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Feminist Gestures:
Rehearsing Relationality in Twentieth-Century Transnational Art Forms

By

Marlena Gittleman

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Elizabeth Abel, Co-Chair
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Abstract

Feminist Gestures:
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by

Marlena Gittleman

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Elizabeth Abel, Co-Chair

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Feminist Gestures argues that gestures act as a first step in rehearsing relationality, allowing us to develop embodied strategies that counter the forces and temporalities of dictatorial, patriarchal, colonial, and imperial violence. It tracks the resistant potential of small physical movements across art forms, from early twentieth-century modernisms to 1980s feminisms in the U.S., Latin America, and Europe. This dissertation argues that non-codified gestures—described in literary texts, enacted in performance arts, and documented in film and photography—arise during historical moments and geographical and social contexts in the twentieth century where speech is limited, expression curtailed, and survival squeezed. The project draws on queer and feminist theory, Global South critiques, studies in phenomenology and performance, and embodied research to undertake comparative studies on works by Virginia Woolf, Maria Aurèlia Capmany, María Irene Fornés, Diamela Eltit, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Gabriela Mistral, Ana Mendieta, and Colectivo LASTESIS. I find that modernist feminists' attention to the body as a site of oppression is later honed into gestural feminist art that reclaims bodies-in-relation as sites of resistance.

While the project acknowledges that much of performance's power lies in its immediacy, *Feminist Gestures* contends that this potential can be re-activated during moments of reading a text or about a performance. Even as tensions between written text and nonverbal physical movement animate the project, I aim to undo strict boundaries between gesture represented on the page and gesture represented in the body by drawing attention to the role of embodied imagination. Unlike a thumbs-up, a wave, or a shrug, the gestures I study call us—sometimes inviting, sometimes demanding—as readers and viewers into our own bodies and sensibilities. From consideration of a fist opening and closing in Cha's experimental art book *Dictee*, to hands "spelling out what is unseen" in Mistral's poem "El reparto," to an ankle flick in Woolf's fictional biography *Orlando*, the dissertation shows that descriptions of gestures in texts never remain in the realm of representation alone. Because we do not immediately know what such non-codified gestures mean, we have to bring our readerly and embodied faculties to details that might initially seem auxiliary or minor. It is through this process of engagement, I argue, that embodied

relationality can arise, if we are willing. Shared movements foment collective political mobilization; gestures invite a loosening of ties to individual subjectivity, allowing us to come into solidarity through our bodies.

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INTRODUCTION

"If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."
— often attributed to Emma Goldman, although she never said it directly

Santiago, Chile, November 2019: a group of hundreds of feminist, queer, and trans protestors assemble in the streets in front of the Palacio de los Tribunales de Justicia as part of Colectivo LASTESIS's performance "un violador en tu camino" ("the rapist in your path"). Amidst months of mass protests against neoliberalism met with militarized police violence, the group chants a song—in front of the building that houses the nation's highest court—that ties these forms of state violence to patriarchal and misogynist violence. The chorus resounds "y la culpa no era mía ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía / el violador eras tú / el violador eres tú".[1] Alongside the words of the chant are the coordinated bodily movements and gestures the group performs together without being perfectly in sync, which could be described as:

> step-touch, step-touch, step-touch, with opposite shoulder swing that keeps the beat;
> hands behind the head with elbows out, squats that punctuate;
> alternating legs bending back and forth and hips shifting the weight side to side while opposite arms curl in toward the shoulders, often accompanied by an escaping smile;
> point directly forward with left arm completely outstretched and taut, lower and repeat;
> point again and again, in different directions;
> point again with arm above the head and circle it around with bent elbow, finish pointing straight up with straight arm;
> right hand joins this action;
> shake left fist on the beat;
> point forward;
> put hand next to mouth as if amplifying sound;
> one last round of: point, drop arm, point, drop arm, point…

A "gesture of solidarity," in light of actions like these, is not merely a figure of speech. The present project sets off from the premise that if the body is a site of oppression—patriarchal, dictatorial, imperial, colonial—then it can also be reclaimed as a site of resistance, in line with intersectional queer, feminist, and Global South critiques. In other words, because gestures have come to structure how we conceive of embodied subjectivity, they have the power to transgress its disciplining. "[U]n violador en tu camino" responds to historical and political returns, repetitions, and echoes in Chile in the post-Pinochet era: of police repression, of neoliberalism, of state-funded violence, of femicide, and of everyday gender violence towards *disidencias* (queer, trans, and otherwise anti-normative subjectivities). We know that the mere existence of such subjectivities can be a threat to normative structures. A central question, then, drives this dissertation: what is it that gestures—small, physical movements of the body—specifically can contribute to embodied feminist and queer resistance?

The answer, in part, is that gestures allow us to rehearse relationality, to develop our own repetitions and returns that run counter to the forces and temporalities of violence. Colectivo

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[1] "and it wasn't my fault, not where I was or how I was dressed/ the rapist was you / the rapist is you." For a recording of the performance, see: https://youtu.be/aB7r6hdo3W4?si=tLIIE6LnHQhL0wtp.

LASTESIS first performed this piece in Valparaíso before bringing it to Santiago. They engaged in embodied and somatic workshops that combined theory and practice, words and movement.[2] Shortly after its capital-city debut, the performance got picked up, adapted, re-rehearsed, and performed again and again in other contexts and other countries, by other feminist groups, responding to specific conditions of state and gender violence, from femicide in Mexico to abuse of power by entertainment industry executives in the U.S., in conjunction with movements like Ni Una Menos and #metoo. As Colectivo LASTESIS's performance begins to show, one way to reclaim the body is through its movements, specifically small and non-codified ones, that draw in the viewer, audience, or reader. In reading about the movements above, you might already have begun to envision how they would look, using embodied imagination—what you sense of your own body in motion—to guide the process.

While gestures are not the only catalyst of a social or political movement, embodying gestures, as I will show, becomes a way to gather, to start relating, to rehearse collectivity, and to build solidarity. Gestures across mediums become a way to speak and write and be otherwise, particularly for women and queer writers, immigrants, and Global South subjects. In the interest of highlighting resonance between shared embodied feminist and queer strategies, I take a transnational approach, considering feminist and queer literature, performance, and visual art, from early twentieth-century modernisms to 1980s feminisms in Latin America, the U.S., and Europe. The works I will consider were created in contexts that include the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, the Franco dictatorship in Spain, and neoliberal violence with U.S. origins. Yet in true feminist fashion, I would be remiss if I were to only dwell on the major events of world stages without considering what happens in the context of the everyday. This project makes the case that those scales—micro and macro, major and minor—are in fact interconnected. Gestures are what Suely Rolnik would term "micropolítica," in the sense that decolonial change can start in attention to the body (4). Yet this process is never limited to one single subject or moment, but rather extends to "the experience of the embryonic futures nesting in our body" (150). In other words, gestures are a small-scale embodied intervention with the potential to move beyond the "minor" or the "micro."

