofa, feminista y muy involucrada con el pensamiento decolonial. Y ella dice que es importante cultivar una doble mirada. Entonces, de un lado ver cómo el poder percibe el mundo. Y en este sentido de cómo el poder percibe el mundo es lo que tú describiste. Las producciones hechas en Latinoamérica siempre van a ser vistas como una copia o una apropiación del canon europeo, un poco retrabajado con una cuestión local. Y sí, esa es la forma como el poder percibe esas creaciones artísticas. Porque percibir las así te permite probar la superioridad de las profesiones artísticas europeas. De cierta manera. Y María dice: "es importante ver eso". Porque eso es como el poder articula una cierta realidad y ahí tenemos que ver cómo el poder

está articulando esa realidad. Pero dice: “También tenemos que ver qué es lo que el poder no ve”. ¿Y qué es lo que el poder no ve? Es cómo esas producciones que estamos haciendo, que la gente está haciendo en las Américas, si bien influenciadas por el canon europeo... Porque el canon europeo finalmente se impone, esa la cuestión colonial. Es una imposición. Y frente a una imposición tú no puedes decir: “no quiero que me lo impongas” o “sí quiero que me lo impongas”. No te preguntan, te lo imponen. Una vez que te lo imponen, ¿qué es lo que tú haces con eso? ¿Cómo tú respondes a esa imposición? Ahí hay una agencia de una creatividad que se escapa al poder, al control del poder. Entonces María dice: “también tenemos que ver a esas respuestas”. Cómo lo estamos apropiando. Cómo lo estamos modificando. Cómo estamos tomando ciertas cosas que tal vez nos sirven y dejando otras. Y entonces ahí también es importante leer entonces cómo la producción dancística en América Latina nunca es una copia directa. Pero hay una cierta transformación allí. Hay una creatividad. Hay algo nuevo que se genera. Entonces sería importante ver esas dos cosas y después por ejemplo viendo el caso de Klever –yo un poquito creo que hablo de eso en *Impure Transmissions*– yo veo como el caso de Klever, si bien está influenciado por la danza moderna estadounidense y europea, también hay otra vertiente que nutre su trabajo que es una vertiente andina. Y el mismo trabajo de Klever va recreando esas vertientes. Creando algo nuevo a partir de ese mestizaje de tradiciones. Y por ejemplo Klever lo hizo a través de sus danzas. A través de sus técnicas, de las clases que dio, de los talleres y de su coreografía. Y entonces yo lo veo en Klever muy muy claro. Y siguen siendo... Pero, el problema está en que si es que la teoría se mantiene eurocentrada, solamente va a ver cómo el poder opera imponiendo un canon eurocentrado en el trabajo de Klever. Y si es que la teoría no ve ese otro trabajo subversivo que Klever está haciendo de traer una tradición Andina a conversar con las tradiciones modernas eurocentradas, si eso no se visibiliza –puede que esté ahí en el trabajo de Klever, yo creo que está– pero si no se los visibiliza es más difícil de darle valor colectivamente. Entonces yo creo que tal vez es un trabajo... No puede ser la una o la otra, sino que es la una alimentándose a la otra. Entre la creación coreográfica y una creación más discursiva.

P- En ese sentido tenía la duda de si estabas familiarizado con el trabajo de otras personas de origen latinoamericano que realicen producciones coreográficas en Bélgica. ¿Creés que hay factores en común en esas producciones? Este mestizaje del que hablás, ¿lo ves presente en esas obras?

F- Sí, déjame pensar... Está este trabajo que Cecilia está haciendo... Cecilia Lisa Eliceche. Pero... el trabajo o los trabajos yo vi de ella eran más discursivos también aunque estaban en escena. Del trabajo de Esteban Donoso que es mi amigo de aquí, de Ecuador y también vivió en Bélgica algún tiempo... Pero también es un trabajo mucho más discurso que bailado digamos. Incluso si era performativo, estaba en el escenario... Pero sí, ahí debo reconocer mi ignorancia.

Risas

F- Sí, no estoy muy familiarizado acá.

P- No eso no... Bueno es que también creo que no es tanto... A ver, una parte es ignorancia y la otra parte es lo que vos decís, la falta de visibilización. Digamos si no... Cuando yo pensé en desarrollar esta tesis me di cuenta de que no hay nada. Nadie sabe quiénes son estos artistas, nadie sabe que están haciendo, dónde estudian... Tuve que ponerme digamos a googlear, a desenterrarlos... Eh, buscando justamente en las personas que están asociadas a P.A.R.T.S., las personas que están asociadas a diferentes instituciones de la danza... Y por nombre: "este nombre me suena me suena hispano, entonces lo googleo y me doy cuenta así". Digamos, fue un trabajo que evidentemente es... también eso. Falta de información a vueltas al respecto de eso.

F- Sí.

P- Pero otra duda que me surgió, porque en los textos que recopilaban la producción, la ejecución y el recibimiento de tus danzas sobre Mary, hablaste mucho sobre las diferencias entre el campo de la danza contemporánea en Ecuador y en Europa. Y quería preguntarte cuál crees que es la especificidad del contexto belga en ese panorama. En tu opinión, ¿podría haberse dado distinto en otro lugar de Europa? ¿Hubiera sido lo mismo cualquier país europeo?

F- ¿La formación de la danza contemporánea?

P- Sí. Esa esa situación de, de alguna manera, encontrar cierta resistencia a tu formación previa y cierta mirada exotocista de tu producción. ¿Creés que es algo que se dio de cierta manera exclusivamente en Bélgica? ¿Que habría sido lo mismo en Alemania por ejemplo? ¿Que habría sido lo mismo...? ¿Tenés experiencia en otros lugares?

F- Tal vez. Porque he hablado con gente que hace danza en otros lugares de Europa y que vienen de fuera de Europa, y de cierta manera compartimos similitud de nuestras historias, si bien la particularidad es distinta. Pero sí, las relaciones coloniales de poder están ahí claramente. O sea, tengo... Recuerdo gente que me habló de su educación en Alemania y también fue problemática. También en Suiza. Pero sí hay una cuestión que es una particularidad con Bélgica y con P.A.R.T.S. Y es que P.A.R.T.S. tiene –o al menos en su excepción y de la forma que yo lo percibo– P.A.R.T.S. tiene una cuestión como expansiva. Como un deseo por recibir estudiantes de todo el mundo, para educarles dentro de un canon europeo. Entonces esa particularidad de P.A.R.T.S., el esfuerzo que han puesto en diversificar las nacionalidades del estudiantado, sin preocuparse por diversificar el currículo de la escuela. Es una particularidad que he visto solo en P.A.R.T.S. Y un poco porque P.A.R.T.S. tuvo la capacidad de traer estudiantes de muchas partes del mundo, que tal vez otra de las escuelas no –no se preocuparon en hacer o no

tuvieron la posibilidad. Ahí hay una particularidad muy... Que para mí tiene que ser como estudiada, no sé cómo darle mucho sentido. Y yo creo que eso influye mucho la escena dancística flamenca, porque finalmente P.A.R.T.S. influye mucho en esa escena. Finalmente muchas de las personas que constituyen la escena dancística flamenca están relacionadas a P.A.R.T.S. No sé si tú estás de acuerdo con eso, pero es la forma en que yo lo percibo. Entonces hay algo ahí que tiene que ser estudiado. Porque finalmente también la escena flamenca se constituye por ser una escena de danza internacional. Entonces de cierta manera busca una cierta internacionalidad, pero que es una internacionalidad ficticia. Porque finalmente es una internacionalidad basada en un canon europeo. Pero al mismo tiempo esa internacionalidad está muy ligada a un producto cultural flamenco. Entonces, ¿cómo puede ser un producto cultural flamenco que a la vez es internacional? Y que a la vez es la reproducción de un canon europeo. Ahí hay un triángulo que hay como irlo analizando.

P- Yo he vivido un... Bueno, una apreciación similar... Como parte de esta formación, de este programa, también tengo que hacer una pasantía. Y la estoy haciendo en lo que hoy en día es laGeste, que es una fusión entre Kabinet K y les Ballets C de la B, o sea dos grandes compañías de danza de Gante... Te diría tal vez las más grandes, que se han fusionado. Y el proyecto en el que estoy trabajando como pasante tiene que ver con Palestina, con bailarines de origen palestino, con la situación política de Palestina... Y me ha pasado tener momentos en los que los coreógrafos a cargo dicen cosas como: "Bueno, lo que pasa es que los bailarines vienen con una idea de *lo que ellos creen que es la danza* y... Y entonces por eso nos gusta trabajar con niños, porque es más fácil moldearlos hacia lo que nosotros queremos que hagan en escena, el tipo de trabajo muscular..." y yo les he dicho: "Bueno, creo que si van a trabajar con gente de otras culturas inevitablemente van a tener que negociar con los saberes y los ideales de esa otra cultura" y me han respondido: "Ellos quieren aprender". La visión es esa, digamos. Que se viene con... Con lo que es la *verdadera danza* a de alguna manera alfabetizar al resto del mundo, digamos. Es eso.

F- Claro. Es un proyecto poscolonial.

Risas

P- Totalmente. Pero a la vez presentado como vos lo decías, como si no lo fuera. Como si fuera una cuestión internacionalista, políticamente correcta... O una cuestión de interés político en este caso en la situación de Palestina, o en la situación postcolonial en Latinoamérica... Hay una cierta racionalización de que "colonizar está mal, así que deberíamos de alguna manera combatirlo" pero en la práctica... Es muy difícil creo, desde ese lugar... Desde el lugar del poder deconstruir ese mismo poder. Y al no dar voces a las a las personas que podrían ayudar a deconstruirlo también ese proyecto está frustrado desde antes de comenzar, digamos...