Feminist Gestures is grounded in feminisms' attention to embodied positionality, to the ways our bodies have been patrolled, policed, silenced—and how they resist. As I will go on to show, resistant movement has deep ties to the embodied pleasure of both dance (understood capaciously) and queerness (understood as necessarily political). It feels only fitting to bring these approaches together to structure the arc of this introduction, drawing from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's axiomatic introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet* and from somatic practices. Sedgwick writes: "In dealing with an open-secret structure, it's only by being shameless about risking the obvious that we happen into the vicinity of the transformative" (*Epistemology* 22). Besides that the gestures I will consider often arise *in the context of queerness*, gestures feel like an open secret in a number of ways: they can be deeply personal, intimate, and revealing, yet anyone can observe them; we know they exist but we don't often give them their due; when we do, we actually aren't quite sure how to pin them down, or what to make of them. We think we know what gestures are, but each time we look, they are a little different, and relationality bends. To narrow the field in this introduction, then, I, too will be "shameless about risking the obvious" when it comes to conceptualizing gestures by presenting a series of axioms below. It is inevitable

[2] For more on this process, see the collective's own *Set Fear on Fire* and "Feminist Performance," an interview with Susana Draper.

that these axioms will overlap, given the interconnectedness of the gestural processes and methodologies they describe.

To add another layer of "shameless" to the context, I'll out myself as a dancer deeply committed to thinking and sensing through how we move our bodies and how we are moved in our bodies. In the rest of this introduction and in the chapters that follow, I invite you to notice your own body as you read, and to enter in where you'd like, blink, breathe, stand up, witness, join in—or some other somatic imagining or action.

Axiom 1: Gestures are physical.

Amidst so many turns of phrase that qualify gesture away from the body's movements—"an empty gesture," "gesturing towards," even "a gesture of goodwill"—this project insists on renewing attention to the physical. The above phrases would appear to emphasize gestures' incompleteness, in line with commonplace understandings of gesture that see it as on the way to something but never quite there, and perhaps lacking and even flimsy as a result. However, it bears recalling that the etymology of the word "gesture" is grounded in the body's physicality. Adam Kendon reminds us:

> The modern word 'gesture' is derived from a Latin root *gerere* which means 'to bear or carry, to take on oneself, to take charge of, to perform or to accomplish.' It derives more immediately from a Mediaeval Latin word 'gestura' which means 'way of carrying' or 'mode of action' (Partridge, 1959) and in its earliest uses in English it referred to the manner of carrying the body, bodily bearing or deportment. Somewhat later it came to be used in Rhetorical treatises to refer to the way in which the body was to be employed in the making of speeches and this usage included, of course, the specific actions of the limbs and face that, nowadays, we usually have in mind when the term 'gesture' is used. ("The Study of Gesture" 153)[3]

Even if gestures might still imply a sense of incompleteness, the repetition of "carrying" here emphasizes weight and work. Giorgio Agamben calls attention to the process-based nature of gestures, claiming that they: "break […] with the false alternative between ends and means" (56). I read this claim as one that can help move us away from the continual question of if gestures "do enough," and that encourages us to think instead about *what happens* when gestures come onto the scene. In this dissertation, I will demonstrate the potentiality of gestures' open-endedness by building upon the physical foundation of gesture as bodily action and action in the body.

Throughout the chapters that follow, I will discuss a range of gestures that are small physical movements, both performed live and described on the page, while also attempting to undermine that strict binary. In terms of movements, we will see a lot of hands: a fist opening and closing in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's experimental art book *Dictee*; a finger moving across a throat in María Irene Fornés play *Fefu and Her Friends*; hands "spelling out what is unseen" in Gabriel Mistral's poem "El reparto" ("Distribution"). We will see other extremities gesture, too: an ankle flick in Virginia Woolf's fictional historical biography *Orlando*, a head turn in Diamela Eltit's genre-bending text *Lumpérica*. I will also show how the full body itself can gesture: an

[3] Kendon's work on gesture is perhaps the most well-known on the topic in the field of linguistics. See also his *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance.*

upright turn in María Aurèlia Capmany's fictional historical biography *Quim/Quima*, a horizontal turn in Ana Mendieta's filmwork *Silueta Sangrienta*.

This focus on the physical is not to negate the existence of "gesture" as figurative, but rather to emphasize where the two touch and to indicate that the writing that follows will never deploy "gesture" in a solely figurative way. Juana María Rodríguez, in a study that emphasizes queer pleasure and reclaims the potential of gestures for Latinas and "*latinidad*," contends that "[g]estures are where the literal and the figurative copulate":

> Gestures can be literal—actual movements of the body—or figurative, gestures that reach out to manipulate how energy and matter flow in the world. […] [G]esture serves metaphorically to register the actions of the body politic, those activist interventions that push, jam, open, block, and twist social forces in the material world. But it is also used to name specific corporeal articulations of fingers, thighs, and tongues, the movement of the living body and her parts. (4)

Even in the above conceptualization, I would argue, the metaphors themselves become more concrete: energy and matter are in fact physical and capable of embodied action in "push, jam, open, block, and twist." While Rodríguez's focus on gestures leads her to analyze what she classifies as "legal gestures," "activist gestures," and "political gestures" as they relate to sexual intimacy and the law before going on to analyze physical gestures in pornography, performance art, and everyday acts (24-25), I emphasize physical gestures in each chapter with the intention of honing in on forms of embodied resistance. Moreover, this dissertation works against solely figurative mobilizations that dilute gestures' embodied relational power (I am here thinking of other scholarly works that deploy the word "gesture" as part of a title without going on to pay much attention to the body itself). This is related to a point of contention with solely semiotic readings of gesture that would make gesture into (only) a sign alongside other signs, or which empty gesture of its significance–disembodied and distanced from material conditions. Yet my approach does not imply an abandoning of the written word, but rather a renewed attention to it. My aim is to draw a sharper distinction between figurative turns of speech that absent the body and descriptions of gestures which still implicate an imagining of the body—always an embodied, somatic, and sensorial process, whether conscious or not. As such, gestures lend body to text.

Axiom 2: Gestures do not always have a straightforward meaning.

Even though the gestures I will focus on are concrete in their physicality, this does not mean that they mean only one thing, or something specific or agreed-upon. *Feminist Gestures* focalizes gestures that do not possess a one-to-one correspondence with a specific meaning or word, what Nelly Richard refers to as "una gestualidad no codificada," or "an un-codified gesturality" (18). I do this in order to show how allegedly minor occurrences or auxiliary details can intervene in oppressive systems by micropolitical means. In fact, given that marginalized communities have often relied upon shifting unspoken systems—like queer flagging—to evade or pass undetected by forms of state and social violence, this project focuses on seemingly fleeting or insignificant gestures. I contend that it is precisely *because* these gestures don't possess just one meaning that they are able to slip or subtly subvert violent systems, and also offer modes of undermining them through relationality.