F- Claro, sí, sí... Es que el proyecto colonial se puede sostener bajo buenas intenciones también. Y tal vez la gente participando está haciendo lo mejor que se le ocurre. Pero lo que se le ocurre ya está dado por un universo eurocentrado. Imperial. Sería, es parte de nuestra imaginación. Pues cuando queremos hacer algo bueno, nos sale una reproducción del sistema. Yo creo que eso pasa también en P.A.R.T.S. O sea, decir: "Que gente de todo el mundo pueda venir acá a estudiar en esta escuela, que tenga estos recursos, que tenga estas oportunidades" es lindo, ¿cacha? O sea, como una buena intención está lindo. ¿Pero qué es lo que sucede? Que nos separan de nuestra cultura de origen, nuestra cultura dancística. Nos educan en una cultura eurocentrada. Que es lo que estaba pasando... Que ha sido el rol de la educación en el sistema colonial en tantas manifestaciones. Desde aquí en Ecuador con la educación formal en comunidades indígenas, Canadá con los boarding schools que son un horror.

P- Sí.

F- Tienen muchos horrores más, pero es la misma lógica: educarte dentro de la cultura dominante para darte acceso a los recursos de la cultura dominante, pero... *Niega con la cabeza*

P- Sí, un acceso que también es limitado, digamos. Porque, de alguna manera mis preguntas de investigación en relación a tu caso y a la mayoría de los casos, tienen que ver justamente con cómo las instituciones educativas y de producción dancística aquí en Flandes y en Bélgica han permitido, influenciado, determinado, limitado tu práctica como bailarín, qué efecto ha tenido esto en tu carrera y cuánto de eso tiene que ver digamos con tus orígenes latinoamericanos. Pero en realidad, obviamente esas son preguntas muy amplias, que no es fácil responder ni en una entrevista de hora y media, ni en una tesis de 30 páginas. Porque justamente son el reflejo de un de un sistema mucho más amplio y que como vos decís no comienza en P.A.R.T.S., no comienza en el campo flamenco de la danza... Comienza en la cuna, digamos, y en el propio sistema educativo de Ecuador y en el de Argentina en mi caso... Porque el eurocentrismo no comienza cuando uno llega a Europa, digamos. Ese... El propio hecho de que sintamos la necesidad de venir a estudiar a Europa ya habla de eso, es un síntoma de eso también. Y también está siempre la duda, digamos, de cuánto de esta búsqueda pasa por la búsqueda profesional, y cuánto por una búsqueda de condiciones de vida materialmente superiores, digamos. Que eso también, en lo que hablabas por ejemplo el sistema de las visas, cómo está pensado para que uno no pueda quedarse... Yo lo vivo también. Yo vivo de la misma manera, con una visa estudiantil. De alguna manera el sistema está planificado para hacerte sentir que siempre tenés que hacer más esfuerzo que la gente a tu alrededor para acceder a los mismos lugares, digamos. Entonces es complejo, digamos... No espero que puedas responderme todas esas preguntas, digamos, en... En este ratito. Pero sí tal vez una reflexión, o algo que quieras comentar al respecto.

F- Sí. Tal vez no directamente las preguntas, pero hay dos cosas que me vinieron a la mente. La primera en realidad es como una pregunta anterior, que fue cuando estaba intentando explicarte de por qué en algún momento dejé de hacer producción coreográfica,. Un poco era porque dejó de seducirme y por otro lado lo veía muy difícil hacer un trabajo crítico a través de eso. Hay un texto de Rolando Vázquez que se llama "*Translation as erasure*"²⁰ –te lo puedo mandar– y ahí él escribe muy bien cómo en los procesos de traducción, que son necesarios en estos encuentros interculturales, cuán ingeniosa es la modernidad para tomar algo de otra cultura, pero para incorporarlo dentro de ese sistema de la modernidad, sin que ponga en cuestión a la modernidad misma. Entonces procesos de apropiación cultural, de... No sé, no me acuerdo bien cómo lo explica pero es increíble este texto. Y eso es de las cuestiones que yo sentía: que haciendo trabajo coreográfico en Bruselas, de cierta manera ese trabajo siempre iba a terminar siendo englutido por la modernidad sin llegar a cuestionarla a la modernidad. Y cuando te dije por ejemplo de mi experiencia con audición de P.A.R.T.S. yo creo que eso sucedió. Había algo que yo traía que era particular de mi formación dancística en Ecuador, que otras personas, otros candidates en la audición no tenían, que eso es lo que quisieron. Ese algo que traía un nuevo color, digamos. Pero todo el resto lo dejaron. Todo esto... "Cogemos este poquito, pero todo esto lo dejamos acá". Entonces hay ese proceso como de la capacidad que la modernidad tiene para seguir sosteniéndose a sí misma. Siempre, porque siempre finalmente está en contacto con otras culturas. Pero, ¿cómo no dejar que las otras culturas le afecten de una forma que la transformen en su centro? Y la otra, tenía que ver... Porque tú hace un rato dijiste que era algo así como... También de qué posibilidades o cómo ha afectado mi capacidad de trabajar, o sea, cómo ha afectado mis condiciones de trabajo el haber migrado a Bélgica. Después de haber pasado por todas esas cuestiones de las visas que fueron horribles, finalmente conseguí el pasaporte belga. 'Tonces ahorita yo soy belga, y eso cambia todo. Es decir, ahorita yo para viajar, puedo viajar cuando quiera. Debo comprar un pasaje, no debo pedir visas. No debo pedir permiso a nadie, solamente voy. Pero también, yo en Bélgica, yo soy... Yo creo que me consideran pobre, o sea legalmente tienen como esas categorías de la línea de pobreza, y yo estoy bajo esa línea de pobreza en Bélgica. El otro día fui a la Partenamut, a la mutualité, me dijeron: "Ah, usted puede pedir este estatuto." Y con ese estatuto tengo transporte público gratis... (Ah espera, mi cámara está un poquito mal, ¿me escuchas bien?).

P- Sí, te escucho bien. *Se corta la comunicación* Ahí, se cortó.

F- Sí, ah pero ahora estamos volviendo creo.

P- Ya, sí.

²⁰ Rolando Vázquez, 'Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2011): 27-44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.2011.01387.x>.

F- Ya está grabando, ¿no cierto?

P- Sí. Me estabas contando esto del estatuto, del transporte público gratis, hasta ahí llegué.

F- Ajá. Y me devuelven por ejemplo dinero de impuestos, siempre recibo dinero de impuestos de vuelta. Soy, en Bruselas, cuento como pobre. Pero después, finalmente tener acceso a los salarios estándar europeo, cuando yo vengo acá a Ecuador eso me permite vivir bien. Yo en Ecuador con el dinero que gano en Europa, aquí soy alguien de una clase media acomodada. Lo que significa que, cada año, yo tengo cinco a seis meses en que no necesito trabajar para nadie. Porque con el dinero que gané en Bélgica puedo vivir bien. Y no tener que preocuparme del arriendo y de la comida me da mucho tiempo para desarrollar mi trabajo, que es un trabajo que yo quiero hacer. Sin tener que pedir funding, sin tener que hablar con co-productores, sin tener que darle nada a un mercado, sin tener que responder a las exigencias de un mercado. Y me permite trabajar en lo que yo quiero, a mi tiempo, y sí, con una libertad increíble. Entonces incluso si ahorita yo no estoy haciendo trabajo coreográfico, yo sigo trabajando pensando la danza, pensando el cuerpo, pensando la historia y pensando las relaciones coloniales. Pero todo ese trabajo es posible porque tengo acceso a ese mercado laboral europeo. Y yo veo, por ejemplo, gente que vive de la danza aquí en Ecuador, no puede trabajar en las condiciones lujosas finalmente en las que yo trabajo. Entonces también hay algo ahí, que esa migración a Europa marcó un campo de posibilidades que no hubiese tenido si no hubiese emigrado. Sí.

P- Sí, y que en gran medida se traduce justamente en condiciones materiales y económicas. Más allá obviamente, de que... Sin menospreciar, digamos, la formación artística y educativa, que es real también. Digamos, tu paso por Europa no es que simplemente abrió puertas a nivel laboral, sino que también debe haber influenciado totalmente en tu forma de entender tu propio cuerpo y tu propia forma de hacer danza, pero... Pero no es desde ahí digamos, el cambio final, el que tiene más fuerza parece ser el otro. El, digamos, la cuestión de...

F- Claro. Sí. Sí, y me parece importante que menciones esto. Porque más allá de la educación que yo recibí en P.A.R.T.S. y eso, a mí el click, la experiencia de migración, me permitió ver cosas que yo cuando vivía en Ecuador no las vi. Como el racismo cotidiano, por ejemplo. Porque en Ecuador yo soy clase media, mestizo de la clase media de la capital. Había experiencias de racismo, pero a millares surgir...²¹ Porque yo no las veía como racismo. Es solamente después que migro a Europa que digo: "Ah, esto es racismo". Y empiezo a ver todas esas otras manifestaciones que no veía. Lo mismo con otras formas de relaciones de poder. 'Tonces también hay algo en esa migración, más allá de lo material, que también

²¹ La expresión "a millares surgir" para indicar grandes cantidades, es una referencia al himno nacional ecuatoriano.

como que abre una perspectiva distinta para percibir el mundo. Y eso es más allá del campo de la danza. Es como una cuestión vital casi.

P- Y una pregunta tal vez un poco más personal, no sé qué influencia tiene en lo académico, digamos. Pero, ahora que, digamos, siempre hablas desde tu condición de ecuatoriano, digamos, pero, ahora con tu pasaporte belga, ¿te sentís belga? ¿Te sentís identificado con esa identidad?