Throughout, I will argue that non-codified gestures—described in literary texts, enacted in performance arts, and documented in film and photography—arise during historical moments and geographical and social contexts in the twentieth century where speech is limited, expression curtailed, survival squeezed. I find that gestures appear more frequently during moments of instability around modernizing cultural narratives, including those that oppress on the basis of gender, race, or sexuality. Unlike a thumbs-up, a wave, or a shrug, the gestures I'll consider call us—sometimes inviting, sometimes demanding—as readers and viewers into our own bodies and sensibilities. For example, while the pointing in the Colectivo LASTESIS performance described above could be read as a signal or as a reversal of blame, there are other gestures whose meaning is not quite so straightforward: the hands behind the head while squatting could be a form of strengthening, of refusing surrender, or something else—and it is the process of considering this that constitutes gestures' potential. Moments like these continue to arise in the twentieth-century art forms I will consider: we will see small movements of the body in performance, film, and photography, and in narration that seems to get dilated or interrupted in describing details that might initially just seem auxiliary or minor. Yet this non-codified movement is key to the gestures that arise in the chapters that follow. Because we *do not* immediately know what they mean, we have to recruit our readerly and embodied faculties.

Axiom 3: Gesture is embodied method.

A crucial methodological question runs throughout this project: what does it mean to analyze the nonverbal via the verbal? How can we use words to speak about a phenomenon that bypasses them? Questions like these permeate the fields of gender studies, literary studies, and performance studies alike. Luce Irigaray asks, with a politicized sense of the erotic: "Why speak? you'll ask me. We feel the same things at the same time. Aren't my hands, my eyes, my mouth, my lips, my body enough for you? Isn't what they are saying to you sufficient?" (205). José Esteban Muñoz, in a theorization of gesture that has been crucial to this dissertation, begins with a childhood memory about his embodied femininity: "the way he walks, how he shakes his ass" become a tell for queerness, at least according to how his machista family members read him, before he himself is even consciously aware of it (*Cruising* 68). A carriage, a walk, "the mannish strut of a particularly confident woman" (*Cruising* 65) (something that has personally caused trouble for me)—all of these communicate beyond words. However, while tensions between written text and nonverbal physical movement animate this project, it is not with the intention to reify or fetishize or assert the primacy of one over the other. Rather, I aim to undo strict boundaries between gesture represented on the page and gesture represented in body by drawing attention to the role of embodied imagination.

By calling on our embodied imagination, descriptions of gestures in texts never remain in the realm of representation alone. In an analogue to performances that stage gestures, we'll see moments in texts that stage characters' bodies through description. In the works I consider, such embodied imagination is required as a way to approach performative aspects of language in earlier modernist texts, as when Virginia Woolf's Orlando flicks her ankle and sets off a chain of embodied events that ripple through syntax and undermine gender norms, which I frame in terms of Judith Butler's "contest[ing] the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations" (531). In texts from the later part of the century, we'll see formal experimentation that also calls for somatic approaches to reading, as in the syntactical interruptions that produce new rhythms in Theresa Hak Kung Cha's *Dictee* and Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica*. Gestures represented on the page then, never simply remain there. This

experimentation corresponds, historically, with the rise of feminist performance art, which seems to stretch the genre limits of the art forms I'll consider, as in Ana Mendieta's performances documented on film and in María Irene Fornés's play *Fefu and Her Friends*, which moves the audience out of their seats in the main theater into much closer proximity with actors' bodies.

Speech act theory and queer theory's extension of it into frameworks of performativity lay the groundwork for textual analysis that always already implicates a sense of doing and pushes at the limits of the page. Sedgwick "attend[s] to performative aspects of texts, and to what are often blandly called their 'reader relations,' as sites of definitional creation, violence, and rupture in relation to particular readers, particular institutional circumstances" (*Epistemology* 3). While reader response theory tends to acknowledge what we might now term readers' positionality (the "particularity" Sedgwick names), the present work is invested in their somatic responses, too, which, I would argue, are actually *part of* the particularity. I build upon these approaches to make the case for what I call "reading gesturally"— that is, why we as readers and critics should pay attention both to how bodies look in performance and how they are described on the page, especially when their movements are subtle or ambiguous and arise in contexts of political violence or everyday oppression that limit speech. In each chapter, I will model specific versions of how to go about reading gesturally, which includes both paying attention to gestures in works and how they invite us to respond in our own bodies. As I will detail in Chapter 3, Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica*, for instance, describes the protagonist holding a blade over her arm, and it seems to call upon readers to go ahead and bring down the blade.

Gestures in the works I consider incite embodied modes of engaging with art forms. Michel de Certeau contends that we can pay attention to small movements of the body to undermine a passive process of reading: "We should try to rediscover the movements of this reading within the body itself, which seems to stay docile and silent but mines the reading in its own way: from the nooks of all sorts of 'reading rooms' (including lavatories) emerge subconscious gestures, grumblings, tics, stretchings, rustlings, unexpected noises, in short a wild orchestration of the body" (175). An attention to this "wild orchestration of the body" also runs throughout moments of composition here, connecting my own writing with the works I will discuss. Throughout, I will deploy description and detail in my critical prose. While this approach is certainly a logistical necessity at times, due to the ephemeral nature of works or to questions of licensing and permissions, it is also a methodological choice. In doing so, I attempt to immerse readers in a process that mirrors what it is like to encounter non-codified gestures in texts and performance, in which the works move us beyond imagining solely in the mind; rather, they call on us to use our full somatic sensibilities.

Axiom 4: Gestures take practice.

Not practice to perfect or to master, but practice to try out and to engage. Rehearsal is a concept that links embodied practice with liberatory practices. It appears in the title of this project because it signals gestures' connection to both of these areas. Ruth Wilson Gilmore contends that abolitionist frameworks involve "rehearsing the world into otherwiseness." She also reminds us that "practice makes better" not just for student movements, but for police and neoliberal institutions (Commencement Speech). Bodily movements, however, are not necessarily liberatory; we need only recall Bertolt Brecht's prescient 1932 claim: "Only when the strutting takes place over corpses do we get the social gest of Fascism" (105). In the face of such violence, gestural rehearsals become a way to attempt resistant alternatives. In what follows, we will see many scenes and moments of rehearsal: Eltit's use of "ensayos" ("rehearsals") in *Lumpérica*,

Mendieta's return to the "going into the earth" gesture, *Fefu*'s rehearsal scene of a performance within the play. In addition to what happens diegetically in the art forms I consider, *Feminist Gestures* also offers readings of modes of embodiment that allow us to try something *else*: try out, try on, try.

This project comes about from the deep links between my interdisciplinary work as a queer and feminist literary scholar and my practice as a dancer. Gestures have always been in my bones, so that even when my mind forgot, they surfaced in my body. (Joints: those articulations.) As such, my own and others' embodied research are a key part of my methodology. Throughout this introduction and throughout the entire dissertation, I let my "I" become known and, at times, detail my own embodied experiences. Not just as a dancer, but as a viewer of performances, I share my embodied experience as a methodological approach. I hope to show where I am writing from; what has led to this writing; my relationships to those who have influenced my approaches; and moments that have led to shifts in my thinking, writing, and frameworks, usually not in a linear "aha!" way but rather because they jostled something that turned up later somewhere else. A book makes narratives neat, but I do not want to lose the traces or the energy of physical de-/composition. While writing this manuscript, I have:

> Thrown my body on the floor
> Shaken my limbs
> Let the weight of my head carry me through space
> Closed my eyes and felt the beat of my heart
> Opened my eyes and seen others dancing all around me

Throughout this text, I build on the critical question "what can the body do?," a question which crosses the fields of critical theory and performance studies, from Gilles Deleuze's adaptation of Baruch Spinoza's inquiry to Ben Spatz's development of the potential of technique and embodied research (2). In the same way that, as I have detailed above, gestures on the page are not mutually exclusive with gestures in the body, embodied research allows ideas to emerge, and writing drives embodied research. Ellie Steere and Emma O'Mara ask: "How does embodied non-linear research affect the process of composition?" and they bet on: "generation of knowledge through feeling, the senses" (2-3). I view the dance studio as a place to build embodied community, to practice in small groups what we want to do elsewhere—including on our own as readers. In the same vein, I view close reading—ever attentive to detail, imagining small gestures in our bodies—as a mode we can bring to our movement. These practices are two complementary modes of composition in time.

Axiom 5: Gestures are phenomena that cross temporalities.

Gestures are physical movements in moments of time. Gestures imply delay, digression, dilation, distraction. Gestures interrupt, lag, loop, and linger. It comes as no surprise, then, that foundational critical texts in gestural scholarship have come out of studies in theater, by Brecht and Walter Benjamin (Butler, too, builds upon this lineage). Brecht develops gesture as a key facet of epic theater, which, he contends "arouses [the viewer's] capacity for action" (37). In his essays elaborating on Brecht's theorization of epic theater, Benjamin too, returns again and again to the role of gestures, particularly "the way in which the raw material (the gesture) is prepared and processed on the stage" (24). In other words: gesture is not auxiliary, but rather, a key facet of the genre. Benjamin contends that what brings audience members into action is that epic

theater "depends on interruption," a process which he ties to gestures performed by actors. Such a process not only interrupts speech, but also interrupts the audience's complacency: "the audience is called upon to learn to be astonished at the circumstances within which he [the hero or protagonist] has his being" (18). While the aims of this dissertation may be somewhat less didactic, and its tone less forceful, than those of 1930s Brechtian epic theater, the chapters that follow will indeed emphasize gestures' ability to intervene across temporalities, in both everyday and historical time. I also build upon phenomenological approaches that allow for in-the-moment happenings, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty's landmark analysis of gestures' potential to open up relational embodiment beyond oneself: "The gesture is in front of me like a question, it indicates to me specific sensible points in the world and invites me to join it there" (191).[4] While I acknowledge that much of performance's power lies in its immediacy, *Feminist Gestures* contends that invitation can be *re-activated* during moments of reading a text or about a performance.

José Esteban Muñoz reads gesture as "a moment when that overwhelming frame of a here and now, a spatial and temporal order that is calibrated against one, is resisted" (*Cruising* 67). I dilate this "moment" to consider performance in real time and gestures documented on the page, which dilate asynchronous relational potential; we are invited to imagine and relate to these gestures in our minds and in our bodies across histories and communities—moments of return and rehearsal. Such a process aligns with the project's historical arc: in order to understand feminist performance art in the Americas of the 1970s and 1980s as a culmination of gestural strategies and sensibilities, I recover modernist literature's attention to grappling with limitations to public life. In particular, I focus on which subjects can move and speak freely, and which turn to gesture because they have no other means of expression.

Axiom 6: Gestures rehearse against forms of violence. (A chapter breakdown)

This project arises from a sustained search for how to be, exist, survive in our bodies in our present times. My project asks, in solidarity with many others: in a time of capitalist colonialist destruction, racial and gender violence, what do we have recourse to, individually and collectively? (And it is a privilege to even be able to have the time and resources to ask the question.) Feminist and queer art forms have always had a complex relationship to linear time, which often drags us along or leaves us behind. It feels fitting, then, to return: I turn to key moments from past queer and feminist texts, performances, and other works across mediums that continue to resonate now.

The chapters that follow bring together a corpus of women, queer, feminist, immigrant, and Global South writers and artists. Gestures in our bodies register violence—both systemic and physical—in our bodies. Many of the women I write about faced acute violence: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Ana Mendieta were both killed by femicide. Yet we will also see other structural forms of violence: surveillance, censorship, repression. If trauma takes place in our bodies, our bodies are where we can attempt to respond, to heal—although that doesn't mean that such a happy outcome is always possible. I am interested in gestural strategies that the works rehearse in the face of violence, ones that we can rehearse too. While these gestural strategies are by no

[4] For contemporary extensions of this phenomenological approach to embodied resistance, especially in the context of racial, gender, and sexual violence, see Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* and Hourya Bentouhami's "The Veil, Race, and Appearance: A Political Phenomenology." For additional key moments in this critical lineage, including how Frantz Fanon draws attention to what racism feels like in the body, see Banu Bargu's "Corporeal Critique."

means exclusive to the positionalities of the writers and artists I consider, I have chosen a corpus of works that seem to be particularly interested in and committed to engaging with bodily movements, and that are willing to experiment with what non-codified gestures can make possible. The authors and art forms I include here are part of networks of relationality, both acknowledged and unrecognized, and I hope they open up the potential for solidarity across other comparative, hemispheric, and transnational frameworks engaged in shared struggles *through* the body.

The chapters present and nuance different modes and deployments of gesture. In all of these, gestures themselves often contribute to an expansion of genre: they dilate prose, slow down poetry, cross performance and its documentation in written text and film. I see gesture as an experimental compositional strategy—where artists rehearse and try things out. Sometimes this leads to more "successful" resistant outcomes, diegetically or beyond the texts. What unites these art forms as much as their subject matter is what their formal experimentation—whether that is on the level of genre or on the level of describing the non-codified gesture—has the ability to provoke *in our bodies* as readers and viewers. Beyond a prescriptive or standardized outcome, they invite us into forms of embodied relational engagement, if we are willing.

The first chapter begins by returning to a familiar modernist text, with renewed attention to representations of how gendered and racialized bodies move through space. "The Touch of Intertextuality: Staging Gestural Encounters in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Maria Aurèlia Capmany's *Quim/Quima*" centers gestural subjects and an embodied approach to intertextuality in order to reckon with fraught political contexts, including coloniality and the Franco dictatorship. I bring together moments of staging in Woolf's parodic biography (1928) and Capmany's Catalan adaptation of it (1971) to claim that nonbinary protagonists' gestures subvert patriarchal gender norms, particularly when speech is limited. I bring Capmany's text, along with its dedicatory letter to Woolf, into conversation with contemporaneous U.S. women of color critics including Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa, whose descriptions of women's bodies writing nuance Woolf as feminist precedent and open up additional transnational and hemispheric frameworks that resonate with the chapters that follow.