F- Es extraño... Cuando recibí el pasaporte, sentía que era como un matrimonio, ¿cacha?

Risas

F- Del... Bélgica tenía que hacerse cargo de mí, tanto como yo tenía que hacerme cargo de Bélgica. Y tal vez no es tanto como una pertenencia como... cultural. Así como decir: "soy belga". Pero sí saber que soy un ciudadano belga, es decir, un ciudadano del primer mundo, a mí me pone una cierta responsabilidad de entender qué eso implica, y cómo me estoy beneficiando de ser parte de un país colonial. Y hay por ejemplo la responsabilidad por aprender más sobre la historia colonial de Bélgica, su deuda con el Congo por ejemplo. Cómo este proyecto colonial hace posible la realidad cotidiana que vivimos en Bélgica, incluyendo la producción dancística. Entonces ahí son preguntas que yo sé que ahora ya no puedo decir: "no tienen nada que ver conmigo". Tienen mucho que ver conmigo. En ese sentido hay un cambio. ¿Pero así como decir: "me siento belga"? No. Para nada.

Risas

P- Sí, perfecto. Bueno, por mi parte, ha sido súper enriquecedora la charla. Ha ido... Digamos, más allá de mis preguntas ha ido a lugares que me sirven mucho a nivel analítico, digamos, para pensarlo. Para seguir desarrollando. Así que te agradezco mucho por esta oportunidad. Me has pasado varios textos también que son útiles para armar el marco teórico también. Así que por mi parte no tengo más preguntas. Si hay algo más que vos quieras agregar por supuesto perfecto. Y si no simplemente agradecerte.

F- Déjame ver si hay alguna cosita que me quedó por ahí... No... Si se me acuerdo y veo que es importante te aviso.

P- Lo único que quedaría preguntar es, ya que te había comentado al principio esta estructura del pasado, presente y futuro: ¿cuáles son tus proyectos a futuro? ¿Pensás seguir haciendo lo mismo que venís haciendo? ¿Tenés alguna idea para el futuro que todavía no hayas desarrollado?

F- Sí. Bueno para mí... Porque en los últimos años he estado pasando mucho la mitad del tiempo en Bélgica y la mitad del tiempo en Ecuador. Entonces una de

las preguntas primordiales es que yo puedo seguir haciendo muchos años más tal vez, pero después ya quiero asentarme en un lugar. Y no sé si es que va a ser Bélgica o si va a ser Ecuador. O sea, una pregunta... que me imagino mucha gente migrante comparte. Y de eso dependería mucho también qué haría profesionalmente. 'Tonces una de las opciones es hacer un doctorado, y un poco, honestamente, es por tener una beca. Una beca por unos cuatro o seis años sería un sueño. Y eso sería en Bélgica. Porque en Ecuador no voy a conseguir becas así. Y después si es que hiciese este doctorado allá en Bélgica, la pregunta sería, de qué iría. Y una de las posibilidades –y que resuena mucho con lo que tú estás haciendo– tiene que ver con investigar la producción de una subjetividad flamenca a través de esta danza contemporánea que se pretende internacional.

P- Sí.

F- ¿Ya? ¿Cuál es la relación entre esa danza contemporánea y la producción de un sentimiento de ser flamenco? De “Flanders, capital de la danza”. Esa es una pregunta muy muy interesante que me gustaría aproximarme. Y es una pregunta, si bien tomada desde la teoría, pues una pregunta muy corpórea. Es cómo te sientes flamenco, flamenca. Y en esa dimensión corpórea creo que hay una cuestión que me acercaría mucho a la danza. Entonces sí, no es la danza de bailarines en el escenario, pero la construcción de nuestros cuerpos. De nuestros cuerpos-objetividades. Entonces sería tal vez uno de esos proyectos futuros.

P- ¿Y si eligieras Ecuador?

F- Ay... Creo que también... Tal vez la pregunta estaría más dirigida a cuestiones de sexualidad. Ajá. También porque en la sexualidad el cuerpo es central. Entonces las herramientas que yo tengo –o que he tomado– para entender el cuerpo desde la danza, creo que podrían ser usadas también para entender el cuerpo desde la sexualidad. Porque la sexualidad y la danza son ambas prácticas corporales. Y claro, hay sexualidades disidentes y cosas así. Okay, y eso me quedaría así, por aquí.

P- Perfecto. Bueno, ahora sí entonces. No más preguntas. Te agradezco mucho por esta charla, por esta oportunidad. Obviamente cualquier cosa que te quede pendiente, que te acuerdes más tarde, siempre estoy dispuesta a recibirla. Y bueno, a seguir pensando en estas cosas. A seguir intentando descifrarlas, creo que es el único camino que nos hemos propuesto, digamos. Es la única forma de intentar darle un poco de sentido a este tablero de juegos que nos presentaron y en el que tenemos que hacer lo que podamos.

F- Sí, sí, sí. No, muchas gracias a ti. Que cualquier cosa, si tienes alguna pregunta o cualquier cosa avísame. Y nos seguimos conversando.

P- Perfecto. Y bueno, y cuando esté terminada la tesis te la haré llegar.

F- Ay sí, por favor, me encantaría.

P- Bueno, muchas gracias.

F- Muchas gracias a ti, cuídate. ¡Chau!

II.II. Lisi Estarás (coreógrafa), entrevistada por Paulina Rosa (estudiante de la Universidad de Gante), Febrero 2023:

Paulina- Así que estoy trabajando con esos casos, digamos. Esos tres casos. Y, de alguna manera, había que darle una estructura también al trabajo y se me corrió esta estructura de, un poco, pasado, presente y futuro. En el sentido de que la producción coreográfica que uno ve en el escenario es el resultado de un proceso, digamos.

Lisi- *Asiente*

P- No es solamente el resultado y ya. Y eso es un poco lo que quería hablar con ustedes, digamos. Un poco cuál es su recorrido, ese tipo de cosas. Pero también de alguna manera, los tres casos están ordenados en ese formato de “pasado, presente y futuro”. Porque por ejemplo, Fabián hoy en día ya no hace producción coreográfica y tiene casi toda producción teórica, digamos, sobre la danza. Y lo que ha hecho a nivel teórico tiene que ver con su experiencia formándose acá en Bélgica. Entonces, en ese sentido es el “pasado” digamos. El “presente” lo estaba viendo con el caso de Amanda. Desde el punto de vista de que ahora su obra se estaba presentando, digamos, en Gante. La última que hizo fue *The School of the Jaguar* y la hizo en KASK. Y el tuyo es el futuro en el sentido de que estás preparando una obra que todavía no se había presentado digamos. Con *#THISISBEAUTY*. No sé si ya estrenó, digamos.

L- ¿Cuál?

P- ¿*#THISISBEAUTY*?

L- Sí. Esa ya estrenó. Estaría en el pasado.

P- Claro, pero todavía le quedan fechas, ¿no?

L- Sí. En Mayo en Bélgica.

P- Claro. Bien, a esa seguro voy a ir.

Risas

L- 24 de Mayo.

P- 24 de Mayo sí, buenísimo. Bien, así que, a ver... Vamos entonces. Si querés, podés arrancar contándome un poco, digamos, cómo fue tu recorrido y especialmente cómo terminaste en Bélgica, digamos. Y por qué elegiste quedarte también.

L- Bueno. Bueno, yo vengo de Córdoba. Donde ahí me formé en el Teatro San Martín en danza clásica. Y también bailé un período en el Ballet Oficial, Juvenil Oficial... Con las bailarinas de puntas, digamos.

P- Claro.

L- Bueno y después me fui a Israel... Yo estaba igual, buscando cosas. Como, otras. Porque sentía que había algo más que el ballet... Y que Graham por ejemplo, era lo único que había en Córdoba en ese momento. Igual en el momento mi estética no daba a prima ballerina... Era como que yo no encajaba bien. Yo sentía esa falta.
Risas

P- A mí también me pasó eso en la danza.

Risas

L- Como que siempre falta.... Como que técnicamente algo no estaba funcionando. Y después yo me fui a Israel a visitar a una familia y había una audición para una escuela.

P- ¿Familia tuya?

L- Sí. En el salón de la academia de música y danza,²² que es universitaria, hice la audición ahí y me dieron una beca. Así que me quedé. Yo me fui con plan de quedarme un mes y me quedé... Nunca más volví en realidad. Bueno, en Argentina pasé... Hice seminarios en el Colón, ese tipo de cosas. Pero nunca trabajé en Buenos Aires. Y bueno, en Israel estuve un año en esa academia y después estuve en Batsheva. Después de la audición me fui, no me gustó la escuela esa...

P- *Risa*

L- Tengo dificultad con las escuelas, con las...

P- Claro, con las instituciones.

L- Con las instituciones, sí. Como, nunca he terminado nada... Institucional digamos. Bueno y después estuve en Batsheva. Y después, a mí en un momento, como que se me volvió difícil seguir ahí. También por la sociedad.

P- Eso te iba a decir, porque es muy... Es un choque cultural importante, digamos, de Argentina a Israel.

²² Jerusalem (Rubin) Academy of Music and Dance.

L- Sí, sí... Pero bueno... Es menos. El choque es menor que acá diría yo. Porque la gente de Medio Oriente, tan tan distintos no somos los latinos. Digamos, son muy distintos, pero la cercanía es mayor que con el norte de Europa con lo latino digamos.

P- Claro.

L- Pero bueno, digamos que mi carrera la empecé ahí, en Batsheva. Mi carrera también profesional, porque bueno, ya era parte de una compañía. Y bueno, y después, también me vine a Holanda en un momento, y tenía una amiga también bailarina. Y me quedé también, como que... Siempre me fue lle... Como que me dejé llevar por donde la vida me iba llevando...

P- Por las oportunidades.