The intertextual concerns of Chapter 1 open into the intersubjective concerns of "Sensing Beyond the Self: María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends*," which contends that overlapping modes of somatic sensibility in the 1977 play with an all-women cast cultivate feminist and queer relationality within and beyond the space of the theater. Focusing on the experimental staging of Part II, I bring together literary analysis of the script with a performance studies perspective on embodied reception of live performance. I center the influence of other performance art on the play's development, with attention to the horizontal and improvisational investigations tied to the rise of postmodern dance in 1960s New York, particularly the compositional practice of tuning scores. What emerges: a shared feminist feeling, collective forms of embodied resistance, with the potential to challenge limitations imposed upon women's bodies by quotidian patriarchal violence.

The third chapter demonstrates, on the one hand, a culmination of gestural practices of resistance in feminist performance art, and on the other, a continued mobilization of textual gestures. "Performing Gestures of Political Resistance: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* and Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica*" considers contemporaneous performance art and experimental written texts (from 1982 and 1983) to theorize gestures' role in feminist strategies for resisting patriarchy and legacies of U.S. empire in South Korea and Chile. The hemispheric analysis bridges U.S. queer reparative reading with Latin American art criticism responding to the violence of the Pinochet dictatorship. I argue that gesture's movement off the page foments practices of

embodied resistance across historical contexts, and I theorize the ways in which resistant gestures on the page continue to be embodied anew by activating readers' senses and sensibilities. Namely, physical acts of reading these genre-bending texts become modes of partaking in collective re-membering.

Given that gestures can traverse subjects, I consider their potential to extend beyond human subjects to the environment. In the final chapter, "Gestural Landscapes: Gabriela Mistral and Ana Mendieta Re-distributing the Body," which itself represents a limit case for the project, I read Gabriela Mistral's 1954 poem "El reparto" alongside Ana Mendieta's short filmworks from the *Silueta* series, which start to undo and reconfigure the limits of the human body itself. This happens both through a re-distribution of body parts and senses and through a loosening of bipedalness that allows the works to move into the horizontal plane of collectivity rather than the vertical one of dominance. Re-distributing the body becomes a way to attend to histories of femicide and colonial violence that affect bodies of women and bodies of land, offering alternative modes of relationality that challenge ongoing extractivism and Anthropocene destruction.

The project concludes with a brief coda that considers transnational adaptations of Colectivo LASTESIS's contemporary public performance "un violador en tu camino" ("the rapist in your path"), which, as we've begun to see above, literally points the finger at patriarchy's complicity with sexual violence, institutional racism, and neoliberalism. Gestures can serve as a relational bridge between bodies, generations, and geographies, particularly generative as we perform new narratives amidst hostile political conditions.

Closing axiom: We can lose our selves in gestures…if we let us.

Gestures certainly indicate identity: an individual's embodied history, experiences, culture, and positionality.[5] As Nina Haft shows, we often carry our ancestors in this way, whether we choose to or not.[6] However, that is not where gestures' ontological sphere ends: gestures can also reconfigure individual identity through relationality. Rodríguez reminds us: "Even when done in private, gestures are always relational; they form connections between different parts of our bodies; they cite other gestures; they extend the reach of the self into the space between us; they bring into being the possibility of a 'we' " (2). There is something important about the *possibility* of intersubjectivity. Via the art forms I analyze throughout this text, I show that relationality can happen across multiple levels: diegetic scenes between individuals, performers and audiences; readers'/viewers' embodied responses; comparative solidarity between works in the form of intertextuality.

Throughout the chapters that follow, I will argue that gestures have the potential to pull us beyond our selves, beyond individual identity markers and positionalities. If we are willing,

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[5] Some things people have said to me when I told them about this project:
"I get why you're writing about the nonverbal, it's very queer"
"I get why you're writing about hands, it's very lesbian"
"I get why you're writing about gestures, we're Italian"
"I get why you're writing about gestures, we're Jewish"
"I get why you're writing about bodies, you're a dancer"

[6] Haft's *36 Jewish Gestures* adapts Joe Goode's own *29 Effeminate Gestures*. See her essay on this in *Moving Ideas.* See also Rennie Harris's *Lazarus* (2018; citing Alvin Ailey's work with "blood memories"), Gerald Casel's *Not About Race Dance* (2021; citing Trisha Brown's *Accumulation* and *Locus*), and Joe Goode and Pangaea Colter's *That Girl* (2023; citing Goode's own *29 Effeminate Gestures*).

they can help move us from this limited solidarity. This is not to deny individual experiences but rather to move from narrow causes to collective liberation. Gestures can act as a first step in mobilizing our bodies and coming together, a practice for ensemble and coalition. Colectivo LASTESIS highlights the importance of the body in developing solidarity: "Entonces se empieza a pasar por el cuerpo una experiencia que es personal *y que quizás no necesariamente a ti te ocurrió*, pero tú, por tu condición de género o la que te vincule, estás entendiendo que es común -que es un problema que es común" (Draper 122).[7] It is in fact the process of working through the body's movements that opens up relational possibilities.

Blindfolds are a key aspect of the collective's performance, and they might suggest an anonymity.[8] However, much like Cha's blindfold in the performance piece *Aveugle voix* that I discuss in Chapter 3 and Mistral's "hermana, toma mis ojos" that I discuss in Chapter 4, I read a willingness to giving up sight, that most privileged of western colonial senses. Such embodied engagement leads to a temporary undoing of one's own subjecthood—even if only for a few minutes. A willingness to lose oneself, to take on the position of others through the movements of the body, to give up enough of our tight holds on positionality (and even privilege, individuality)—these are perhaps the opposite of willful dominance, and one way to embodied solidarity. Yet the tension that drives the gestural engagement I will consider in what follows is that, of course, we can never fully *become* another—and it's the gap that's productive. That gap forces me to think about me and you, what we share and what we don't, what our bodies can and can't do and don't and won't, and all the spaces in between—that's the critical work of gestures.

Finally, this book takes physical gestures as a starting point for intersubjective relationality, in our bodies, between them and beyond them. It trusts the work that gestures can do. So here I am, stretching out my hand.

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[7] "So then what starts to move through the body is an experience that's personal, *and even if it didn't necessarily happen to you*, you understand that it's shared because of your condition of gender or whatever condition links you—it's a shared issue" (my translation).

[8] For an example, see the image here: https://www.lasexta.com/noticias/sociedad/un-violador-en-tu-camino_201912085decdd020cf2203004e7ea6e.html.

CHAPTER ONE

The Touch of Intertextuality: Staging Gestural Encounters in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Maria Aurèlia Capmany's *Quim/Quima*

In the spirit of the nonlinear temporal engagement this chapter, and this project as a whole, proposes, I'd like to begin near the end—that is to say, closer to the present moment. In the summer of 2018, I attended a performance of Maria Aurèlia Capmany's *Cartes impertinents de dona a dona* ("Impertinent Letters from Woman to Woman") at the Teatre Lliure de Gràcia, in the Barcelona neighborhood of the same name. It was actually more of a dramatic reading: Rosa Maria Sardà, the veteran stage, film, and television actor, read selected letters from Capmany's 1971 text, with direction by Pau Carrió.[1] Per Capmany's own ironic prologue, the letters work to question, even ridicule, criticism between women that "surpasses the hardness of diamonds" ("supera la duresa del diamant," 10).[2] The collection of letters—which begins with "D'una burgesa a una obrera" ("From a bourgeois woman to a woman worker") and ends with a reference to a key Woolfian concept: "D'una dona de bé a l'assassina de l'àngel de la llar" ("From an upstanding woman to the woman who assassinated the angel in the house"), with intervening titles such as "D'una dona menopàusica a una noia que tot just a començat a menstruar" ("From a menopausal woman to a girl who's just started to menstruate") and "D'una dona adultera a una noia que practica la promiscuïtat" ("From an adulteress to a girl who practices promiscuity")—stages juxtapositions and dramatizes stark differences between classes, life experience, generations, geographies, and social positions. They also allude to European fictional women characters who go against the gendered social norms of their time, such as Lady Macbeth, Nora Helmer, and Emma Bovary, crossing them with real women's situations in Catalonia amidst the unspoken backdrop of Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorship of Spain (1939-1975). The letters turn the critical lens inward and share the results outward, making public and structural what could be (and has traditionally been) thought as domestic and individual.

The stage adaptation has certainly expanded the text's public and historical reach, and through this physical medium it brings forth new resonances and significance to what was initially represented on the page. According to the Teatre Lliure's program: "ens aboquem als textos de Maria Aurèlia Capmany per mirar de comprendre una mica millor, ara que el feminisme torna a estar a la palestra, aquest món nostre."[3] The performance I attended on a weekend evening in late June ran for sixty minutes without intermission, and the audience was rapt. Capmany herself, in addition to being a prolific novelist, essayist, critic, feminist theorist, playwright, and translator, was trained as both philosopher and actor and co-founded the Escola d'Art Dramàtic Adrià Gual; the letters' acute sense of voice and timing made them ideal for a staged reading. [4] Sardà was a seasoned professional, dressed all in black as she declaimed from a

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[1] Sardà is perhaps best known to U.S. audiences for her role in Pedro Almodóvar's *Todo sobre mi madre* and known admiringly among some film critics as La Sardà. *Cartes impertinents* was one of her last performances.

[2] All translations from the Catalan my own unless otherwise noted.

[3] "let's immerse ourselves in Maria Aurèlia Capmany's texts to try to understand this world of ours, now that feminism returns to the fore." The etymology of "palestra" also suggests an arena or ring—that public stage for struggle.

[4] Gual himself, an avant-garde director of the early twentieth century, makes an appearance in *Quim/Quima* when Quim and his then-wife, Maria Solano, go to see a show that he directs (185-186). This is just one example of many

binder on a music stand, commanding undivided attention on a bare stage with only monochromatic video projections of the letters' titles behind her. She maintained a certain poise throughout, yet modified her tone and carriage slightly depending on the perspective of the letter she was reading. In this context, small movements did important character work as Sardà embodied the different women archetypes and their forms of critique beyond the verbal: moving her glasses down to peer over the bridge of her nose, shrugging her shoulder slightly with elbow bent and palm upturned, placing her hands on her hips, crossing her arms.[5]

As an audience member in that small dark theater, at times I shook with laughter; at others I felt my chest tighten with rage at seeing these same issues from the late 1960s and early 1970s reappear in the first decades of the twenty-first century, perhaps a reason why the program posited that feminism has "returned to the fore." Sometimes I squirmed in my plastic seat, certain I was sticking out as a younger feminist (balking at second-wave concepts of gender), and as a non-Catalan (missing a joke, forgetting to bring a sweater). And yet I couldn't help but shed a few tears alongside the older generation of women strangers sitting next to me when the "upstanding woman" of the last letter admitted she was truly considering assassinating her own "angel in the house." I bring up my own experience in order to think through—and feel through—the continuing lives of works in the bodies of others. I am implicated, in body and on paper, in the feminist intertextual genealogies this chapter considers. Gestures, as I'll go on to emphasize throughout this chapter and those that follow, are never solely confined to either written work or embodied movement; Sardà's performance employed gestures to bring into body what was previously only written on the page. Yet attention to gestures *within* literary texts also allows for new modes of reading texts and of presenting national histories and literary genealogies, themselves inherently intertextual. In the main works I consider in this chapter, fiction, through literary representation, allows for the diegetic staging and rehearsal of tactile and embodied entanglements that historical facts and traditional historiography do not—such as the meeting of figures who never actually met. The entanglements I focus on here are often queer and feminist not just in terms of time and space but in terms of desire and touch, yet I'll also consider interruptions to queer and feminist encounters through moments of encounter that dramatize difference.

What does it mean to revive a text—in the form of a play, in the form of adaptation, in the form of literary criticism? If we consider the etymology of "revival" and its implication of a bringing back to life, it's worth noting that this theatrical piece was first conceived for the twentieth anniversary celebration of Capmany's death (for a 2011-2012 season) and then revived for her centenary celebration in 2018. Reviving also implies a series of returns: the return of Capmany, the return of her texts, the return of feminism—even if they were never fully absent. The texts this chapter takes as its central pairing, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) and Capmany's *Quim/Quima* (1971, published in the same year as *Cartes impertinents*) revive, return to, and restage historical events major and minor through the genre of the fictional biographical novel for protagonists who live through centuries. Capmany's text does this at the same time as it revives, returns to, and restages Woolf's text in a Catalan context: London becomes Barcelona, England becomes Catalonia (notably, not Spain), and the time span of 1586-1928 becomes 1000-1938.

Catalan literary figures that Quim/Quima encounters over the course of the novel in the form of embodied intertext, much as Orlando does with British literary figures. Later in the chapter, I'll bring in one of Capmany's feminist students, Montserrat Roig, who studied with her at the school.

[5] See a photograph of Sardà during the performance at this link: https://m.europapress.es/catalunya/noticia-teatre-lliure-repondra-cartes-impertinents-rosa-maria-sarda-20180202112210.html.