L- Sí. Pero en Holanda me costó bastante, como que estuve un año ahí y me costaba. Iba a un montón de audiciones pero no me contrataba nadie. Y después me enteré de una audición con Alain Platel, y ahí vine y fue mi primer trabajo en realidad en Europa. Trabajando con él. Y ahí ya me quedé digamos... veinte años.

P- Claro.

L- Pero haciendo en paralelo. Yo tengo como una carrera eh... Siempre estuve buscando cosas fuera de donde estoy. Como tengo ese problema o esa virtud, de siempre estar curioseando otras cosas. Así que mientras yo fui intérprete de Alain, después fui coreógrafa de él, de Ballets C de la B. Pero también hice cosas a nivel freelance, paralelamente siempre me gustó el mundo freelance. Como que esto pasó en la historia de lo institucional. Es algo que es importante, pero en general digamos, después, mi carrera común como coreógrafa... Mi carrera como coreógrafa empezó como por casualidad. Digamos, no es que me decidí a ser coreógrafa, sino que se fue dando, digamos. Bueno y después así con el tiempo... Empecé MonkeyMind Company. Que hace un par de años nomás lo tengo, pero digamos, como carrera de coreógrafa ya empecé hace 10 años. Sí, un poco más.

P- ¿Y ese es tu primer proyecto que es tuyo, digamos?

L- Oficialmente es una compañía. Como, digamos, aceptada. Como que tiene una estructura que es pequeña, pero es una estructura.

P- Claro.

L- Porque antes yo siempre estaba con les Ballets C de la B, y yo era uno de los productores, como executive producer, entonces era todo con ellos. Yo me abrí, entonces ahora tengo esa compañía. Pero sigo haciendo freelance, digamos. Trabajo fuera de la compañía un montón. Y con mi compañía produzco pequeñas cosas.

P- Bien.

L- Eso es un poco el recorrido hasta hoy. Y bueno, siempre tengo un ojo en Argentina y en Sudamérica, a nivel artístico y a todo nivel. Me interesa salir mucho de Europa... Mucho me interesa salir de Europa. Crear fuera de Europa. Sudáfrica es otro lugar con el que tengo... Ya fui tres veces. Y como... Produzco ahí también, con gente de ahí. Me es muy importante eso de salir de Europa. Porque hoy en día el artista, digamos, la manera de producir y lo artístico van juntos. No es que "ahora yo te hago lo artístico y la producción no sé qué..." Es como que van juntos. Por eso yo digo, podés hacer una obra en un día o podés hacer una obra en seis meses. Podés hacer una obra con un millón de euros o con diez euros.

P- Sí.

L- Quiero decir que la producción tiene un efecto sobre el artista. Para mí eso es un plus, no es algo negativo. Las limitaciones para mí son un plus para que pensemos. En general mi estética es como muy... Invierto mucho en el cuerpo. En lo que está en escena. En vivo. Y menos en otras cosas. Como que... Digamos que en general, hoy en día... Bueno, yo empecé con esa idea de -voy a lo artístico ahora- con lo de MonkeyMind... Eso lo empecé a desarrollar... Yo empecé con esa idea de, en MonkeyMind, desarrollar mi coreografía tratando de... En realidad fue algo muy casual, que era poner en velocidad los movimientos. Entonces, cuando el pensamiento se desconecta del cuerpo en algún lado... Y también que le permite a la expresión facial y al sonido... La velocidad es desde ya... Una calidad digamos. Y así empecé, como... Me empecé a interesar por la línea del cuerpo y del pensamiento. Y cómo van por caminos separados o juntos. Y eso es, hasta el día de hoy, mi investigación. Es algo que trabajé mucho focalizado en la velocidad del movimiento, en lo que es staccato veloz, gestual... Algo reconocible, repetición... Y ahora estoy muy pegada a lo que es texto. Es como que, hoy en día una obra que no haya palabras, no puedo soportarlo.

Risás

L- Y bueno, y eso es mí... Donde estoy hoy, digamos.

P- Donde estás hoy en día. Porque yo leí, cuando estaba investigando sobre tu obra y no conocía nada, leí una nota de Mauro... ¿Cómo se llama? "Cacciatore", ¿puede ser? Sí, sobre *Vernáculos*.

L- Ajá.

P- Y al inicio en esa nota decía...

L- Ah, ¡lo de Buenos Aires! Sí sí sí.

P- Sí, lo de Buenos Aires. Y esa nota se llama “*La identidad como proceso*” y él plantea como si la identidad siempre hubiera sido un tema central en tu obra. ¿Vos te identificas con eso? ¿Creés que es así? ¿Segue siendo así...?

L- Sí, yo pienso que me sirvo de la identidad, que es una búsqueda. La identidad para mí no es algo... Mi identidad, no tengo una identidad definida. No es algo fijo y es como... la búsqueda de identidad. Es cierto que mis primeros trabajos estaban muy ligados a mi experiencia como argentina. Digamos, latina, argentina, latina. Buscando algo en relación a la argentinidad o lo que me falta de la argentinidad. Y con mi identidad judía, esos dos polos. Que todavía están presentes, más en el detalle. No tan outspoken. Como *Patchagonia*, es una obra que yo monté en Buenos Aires que giró bastante acá. Que se llamaba *Patchagonia*, y que era realmente... Tenía que ver con la cultura, con la búsqueda de una cultura...

P- Mirá, te me adelantaste a la pregunta siguiente, que era “¿Qué lugar ha tenido lo argentino o lo latinoamericano en esa búsqueda de la identidad?” justamente.

L- Y sí, para mí está siempre presente, en realidad. Es como, a partir del lenguaje yo también: cómo escribo los textos para las obras. Por ejemplo, la dificultad del lenguaje para mí es... Sí, una dificultad. Un camino también. Cómo escribo en un idioma, en Inglés... En general escribo en Inglés y después lo traduzco al Español por ejemplo.

P- Claro.

L- Como en *Vernáculos*. Pero ahora estoy preparando esta obra para Buenos Aires, la escribí en Español. Y es como la primera vez... Bueno, para mí un idioma es muy importante. Es como la firma de la identidad también.

P- Sí, modela el pensamiento, sin duda.

L- Totalmente. Y bueno, por ejemplo el Ydis, que es una lengua muerta, para mí también tiene como... Una base. ¿Cómo...? No rescatar esa lengua, pero, ¿por qué murió? Tal vez. Sí, me da curiosidad. Me da curiosidad. También porque hice una investigación sobre Wittgenstein²³ con una filósofa. Eso sí te podría pasar, esos artículos de filosofía en los que ella analiza mi obra a través de un ojo... Cómo la palabra y el gesto se relacionan. Pero la identidad sí, es una búsqueda continua. Pero yo, especialmente... No especialmente, pero desde siempre, digamos que es una puerta que se abre y después uno va en ese viaje. La identidad no es algo en lo que yo pueda... Pienso que la gente que no ha viajado, no ha salido de donde nació, tiene otro tipo de dificultades que la que dejó su lugar de muy joven. Como hay una pérdida y después de una ganancia. Pero el sentimiento es como siempre ese wondering. Pero no es un conflicto. Como, no tengo... No soy

²³ Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) fue un filósofo austríaco que investigó la filosofía del lenguaje.

arraigada en realidad. Podría vivir en un hotel en realidad yo. Como que no siento... Mi casa es como un... No tengo como una base.

P- Hoy en día vos tenés una hija, ¿nació acá?

L- Sí, mi hija nació en Bélgica. Y el padre es Holandés y Francés pero nos separamos, y bueno. Estamos acá los dos por ella.

P- Por ella, claro. Claro, porque eso también es un proceso, ¿verdad? Criar a alguien en un lugar en el que no naciste.

L- Claro, yo estoy criando a alguien, no en mi idioma, y no hablo el idioma que ella habla. Como idioma materno ella habla Holandés por ejemplo. Mi Holandés es muy malo. Pero bueno, no... La otredad a nivel extranjero, lo siento todo el tiempo. Toda mi vida lo he sentido, estoy acostumbrado en realidad. Me pasa en Córdoba también.

P- Y es que ya, es como no pertenecer del todo a ningún lado.

L- Claro, entonces como es algo a lo que estoy muy acostumbrada, a ser "el otro". El diferente, el que no es de ahí. Ahora ya no es algo conflictivo.

P- Y en ese sentido, las obras que vos has hecho, más orientadas a la búsqueda sobre tu identidad argentina, latinoamericana, ¿las has hecho para Argentina, o las hecho para acá, para presentar en Europa?

L- No, no, las hice aquí. Y bueno, he estado en el FIBA con esas obras... Casualmente me han invitado, pero no las hice para eso. Yo hice una obra llamada *The Jewish connection project*, que eso es más reciente... Y bueno, eso sí como... Está muy indagando el problema de la judeidad, desde un punto de vista totalmente laico. Y después de esa obra en realidad... No me traumé, pero fue bastante traumática porque... La percepción del judío hoy en día, con todos los conflictos políticos con Israel, es muy complicado. Mucho. Y por ejemplo, una vez, una persona me dijo: "Nos gusta la obra pero le podés cambiar el nombre". Porque a la gente... Como que "*The Jewish connection project*" tiene una cuestión negativa. Como, medio antisemita. Pero ese era todo el chiste, el nombre de la obra. No lo voy a cambiar. Y después como, decirme: "No, ya obras con cosas judías ya tenemos en este festival" como, tipo eso... Y después, han pasado cosas... Actuamos en Suiza, no se qué... Y nosotros usamos la música de Wagner en esa obra, y había gente que era sobreviviente del Holocausto. Que después quisieron tener una conversación con nosotros. Y bueno, en un momento te planteás: «¿Es que mi obra...? ¿Es que lo que yo hago es tan importante como para que una persona que está en el público sienta, como... Todo lo que le pasó en su vida? Que se le venga de nuevo... ¿Es que lo que yo hago es tan importante como para hacer sufrir a alguien que está mirando?» Y después, con ese tema del judío, lo dejé de lado ahora. Pero ahora, mi camino de la identidad, como fue... Me hizo pensar un

montón. A nivel de lo que hacemos y quién lo ve, y a quién puede llegar a afectar también algo. Como que a veces uno dice: «Ay, yo me quiero expresar!» pero tal vez eso no era lo más importante.

P- Claro, sí.

L- Y bueno, después de esa obra, que paramos de hacerla porque ya era tan... Heavy, cargar con eso, que también me hizo cuestionar a mí y bueno. Y bueno, creo que ese fue el último que estuve muy enganchada con eso de la identidad. Igual, si ves mis obras, vas a ver referencias siempre a la argentinidad, a lo latino, siempre. De lo judío, siempre van a estar ahí. No como primer plano, pero siempre vas a ver las referencias. También porque en un momento, yo me enganché mucho con el tema del malambo. Del folklore, de la cuestión rítmica, porque mi material es muy rítmico. Yo pienso que viene de una cierta memoria del folklore o de cosas que yo viví. Y antes que ahora, en un momento –pero eso fue eso como hace veinte años– me puse a estudiar malambo con zapatos de tap... Que bueno, ahora hay un montón de eso. Y también esas referencias de ciertos ritmos, que vienen del folklore, están muy presentes. Bueno el tango, hice esa obra con tango... Siempre me gusta... Porque la identidad para mí es justamente eso, es la mezcla de todo, de elementos.

P- Y de alguna manera se cuele en tu obra también desde lo corporal, digamos, desde lo físico.

L- Totalmente.

P- Desde la danza.

L- Desde la danza, sí, la cuestión rítmica... Bueno después, musicalmente... Este, también lo judío siempre está presente.

P- Porque, por ejemplo en la obra de Fabián, se cuele más desde lo conceptual tal vez.

L- Sí.

P- Y no necesariamente desde lo físico, o sí, pero tiene que hacer la conexión teórica de donde está la conexión desde lo físico. En cambio, si vos tomás un ritmo que viene de Latinoamérica, es clara la conexión. Es evidente, digamos.

L- Sí. Sí. Lo mío es más como instintivo, no es como conceptual.

P- No es conceptual.

L- Porque yo trabajo mucho sobre la emoción en realidad. Que es lo que... Cómo la emoción se produce, se traduce en el cuerpo y vuelve, digamos. Es circular. Y para mí, por eso también la palabra viene a confesar algo... Que no es posible no decirlo, digamos. Porque antes yo trabajaba mucho –pero esto viene de Alain

también– como la urgencia del cuerpo. Cómo el cuerpo llega a un lugar en que la palabra ya no puede expresarlo. Y entonces el cuerpo toma acción, digamos que esa es mi escuela con Platel. Yo ahora, hice ese recorrido y ahora vuelvo a la palabra en realidad. Como cuando el cuerpo se esconde atrás. Se esconde atrás de la danza para no tener que decir la palabra. Entonces, es como...

P- Sí, un ida y vuelta, digamos. Sí.

L- Sí. Para mí ahora, yo trabajo la urgencia de la palabra que viene del cuerpo. Es siempre físico en realidad. La palabra sí viene a expresar y a decir algo que el cuerpo ya no puede expresar.

P- Claro. Y las producciones que vos has hecho en Europa por ejemplo, que tenían que ver con este tipo de búsquedas, más desde lo latino, lo argentino, ¿cómo ha sido la recepción de esas obras? ¿Alguna vez notaste una mirada exoticista sobre tu obra? ¿Cómo se ha integrado? Digamos.

L- Bueno, mi última experiencia es con el tango. Esa obra que hice en la Ópera, *A Bigger Thing*. Que es toda con música de Rovira. Que Rovira... Es un delirio hacer una obra de danza contemporánea con música de Rovira. Sí... Sí y no en realidad, como que ahora la gente, bueno... Lo que pasa es que por ejemplo, el tango, que es muy connotado. Como, uno viene justamente... Lo que hacía esa obra es que la gente dice “música tango” y lo que estás viendo es como nada que ver, no hay ninguna referencia. No hay nada que se asemeje al tango. Como que, yo lo escuché... Lo escuchás de otra manera la música también. Porque no hay ninguna referencia, en lo físico ni en lo dramático, ni en nada que tenga que ver con el tango. Entonces para mí es agarrar algo, una estructura, como un tango –que son dos personas con cierto entendimiento, en donde uno manipula al otro, pero la otra improvisa también al mismo tiempo– donde hay reglas muy fijas. Entonces, agarrar esa regla y romperla en realidad. Eso es lo que hice por lo menos con esta obra. Más allá de que habían performers que no eran profesionales, y que era una obra enorme de sesenta personas y gente con discapacidad, bueno... Pero para mí, el encuentro digamos, tomé lo teórico del tango, en la danza del tango, y romper, digamos.

P- Claro. Y eso eh... Justamente bueno, el otro día que fui a tu workshop, me contaste que hace un tiempo ya que estás trabajando con el tema de la inclusión.

L- Sí. Sí, yo empecé en el 2016. Con Platform K, que es esta compañía que ahora está bastante floreciendo, digamos. Que son de acá. Que empezaron super pequeños. Y ellos me pidieron hacer una obra. Yo dije que no, pero les dije que iba a hacer workshops con ellos. Y empecé en un momento, no sé, después de un año, dije “Bueno, hagamos una obra”.

P- ¿Cómo se llamaba la compañía?

L- Se llama Platform K.

P- Ah.

L- Platform K, y la obra se llama *Monkey Mind*. Y con esa obra giramos un montón. Pero es que fue un momento en que no había. No es como ahora. Fue un momento en que no había gente con síndrome de Down, o había pero muy como naïve, desde el punto de vista naïve. Digamos, social. Y esto como... Fue una obra donde tuve bailarines impresionantes con síndrome de Down, que estaban con otros que no tenían síndrome de Down, y bueno... Fue una obra muy muy exitosa.

P- A mí eso me llamó la atención en tu workshop. Que, yo fui sin idea de nada, y lo que vi a nivel de calidad del movimiento, dije "Esto es danza contemporánea".

L- Ayer el show no sabés lo que fue, la rompieron.

P- ¡Claro!

L- Igual, sí. Yo pensé, porque había gente... Había esa chica que... Viste que estaba... Que no podía hablar, nada. Y en cinco veces que la vi, cómo progresó, y estuvo bárbaro el show. Estuvo buenísimo.

P- Realmente no... No noté para nada ninguna actitud condescendiente, o sea, al contrario.

L- Yo trabajo como con todo el mundo, en realidad. No trabajo distinto.

P- Y ahí se producen esos resultados también, digamos.

L- Sí, pero puede pasar que... Bueno, como esa chica que le agarró un... Se puso medio violenta en un momento. Si no tenés miedo, en realidad, y no querés ser políticamente correcto, recomiendo trabajar con tus herramientas y sin adaptar. Pero es lo mismo cuando yo trabajo con gente amateur, o... No importa. Con la gente que está sentada acá. Digo, también es más que nada el lenguaje de palabra que tenés que simplificar, pero no el trabajo en sí, digamos.

P- Claro.

L- Y bueno, y ahí empecé con esa obra *Monkey Mind*. Y a partir de ahí, generé relaciones con esos bailarines con síndrome de Down, que hasta el día de hoy, yo los llevo. Los llevé a Sudáfrica, los llevo a otras propuestas. Porque me parece que ellos, como aportan un montón en los circuitos digamos, profesionales. Es distinto como ser partner con una persona con... Como su fantasía es otra. Su manera de estar en escena es otra. Y me parece muy como enriquecedor. Y digamos que, hoy en día, hacer obras no inclusivas no me interesa mucho. A no ser, un pedido... Algo muy específico. Pero sino... Si no es inclusivo, sólo bailarines profesionales, no creo que sea algo que me interese. A no ser que sea yo. Un dúo o algo yo sola. Algo así. Pero sino... Perdí el interés.

P- Es como que siempre te estás corriendo de lo hegemónico, digamos.

L- Sí.

P- Te corrés de lo que es Europa y del Eurocentrismo. Te corrés de lo que es el... Bueno, able... Ableism, no sé cómo se dice en Español.

L- Sí.

Risas

P- Es como... Ya pasa eso... Viste que uno se olvida las palabras en la lengua madre.

L- ¡Sí! Eso sucede.

P- Es tremendo. Pero... Pero claro, es como que siempre estás trabajando digamos, en las periferias, de alguna manera.

L- Sí, me interesa... Sí, la mirada de la periferia me interesa. Y por eso necesito salir de Europa para crear. Porque sino, siento que uno está como muy... Especialmente en Bélgica que hay tanto, es tan bueno y tan... pero siento siempre que hay que ver cómo otra gente produce. Totalmente. En Argentina, bueno, y en Sudáfrica... Y bueno, el trabajo inclusivo, como ahora... Es mi interés. Sí.

P- Claro, es tu interés.

L- Es mi interés.

P- Pero... El trabajo este que presentás, bueno, que volvés a presentar en Mayo, #THISISBEAUTY, eso sos sólo vos.

L- Eso es solo, sí. Yo hice un solo para mis 50 años, y ahora tengo 52. Pero... En realidad, yo decidí hacer un solo cuando iba a hacer como fiesta de 50 años, y después también porque empecé a pensar: "¿Por qué no hay gente de mi edad en escena?" ¿Por qué no hay mujeres de mi edad en escena? Como la mayoría del público son mujeres entre 50 y 60 años, ¿por qué no están representadas? ¿Por qué no están representadas en escena? ¿Por qué la danza se transformó...? La danza no es un deporte. Digamos, está el virtuosismo, y la técnica y lo atlético... Pero la danza para mí no es eso. Entonces dije: "Bueno, ya que no... Nadie lo quiere hacer, lo hago yo". Hablo también de la menopausia, que es un tema que también me incumbe.