While Woolf's protagonist Orlando changes genders just once, from man to woman, Capmany's Quim/Quima changes twice, from man to woman and back again. As they track the protagonists' movement through time periods and geographies, crossing paths with historical and literary figures and events along the way, both *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* encourage us as readers to reckon with national histories, and the ways in which literature goes about representing them. Woolf's text parodies the patriarchal vestiges of biography and historiography, genres then dominated by men writing about men, and Capmany's text extends this critique to include an imperial Spain, implying a patriarchal nationalist through-line to the Franco dictatorship's repression of women's freedoms and of Catalan culture. If traditional modes of writing history impose limits on what was and is conceived of as possible, these queer historical texts revise (changing) gendered bodies' linear and progressive movements through time and space, via the interruption, advent, or continuing presence of gestures. Capmany's *Cartes* and the performance of it I've described are attempts to grapple with the possibility and limitations of solidarity between women across differences, a red thread through much of Capmany's literary and political work. The letters' direct address to "you" attempts to make one's own positionality legible to another; a similar second-person address is implicit in Capmany's adaptation of Woolf's text and explicit in a letter she writes to an already deceased Woolf that is published as part of *Quim/Quima*. As Sardà's performance begins to illustrate, if gestures bring into relief what certain bodies and subjects can and cannot do, it follows that gestures themselves play a key role in representing uneven power dynamics that are gendered and racialized and intimately tied to questions of nation and empire—*and* also offer the possibility to challenge these dynamics. This is the case both within and between *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima*, meaning that gestures also structure—with the potential to shift—intertextual relationality.

This chapter will put forth an intersectional feminist reading of gestures, which focuses on how gestures speak when words cannot, here in the contexts of gender oppression, challenges to binary gender through burgeoning transness, and various forms of colonialism and imperialism. *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* share a continued emphasis on the potential of gestures for gender-bending protagonists that act as a sometime substitute for actual writing during times of historical oppression of women's rights, particularly in the public sphere; this ultimately leaves traces as an embodied practice of writing that makes not only the content of the two works, but also their authors, touch. Reading gestures underscores the gendered limitations of the time periods in which the texts' protagonists find themselves: both Orlando and Quim/Quima move throughout their texts with memorable gestures, which come to represent a mode of telling a life story that runs parallel to the historical events that cross it. This continued attention to gestures is a way of foregrounding and critiquing what women, nonbinary, and trans subjects were and were not allowed to do and say during certain sociopolitical moments and national contexts.

While the texts seem to be clear on how their protagonists challenge normative gender through embodied gestures, gestures' potential to challenge colonial and imperial power is more ambivalent. We will see that in certain scenes, gestures elucidate and draw out conditions of imperialism and coloniality, but these scenes often serve more as a locus of questioning rather than of clear intervention. While the texts often satirize the power structures of courtly monarchy in England and Spain, they differ in their commitment to critiquing the colonial and imperial effects of these courtly monarchies beyond those centers of power. While Capmany's text often goes further than Woolf's in this sense, it often stops short of what Walter Mignolo terms a "decolonial gesture," which entails "explicitly confront[ing] the colonial matrix. If the confrontation is implicit, it would be the process of interpretation that brings a given 'gesture' […] in the decolonial frame" ("Looking for the Meaning of Decolonial Gesture"). This chapter

will consider the limitations and the potential of gestures in scenes of imperial and colonial contact.

Gestures mark the contours of face-to-face encounters in these literary texts, as well as the contours of intertextual encounters between them, across temporal bounds. I focus on the points of contact between Woolf and Capmany's work to theorize what I call intertextual gestures, that is, modes of textual touch and embodied movement made possible not only by re-writing, adaptation, or citation, but rather, by re-writing that animates anew the historical and textual bodies of authors and their texts in novel temporal and spatial contexts—this brings in not just the possibility of inspiration and admiration but that of critique, re-staging, and revision. This chapter will begin by foregrounding gestures' challenges to both narrative and historical time in the contexts of Woolf and Capmany, and within their texts, *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima*. The continuing lives of these protagonists, made possible by their shared parodic challenge to historiography, loosens the constraint of that genre to allow for retrospective critical perspectives. The novels' critiques of which bodies can move and how, geographically and temporally, turn on what I'd term an embodied omnipresence granted to Orlando and Quim/Quima: they are granted the capability to come into physical contact with key players of historical moments. As such, gestures are a locus for understanding critiques of, particularly, patriarchal gender norms. I will show this through comparative intertexual close readings of gestures that focus on how their texts stage bodily movement, with an emphasis on how that intersects with gender, coloniality, imperialism, and racialization. While the protagonists of these texts are offered the embodied possibility and, I would argue, privilege, to traverse time and space in ways that actual women, trans, and nonbinary subjects, and subjects of color of their time and contexts were not, I will attend to how this possibility lies within the realm of literary representation.

I'll then extend the scope of my reading of fictional texts to consider the paratextual letter Capmany wrote to an already deceased Woolf that is published as part of *Quim/Quima*, which highlights gendered limitations in her time in the context of fascist dictatorship, precisely by drawing attention to the differences between her body and Woolf's. By calling forth this fictional Woolf as the recipient of the letter, Capmany not only "translates" an aspect of Woolf's body of work into Catalan, but also uses Woolf's body and her own as stand-ins for encounters of difference between body type, ethnicity, and North/South European power dynamics. I'll widen my analysis into Capmany's and Woolf's feminist nonfiction oeuvres, and then into a discussion of intertextual gestures within transnational queer feminist criticism. While Capmany's work challenges the limitations of forms of feminism that center whiteness by grappling with coloniality and imperialism through highlighting Catalonia's fraught relationship to the Spanish crown and its later cultural repression during the Franco dictatorship, it is still marked by European and bourgeois positioning. I'll close by turning to a U.S. context, where 1980s women of color feminists—including Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Alice Walker—take interrogation of difference in a more radical direction, challenging the universalization of Woolf as feminist precedent through an emphasis on bodies: what they look like and how they move, particularly in relation to the act of writing. My reading allows for the possibility of feminist solidarity while not collapsing difference or equating struggles against patriarchy in one cultural context with those against settler colonialism or structural racism in another—although it bears mention that these are interlocking forces. Such attention to comparative approaches to shared or similar gestural strategies between queer and feminist art forms will also extend beyond this chapter. In bringing varied texts together in this chapter, I work against metaphor-based approaches to theorizing feminist intertextuality, ultimately making the case for an intersectional and embodied

approach to intertextuality and adaptation, which centers gesturally relational subjects within often-fraught wider political, cultural, and historical contexts.

Capmany and Woolf: On time, in time, out of time

Two writers rendered still in time, each posing with her hand on her cheek.[6] One, Woolf, with fingers grazing cheekbones and eyes upturned; the other, Capmany, resting her cheek on the back of her hand, gazing straight at the camera. Their lives don't span the centuries of their protagonists Orlando and Quim/Quima, yet each lived through a span of historic changes that affected the way they perceived tensions and freedoms between gender and politics. Woolf was born into nineteenth century Victorian London (1882) and lived to nearly the middle of the twentieth century (1941). Capmany, on the other hand, was born in the early twentieth century in Barcelona (1918), came of age during tumultuous political changes in Spain, and lived to nearly the twenty-first (1991). European upheavals affected each of their lives unevenly: Woolf was impacted by the shock of World War One while Capmany had just been born into a less-implicated Iberian Peninsula; later, Capmany was impacted by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and ensuing fascist dictatorship directly, while Woolf voiced solidarity from afar. Both wars interrupted timelines: personal, literary, historical, political. Both *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* present alternative timelines, producing historical novels that are both domestic and epic: protagonists reckon with the weight of interpersonal love affairs and major national events, from one century to the next.