P- Sí, pero que también es muy tabú.

L- Que es muy tabú y que nunca vi una obra de danza que hable de la menopausia. Entonces también dije: "Bueno, lo voy a poner yo entonces". Y bueno, sobre todo eso, como revalorizar los cuerpos otros, digamos. Hasta de una edad determinada. También porque en Europa hay un foco muy grande

–especialmente acá en Bélgica– sobre los creadores jóvenes. Que me parece que es algo muy positivo, que la juventud tiene la palabra obviamente, pero me parece también que es muy fácil. Porque es todo lo nuevo... lo nuevo. Como... Al ser tan todo descartable en nuestra sociedad...

P- Sí, y aparte te hace sentir de alguna manera el entorno, a mí pasa: todo es hasta los treinta años. Yo cumplo treinta en diciembre y digo “Ya está, se me acaban las oportunidades”.

L- ¿Treinta años cumplís?

P- Sí... Y es como qué, ¿todo está hasta acá? Orientado a jóvenes europeos, y nada más que eso, entonces...

L- Eso lo veo como una gran falencia. Una gran pérdida. Y a mí me gusta mucho... Ponele, en la obra en la Ópera había una mujer que fue una bailarina, que tiene ahora no sé... ochenta años. Y mirar a esa mujer en escena es como un regalo. Lo mismo con la gente con discapacidad. Es como... Te das el lujo. No es que, vos les hacés como que... No es que haces algo por ellos. Al contrario, te das lujo de mirarlos. Y bueno, y eso fue la historia del solo, digamos.

P- ¿Y cómo ha sido recibida esa obra?

L- Esa obra tuvo muy buenas críticas, en Flandes... En diarios, en De Morgen tuvo una crítica muy buena. Después, es una obra muy difícil de vender porque está en Inglés, como muy verborrágica. Y tiene mucho texto. Es como que no es danza y no es teatro. Entonces, es como demasiada, demasiado teatro...

P & L- Demasiado teatro para la danza y demasiada danza para el teatro.

P- Claro.

L- Y cae en un lugar que es performático, digamos, que es lo que a mí me gusta hoy en día. Sí, es performático, que hay palabra, que hay humor... Y es como que dice cosas profundas, pero de una manera irónica, o riéndose también de las cosas. Porque el humor es otro tema... La menopausia y el humor son temas que me interesan. El humor en la danza me es algo que a mí me es bastante imprescindible. Siempre me pareció que la danza, me parece que se toma tan en serio las cosas... Y por eso yo siempre entendí cuando el público dice: “No, no quiero ir a ver eso porque no voy a entender nada”. Porque sí, es super como... hermético también.

P- Abstracto.

L- Abstracto y hermético. De todos modos, la poesía ocupa un gran lugar en mi obra. La abstracción de la poesía. Pero me gusta la combinación de elementos.

P- Sí, de hecho, a mí me pasó eso: que yo elegí casos de coreógrafos de danza, y en realidad los tres casos terminan siendo más hacia la performance, hacia lo performático que hacia la "Danza" digamos...

L- Pura, digamos.

P- Digamos, ¿qué es danza hoy en día?

L- Sí, es como que hoy en día se ha borrado mucho lo que es... Igual la escritura coreográfica también me es muy importante, como el lenguaje coreográfico.

P- *Asiente*

L- Pero todos estos elementos tienen que estar: el lenguaje coreográfico, el humor, lo performático, la palabra... Como que son todos ingredientes para mí. Pero, es cierto que la escritura coreográfica tiene que estar: ¿Cómo lo decís? ¿Con qué material? El material tiene que ser específico.

P- Y en ese sentido, ¿tu formación fuerte viene desde la danza clásica y desde la danza moderna?

L- Sí, más que nada en clásica, y después, mi material... Porque con Alain, siempre cada uno hace su material. Yo desarrollé todo mi material digamos, dentro de sus obras. Empecé así. Como, desarrollando mi material, y se volvió lo que es ahora mi material.

P- Claro.

L- Pero empecé digamos, ahí. Yo, en sus obras, hacía mucho para cosas de grupo. Si ves sus videos vas a reconocer mi material. Pero en general, siempre me pedía: "Hacé como... frases". Yo hago muchas frases, medio escritas. Y bueno, ahí empecé también mi manera de escribir frases: muy numerales, como, nada que ver con lo que ves, pero es muy escrito. Pero sí, ahora es como... Sí, más o menos ahí estoy ahora. Después, la obra en sí... Me fue bien. Me va bien y me va mal. Porque me cuesta venderla, pero para lugares muy específicos donde funciona muy bien está bien. Como Julidans, ahí en Ámsterdam voy a ir también. Pero es cierto que no puedo ir a actuar a... No sé, Gentbrugge, digo: un lugar que la gente no habla Inglés, no puedo. Está escrito en inglés.

P- Claro.

L- Lo hice en Francés, pero no... Como que no me convenció, la verdad. Como... No tiene ritmo. El idioma no tiene ritmo, y bueno. No... Me gustaría hacerlo en Español. Una versión en Español estoy pensando. Pero es el idioma materno, entonces tal vez...

P- ¿Y creés que la obra se modifica cuando le cambiás el idioma?

L- Totalmente. Es como otro personaje. Otro idioma es otra persona. Pero... Puede decir lo mismo, pero lo dice desde otro lado. El lenguaje es como...

P- Es interesante eso.

L- Sí, sí, es lindo. Es interesante.

P- Sí, justamente leí un texto para la tesis esta, un texto que habla sobre la... Cómo la traducción ha ayudado a formar el proyecto moderno. En el sentido de que, al traducir también se borran cosas.²⁴

L- Muchas, porque hay como... Digamos que las cosas... Por eso en poesía por ejemplo, como en Pizarnik,²⁵ que está traducida muy poco. Porque, ¿cómo traducís eso? Es intraducible. Es intraducible, sus conceptos son... No hay palabras para... Después obviamente hay escritores, como Borges²⁶ que bueno, obviamente, tradujo a Conrad,²⁷ qué se yo, grandes escritores pero... Él era escritor. Entonces como puede reformular algo.

P- Y bueno, ¿empezás el solo narrando tus orígenes en Córdoba también?

L- ¿En este, #THISISBEAUTY?

P- Sí.

L- Eehm... No, ¿no sé? No me acuerdo. No lo sé.

P- Osea, yo vi el trailer, todavía no vi la obra.

L- ¡Ah! Okay.

P- Y comenzaba como diciendo "Yo nací en...", hablás de este lugar en Córdoba...

L- ¡Ah! ¡Sí, cierto! Ese trailer. Ese trailer... La obra no tanto, pero es cierto que el trailer es así.

P- El trailer apunta más a eso.

L- ¡Ah, sí! Porque al final hay un monólogo que dice eso, es cierto. Me lo olvidé. Que dice: "Nací en este día, viví en esta calle... Mi mamá se llamaba así, mi papá se llamaba así..." Sí, sí.

P- Claro, yo me acordaba de eso.

L- Termina así la obra en realidad.

²⁴ Rolando Vázquez, 'Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2011): 27-44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.2011.01387.x>.

²⁵ Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-1972) fue una poeta, ensayista y escritora argentina.

²⁶ Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) fue un escritor, poeta y ensayista argentino.

²⁷ Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) fue un novelista británico-polaco.

P- ¡Ah! Entonces no es que parte de ahí, sino que vuelve al origen.

L- No, termina ahí. Sí, sí.

P- Bueno, un poco, quería preguntarte también, ¿cómo el contexto de...? Porque vos estuviste por muchos lugares, pero al final te quedaste de alguna manera establecida aquí en Gante.

L- Sí.

P- En lo que sería el campo de la danza flamenco.

L- Sí.

P- Y un poco surge siempre esta idea de que Flandes se asume a sí misma como una escena internacional, porque de hecho, casi todos los creadores de danza aquí en Flandes no son...

L- No son... Hay muy pocos, sí.

P- Pero a la vez se habla siempre de "el canon flamenco", de "la identidad flamenca" digamos... ¿Cómo vivís ese contraste? Digamos, ¿cuál es tu lugar en ese mapa?

L- Bueno, lo que pasó es que... Bueno, está Vandekeybus, Anne De Keersmaeker y Platel, como ellos son los fundadores de después "la ola" osea, digamos, de la danza flamenca. Empezó, digamos, con ellos y todos sus discípulos, que están... Son los que están ahora. Es cierto que, durante muchos años con Platel, nunca había un bailarín belga en el equipo, jamás. Hasta que hubo uno, y ese es el único que hasta hoy quedó y está ahí. Es como que... Era muy poca la relación que teníamos con gente de acá. Después como creadora, como coreógrafa sí, estoy en Flandes y el soporte viene de Flandes. Y muchos de mis colegas se fueron a Wallonia y Bruxelles. Se fueron a la otra parte. Muchos de ellos. Porque acá, les parecía muy difícil insertarse en la sociedad flamenca. Pareciera que es muy abierta, pero en realidad no lo es.

P- Creo que se creen más abiertos de lo que realmente son.

L- Totalmente. Y era muy... Yo pienso que, si yo fuera flamenca sería más famosa, si es por eso. Tendría muchas más oportunidades seguro. Y fue clarísimo que, llegó un momento en el que me di cuenta de que están tratando de levantar... Digamos, de que la gente, los flamencos, tengan más posibilidades. Ellos... Como... Voluntariamente. Yo veo que hay teatros que tienen puro coreógrafos flamencos. Hay algo así. Hará no sé, tal vez, un par de años, que lo empecé a sentir así. Que si yo fuera flamenca me iría mejor.

P- ¿Y eso ha limitado también, ...? ¿O ha, te ha orientado también a buscar producir en otros lugares? ¿O fue una búsqueda paralela?

L- Sí, fue paralela. Es como que yo siempre tuve el soporte de acá, y bueno, mi compañía es flamenca, y ahí estoy con laGeste y bueno, tengo planes con ellos... En realidad, cuando yo estaba en les Ballets C de la B como coreógrafa, era la única extranjera. Y fue la primera vez que ellos en veinte años tenían alguien así. Y en las reuniones, siempre se hablaba Flamenco. Aunque yo no lo hablaba. Hasta que en un momento empezaron a hablar Inglés. Y siempre... Era como algo que les molestaba muchísimo: Yo, que mi Flamenco no sea suficientemente bueno. Pero yo llegué a la conclusión de que aunque mi Flamenco fuera bueno, yo nunca voy a ser aceptada en esta sociedad. Ese es mi sentimiento real. Que no es por el idioma, es porque es así. Porque no soy, no voy a ser nunca parte de la sociedad. De la idiosincrasia ni de la sociedad.

P- Y en ese sentido, cuando hablaba con Fabián, ese sentimiento, Fabián no sólo lo tiene desde lo personal, sino también lo dancístico. Como que su formación de Quito nunca fue del todo asimilada... Como si de alguna manera, quisieran tomar el color, lo exótico, lo especial que traía, sin tomar... Toda la tradición de la cuál venía eso, digamos.

L- Claro.

P- Vos eso... No sé cómo lo habrás vivido. Porque al venir tal vez de la danza clásica, es una formación que ya tira más hacia lo europeo, digamos. No sé cómo lo habrás vivido eso en lo... Específicamente en lo dancístico, digamos.

L- No, más que nada... Como recuerdo mucho, como momentos... Porque yo soy rubia, puedo ser europea... Digo, de colores europea. Y cuando iba a una audición por ejemplo, me decían: "Ay, pero ¿sos argentina? No parecés argentina". Es como ese comentario, que se esperan ver, no sé... Una persona, un indio con plumas. Y al final les caigo yo, rubia de ojos verdes. Y qué bajón, porque no queríamos eso, queríamos otra cosa. Después sí, en la... Latineidad, en el humor, en la manera de moverme sí hay algo muy latino. Como... Por ejemplo, Platel, él lo usa mucho eso. La identidad de... Si ves las obras de él ves de dónde viene cada uno, como... Un maori, una africana, una latina... Está muy categorizado. Un israelí que habla Hebreo... digo, está muy claro que la gente no es de acá. Pero él lo usa de una manera muy inteligente también. No lo hace a nivel exótico, digamos. No exotiza. Sino que viene desde lo emocional de esas identidad. Como, ¿qué es emocionalmente tu identidad? Y... Como que sí y no. Como... Es el mismo comentario: "No parecés judía", "No parecés argentina", "No parecés..." O, en Argentina me dicen: "Ay, sí... Ya estás como una europea". Pero Europa es grande, como que, «¿europea de dónde?» Claro, dicen: "Ah, eso es muy europeo", se refiere al europeo... al alemán, al suizo.

P- Claro, como esa noción de "primermundista", digamos.

L- Claro. “Sos muy como...” Pero bueno, es como algo a lo que estoy acostumbrada también. Pero es cierto sí, que, especialmente en los ‘90 en Holanda me pasó un montón, eso que me digan: “No parecés argentina”. Como... Es algo muy violento, porque, ¿cómo? «Nunca estuviste en Argentina entonces.»

P- Claro sí. Sí, sí, sí.

L- Es lo mismo cuando dicen, en Argentina dicen: “Sí porque, algo como Suiza...” Como si Suiza... «¡Pero nunca estuviste en Suiza!» Entonces decir “algo como Suiza” es decir, es porque es algo lindo, como Suiza. Pero Suiza en realidad... No es lindo, digo ¿entendés? Es como... Las concepciones de las cosas están tergiversadas.

P- Son prejuicios, digamos.

L- Prejuicios, sí.

P- Sí. Sí, sí.

L- Pero eso de lo flamenco, sí. Eso es, asumidísimo que yo nunca voy a ser... Que al final nunca voy a poder como... A pesar de que estoy en la escena como coreógrafa y recibo subsidios –no siempre, pero recibo– no me siento totalmente bienvenida en realidad.

P- No, y además... En el diario nunca sale tampoco “La coreógrafa Lisi”, sale “La coreógrafa argentina Lisi”.

L- Sí, eso siempre. Y también siempre dice “Bélgica-Argentina”, nunca dice “Bélgica”.

P- Claro. Y vos, en ese sentido, ¿tenés ciudadanía europea?

L- Tengo pasaporte holandés yo.

P- Y cuando te fuiste a Israel, ¿ya lo tenías?

L- No, no. Me casé en Holanda yo.

P- Claro. Porque eso es otro tema, digamos... Que, muchas veces, la carrera profesional, si bien tira... Lo que te termina definiendo dónde quedarte, o hacia dónde ir, tiene que ver más con las oportunidades materiales.

L- ¡Obvio! Sí, sí. No, yo, cuando empecé a trabajar con Alain, bueno, vivía todavía en Holanda. Seguí viviendo en Ámsterdam, ocho años, y después me vine para acá. Y viví en Bruselas y después me mudé a Gent. Pero siempre, yo me quedé acá por Alain, en realidad. Porque trabajar con él, ya fue mi vida eso. Esos veinte años podrían haber sido en cualquier lado, como que no fue una elección.

P- Claro. Sí.

L- Una elección consciente. Tampoco lo fue cuando me fui a Israel, tampoco lo fue cuando me fui a Holanda. Tampoco fue cuando me vine acá, ni lo es ahora. Digo, yo vivo acá porque, por mi trabajo y porque bueno, tengo a mi hija acá. Pero... No es una elección. Puede ser en cualquier lado.

P- Aparte... Bueno, siendo digamos, "del interior"...

L- Sí, es otra cosa.

P- Viste que en Argentina todo lo que no es Buenos Aires es "el interior".

L- Sí, sí sí.

P- Yo también, soy de Rosario. Y, un poco está esa situación de que en Argentina, crecemos sintiendo que la vida pasa en otro lado, ¿viste? La vida pasa en Europa, la vida pasa...

L- ...en Buenos Aires. Sí, sí.

P- Claro, la vida pasa en Buenos Aires. Entonces, si querés dedicarte a las artes...

L- ...tenés que salir.

P- Tenés que salir.

L- Pero la suerte de la gente del interior también, es que, al no pasar por Buenos Aires, nosotros venimos directamente a Europa. ¿Entendés? Porque es distinto, la gente que del interior se va a Buenos Aires, y bueno... En Buenos Aires obviamente tenés oportunidades. Muchas más. Pero gente que no va a Buenos Aires, se va a Europa directamente, hay muchos de los creadores que salen... Especialmente en la danza, [...] ²⁸ Eso no lo pongas.

Risas

L- No estoy segurísima pero... Digo.

P- No, pero es una realidad, digamos, de que... Vos decís: "¿Cuánto de tu carrera estuvo determinado desde tu búsqueda artística/profesional, y cuánto desde decir «No quiero quedarme viviendo en Córdoba por...?»?"

L- Sí, yo estudié Trabajo Social en realidad en la universidad. Y eso para mí sí, tiene que ver con el trabajo inclusivo obviamente.

P- Claro.

L- Ya era... Una cosa que me interesaba a mí. Y después, fuera del ámbito social de la provincia de Córdoba, ¿qué, me voy a jubilar a los 65 años haciendo puntas?

²⁸ Un comentario fue omitido en la transcripción a pedido de la entrevistada.

digo... Fuera de eso en Córdoba no había nada. Y ahora hay pocas cosas de vida freelance pero, no mucho digamos.

P- Claro. Sí. Y bueno, y en ese sentido, lo que decías antes de: "Voy a poner en escena a una artista más grande", que cumple cincuenta digamos. ¿Vos sentís que hay futuro acá para una bailarina/coreógrafa de más de cincuenta, o lo tenés que crear vos a ese futuro?

L- Yo creo que lo tengo que crear yo. Osea, oportunidades no hay para gente... Para bailarines mayores de treinta, no hay oportunidades. Para coreógrafos, en mid-career –como yo– pocas. Muy pocas. Sólo si ya tenés, sos muy famoso, okay, eso es otra cosa. Pero si estás como yo en el medio, si sos conocido pero no sos Alain Platel, como... Pocas. Como... Tenés que creártelas vos. Y hacer entender, por ejemplo a los programadores con este solo, por qué este solo es importante: porque tenés el teatro lleno de mujeres de mi edad. ¿Por qué no tenés una obra con mujeres de mi edad?

P- Claro. Sí, eso es verdad.

L- Me parece así. Ahora no sólo tenés que venderles la obra, hacer la obra, venderles la obra, y hacerles un contexto para que ellos entiendan por qué existe esa obra. Que no es porque a mí se me canta hablar de mí que tengo 50 años, ¡sino porque es importante que haya mujeres de 50 años en la programación! Digo...

P- Claro. Sí es que, totalmente. Sí, esa necesidad de ver...

L- Es relevante.

P- ...otros cuerpos en escena. No importa digamos, no sólo desde la discapacidad, desde lo queer... Pero esto también.

L- O queer, bueno, eso hay un montón... Pero eso es porque ahora, los fondos europeos están destinados a eso, a inclusión... Obras inclusivas por ejemplo de discapacidad y queer.

P- Claro.

L- Y bueno, pero... Está bien, digo. Ahí en esta obra que voy a hacer en Buenos Aires, tengo. Es una obra grande con muchos bailarines en escena haciendo cosas virtuosas o hip hop, queer, inclusiva... claro. Y después, la gente que no es ni... Es que, acá son como... Okey, esto... Este casillero...

P- Ya está, sí.

L- Este casillero está lleno... Y bueno, si ya llenó ese casillero no te ponen. Y sí, por ahí le falta una columna a tu programación, entonces es como...

P- Sí, que en realidad es también como la ilusión de inclusividad. Pero en realidad, si el interés fuera ese no importaría que ya haya otra obra judía, que haya otra obra latina, digamos...

L- Obvio. Aparte por ejemplo, con la obra esa, con *MonkeyMind*, todo el mundo quería. Como, ahora yo voy a hacer una obra con gente de Sudáfrica, con sudafricanos con discapacidad... Discapacidad, lo mismo acá, un mix. Todo el mundo quiere esa obra. ¿Entendés? Porque son negros discapacitados. Tenés dos...

P- Sí, chequeás dos en uno. Ay sí, es tremendo.

L- Y yo digo: "No, no quiero vender esa obra. Yo quiero que me compren el solo". ¿Entendés? Pero todo el mundo quiere esa obra, pero esa obra yo no la voy a vender. Porque eso es fácil vender, no quiero vender eso. ¿Entendés? Como todo el mundo quiere eso, porque eso es bueno, negro... Y son todos negros con todo eso encima. Ya como...

P- Sí, sí. No, y también digamos, si vos caés en esa lógica, también: ¿cuánta integridad queda en tu propio trabajo? Digamos...

L- Obvio. Obvio, obvio. ¿Por qué vas a querer una cosa así? No... Yo soy bastante... rebelde, de alguna forma. Como... Y también porque soy, tengo 50 años y ya conozco bien cómo se mueve la escena. No me es... No me ofendo, no me nada, no me importa en realidad. Me importa y no me importa. Pero sí, la integridad me importa. Es una de las pocas cosas que me quedan. Integridad en el trabajo.

P- ¿Te tenés que ir?

L- No, no... Tipo en veinte minutos.

P- Perfecto, porque me queda una sola pregunta.

L- ¿Tenés algo más?

P- No, simplemente preguntarte si estabas familiarizada con el trabajo de otras personas de origen latinoamericano que también estén trabajando en Bélgica.

L- Sí, sí sí.

P- Y vos, ¿sentís que hay alguna cierta herencia latina? ¿Algo en común que veas? ¿O no?

L- Y... Bueno, no sé. Estaba Ayelén –te hablo de gente de mi generación– Ayelén... Que tiene un costado que ahí sí puede ser que tenga, pero no en lo que está haciendo hoy en día.

P- ¿Cuál es el apellido?

L- Ayelén Parolín.

P- Ah, Ayelén...

L- Ayelén Parolín... Ella tiene más, sus obras, cuando ella estaba en escena, por ejemplo ahí sí, tiene cosas de humor, que sí, para mí tienen que ver con una identidad latina. Con no tomarte tan en serio, esa temática por ejemplo. Creo que su última obra se llama "*Simple*", ahí también hay muchas cosas de humor. No en el material en sí mismo, no. Pero en tema del humor, por ejemplo, es algo que sí veo que las latinas tienen más como... Menos dificultad de reírse de sí mismas, para ponerlo más fácilmente. Ayelén... Después, ¿quién más? Y no después, como, Amanda Piña y todo eso es más conceptual. Del lado conceptual, más político, digamos. No es tanto lo que yo hago.

P- Claro.

L- No es tanto a lo que yo me enfoco. Con esa... con ese tipo, menos. Pero, no sé quién más. Si me nombrás gente puedo...

P- No, no. Es un poco... Lo que noté también cuando empecé a investigar esto, es que no hay mucho conocimiento, justamente. Osea, incluso cuando yo planteé este tema era lo mismo: "Qué interesante, qué bueno", pero ni mis docentes sabían quiénes son estos coreógrafos latinoamericanos, dónde están trabajando... Osea, fue ponerme a googlear de alguna manera.

L- Claro.

P- Y un poco en las entrevistas estoy notando lo mismo. Que es una cuestión de falta de información circulando... Lo cual, me alegra un poco decir: "Bueno, es relevante la búsqueda".

L- Sí, sí sí.

P- No, eso simplemente. Tengo otra duda que es totalmente desde lo práctico.

L- Ajá.

P- ¿Tu apellido se escribe con acento o no? ¿Es "Estarás"?

L- Y, en realidad sí. Pero yo lo saqué al acento, porque nadie lo pone y... Un quilombo.

P- Claro.

L- Entonces a veces lo pongo con y a veces sin... No sé, como quieras en realidad.

P- Pero es en la última, es "Estarás".

L- Estarás, como el verbo. Es con acento, pero acá... En general me lo ponen al revés, entonces lo saqué yo.

P- Claro, sí, me imaginé que debía venir por ese lado, pero me llamaba la atención que a veces te encontraba con acento y a veces no.

L- Sí, cambié también el "Lisi". Era con "z" y lo cambié con "s", porque sino los franceses me dicen "Lizi" y no me gusta.

P- ¡Ah! ¿En serio?

L- Y no me gustaba y lo cambié, y ahora soy "Lisi" y "Estaras", ya está. Sí, me simplifiqué el nombre, porque sino ya...

P- *Risa* Es fuertísimo eso. Desde el punto de vista conceptual es muy fuerte. Para poder...

L- Para poder sobrevivir. Sino me decían "Lizi", que era una cosa insoportable, y lo cambié. Y le puse "s."

P- Claro, ¡mirá!

L- Y "Estarás" lo mismo, le saqué el acento porque lo ponen al revés.

P- Wow. No, por mí ya... No tenía más preguntas. Super enriquecedora la charla. Y me encantaría verte en Mayo.

L- En Mayo dale, haceme acordar y te dejo una entrada.

P- Ah bueno, pero eso no importa.

L- Ahí es, se llama Corso el teatro.

P- Bien, perfecto.

L- Sí, es un teatro lindo. Y es una double bill con otra obra, una chica joven, que me parece que está bueno lo que hace. Sí, con gusto, vení. Y después eh... ¿Qué más hay ahora? No, tengo lo de Buenos Aires... Y después... En Junio tengo ahí en el Conservatorio de Amberes, voy a hacer una obra ahí también. Con los estudiantes, y también inclusiva, con gente con discapacidad.

P- Y lo que estás haciendo en Buenos Aires, ¿es una cosa completamente distinta?

L- Es un solo. Otro.

P- Es otro solo, bien.

L- Pero específico para este lugar, para Fundación Cazadores. Es un ciclo de tres coreógrafos y bueno, yo soy una de los coreógrafos. Sí, una obra corta y sí, lo tengo que terminar.

P- Bien.

L- Pero es un lugar chiquito, para cuarenta personas, como super intimista.

P- Muy íntimo digamos, claro.

L- Sí, sí sí.

P- Claro, que bien.

L- Es como de las cosas que hago yo para divertirme en mi vida.

Risas

P- Bueno, muy bien Lisi. ¿No sé si hay algo que vos quieras agregar? Por mí ya está.

L- No, ¿y después qué vas a hacer con este material?

P- Bueno, ¿qué voy a hacer con este material? Digamos, un poco la idea es que la tesis de Grado sea el puntapié para la tesis de Maestría, en la que poder abarcar un poco más. Porque es un tema muy amplio, muy poco investigado, y me gustaría seguir ahondando en eso. Digamos, el tema principal de la tesis es: ¿Cuál es el rol de estos artistas de origen latinoamericano en el campo dancístico de acá?

L- Está muy bueno el tema.

P- Está muy bueno el tema, y noto que hay mucho por abarcar. Entonces en esta primera tesis la idea es hacer un poco, un pantallazo. Entender un poco estos casos puntuales y qué conexiones tienen o qué diferencias tienen. Pero en treinta páginas... Tampoco se puede hacer milagros, digamos. Es un poco... Comenzar. Y tal vez también utilizarlo de base para en la tesis de Maestría ahondar un poco más.

L- ¿Y ahora qué tenés que hacer? ¿Cómo tenés que...?

P- Claro, bueno. La idea es entregarla en Junio, que es, ya. Osea, no falta nada para Junio. Y veremos si llego, la idea es llegar.

L- ¡Sí!

P- Sí. Pero bueno, justamente por eso quería tener la entrevista. Porque si me confiaba de ver tu obra en Mayo, viste, de Mayo a Junio hay poco tiempo para...

L- Sí.

P- ...para analizar. Por eso quería que el foco de este caso estuviera más en la palabra.

L- Bueno, si querés el video, está bueno el video, digo. Bueno, esta muy... Como...

P- Buenísimo. ¡Sí, obvio!

L- Lo que ves, como que está muy bien hecho y es mejor, es muy claro.

P- Perfecto. No sabía que estaba registrado. Te puedo pedir eso, y me habías dicho también de unos textos que hablan de tu obra.

L- Sí, de Wittgenstein, de Carla Carmona.²⁹

P- Perfecto. Perfecto. Sí, esas dos cosas serían super útiles.

L- Ah sí, sí, sí. Y tengo todo lo de mi trabajo inclusivo también.

P- Buenísimo.

L- Yo hice un artículo para esta... Mandame un mail o un mensaje así me acuerdo.

P- Así te acordás, perfecto.

²⁹ Carla Carmona, 'Champagne!-champagne!!', or 'A bigger thing', Sara Vanderieck, 2022, <https://www.saravanderieck.be/?p=3841&lang=en>.