Montserrat Palau i Vergès, a leading Capmany scholar who weaves together literary and historical criticism with her own personal memories of the author, characterizes Capmany's life and professional trajectory as one marked by temporal "rupture" ("ruptura," Palau 28).[7] Palau explains the impact that the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent defeat of Republicanism and installation of Francoist fascism had on Capmany's plans: "Aquell esperit de llibertat en què fou educada, però, s'acabà amb la derrota del 1939. El franquisme suprimia aquell món civilitzat i ple de possibilitats per al qual havia estat preparada i tampoc no deixava lloc a una família atípica com la seva, intel·lectual, liberal, catalanista i d'esquerres" (Palau 27).[8] What's clear here, even on the level of grammar, is a sense of "had been" that indicates interruption and loss of a future time. We might say, given Palau's emphasis on "lloc" ("place"), that Capmany herself was both out of place and out of time, that both of these forces did not leave room for the future she'd imagined for herself or, given her ardent socialism and feminism, those around her. In addition to writing about present conditions in such works as *La dona en Catalunya* (1966) and *El Feminisme a Catalunya* (1973), Capmany's work on *Quim/Quima* served as a way to defy temporal and chronological limitations and to muddle trajectories and expectations around gender roles in time through a gender-bending protagonist who can also opt out of being a Spanish woman in ways Capmany and her Catalan contemporaries could not. This process is not just intellectual or

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[6] I am here referencing two photographs of the authors, which can be found at the following links.
Woolf: https://www.alamy.com/virginia-woolf-1882-1941-museum-private-collection-author-anonymous-image464849080.html.
Capmany: https://diarieljardi.cat/maria-aurelia-capmany-una-excepcio-de-la-seva-epoca/.

[7] I am grateful to Montse for her generosity in meeting with me to speak about Capmany, sharing texts, and taking me through some of her archives at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona in the summer of 2018.

[8] "That [Republicanist] spirit of freedom in which she was educated, however, ended with the 1939 defeat. Francoism suppressed that civilized world, full of possibilities, for which she had been trained, and it did not leave room for an atypical family like hers, intellectual, liberal, Catalanist, and leftist."

driven by will, but it is also markedly physical, as Palau points out in her analysis of an authorial alter-ego, Bel Puig, in the epistolary novel *Lo color més blau*. Capmany was interested in writing that could, per her character's words "anar cap enfora, restituir tot pensament a gest, tota passió a itinerari. Per dir-ho d'una manera ràpida ho explicaria així: No hi ha res de la meva consciència, tot és la meva pell" (214).[9] In this scene that also critiques critique itself as a series of (disembodied) trends, she revindicates her own body's outward movements, expression, and its surface (skin); this movement from inner to outer becomes, as we'll see, grounds for relationality through staging and touch.

Woolf, too, imagines the passage of time otherwise throughout her oeuvre. *A Room of One's Own* (1928) is grounded in recovering a history of women's writing; in the process, gestures connect bodies in temporality, and the effects linger. Woolf makes up a fictional contemporary writer, Mary Carmichael, to continue her investigation into "women and fiction" (3) in this lecture, which was given in the same year in which Woolf published *Orlando*. In the fictional Carmichael's fictional novel (*Life's Adventure*), we learn, there are two women characters who relate queerly: "Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these—'Chloe liked Olivia…' Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women" (85-86). One of the ways that Woolf sets up this relationship, though, is through the nonverbal and gestural, which is linked to the public limitation of "[s]ometimes women do like women." Physical relationality is not limited to the fictional characters Chloe and Olivia but also affects those present in the various layered framing devices, including Mary Carmichael, Woolf herself, and the implied readers of Carmichael's text:

> For if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. It is all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping. And I began to read the book again and read how Chloe watched Olivia put a jar on a shelf and say how it was time to go home to her children. That is a sight that has never been seen since the world began, I exclaimed. And I watched too, very curiously. For I wanted to see how Mary Carmichael set to work to catch those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex. (88)

Gestures themselves represent, to use Woolf's words, an "interest that has not some obvious motive behind it" (88). In other words, there's no obvious correspondence between putting a jar on a shelf and the way one woman feels about another, but, here, there is correspondence nonetheless, the intimacy arising from the temporal and spatial staging of queerness between Chloe and Olivia.

Such staging is made possible precisely by "those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves" and the self-reflexive verb of that phrase. Gestures are subtle, gestures go unnoticed, but they come to speak and mean nonetheless; they imply and suggest based on how bodies relate to one another, and Woolf the reader goes from "I began to read" to "I watched," as though staging the words into the embodied events of a scene, through

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[9] "go outwards, restore all thought to gesture, all passion to its path. To say it briefly, I would explain it like this: there's nothing of my consciousness, everything is my skin."

the imagined intertext of Mary Carmichael's writing, and filtered through Woolf's own body, as when she recounts: "I tried a sentence or two on my tongue" (84). This calling up of the senses of sight, touch, and taste—through gaze, hands, and tongue—builds an intimacy that verges on the erotic, underscored by the vaginal image of the cave. This embodied intimacy extends beyond the duo or the couple into the realm of literary history, particularly that of women's writing. Woolf's metaphor of "those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping" is echoed later in her "Professions for Women" (1931)[10]: "For the road was cut many years ago—by Fanny Burney, by Aphra Behn, by Harriet Martineau, by Jane Austen, by George Eliot—many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten, have been before me, making the path smooth, and regulating my steps" (149). Woolf's conceptions of intertextuality here are comprised of gendered and gestural rehearsals: women move their bodies through spaces where other women have moved their bodies, placing their feet in the same places to produce new effects.

The image of "[t]hose serpentine caves" is not just physical and spatial but temporal, creating an alternate literary topos in which women's gestures can come to light.[11] It is no secret that Woolf and her Modernist contemporaries were preoccupied with time's effects on the psyche and the relationship between interiority (feeling) and exteriority (telling): we need only think of *Mrs. Dalloway*'s Big Ben tolling each hour of that narration of a single day; or perhaps its inverse, the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*, which literally brackets major events in favor of narrating more subtle events; or *The Waves* which maintains a present-tense monologue structure even to narrate past events. Although these first three novels may be those that initially come to mind when thinking about Woolf's work with time in fiction, *Orlando* also allows for serious consideration of duration and continuity, however playful the text and however slapstick some of its comedic timing may be. The narrator of *Orlando*, just after poking fun at Woolf's own formal innovations around narrating time in *To the Lighthouse*,[12] references the "extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind" (68); what follows here is how what I'd call "time in the body" comes into the way we read both *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima*. If *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* center continuity and duration as a figurative gesture of utopian imagination and possibility that resist gender and sexuality norms, the physical gestures that punctuate the texts act as flash points, interruptions, and, ultimately, per Adrienne Rich, "re-visions" to the status quo of historiography and the subjects it represents.

The following close readings, then, bring together two overlapping engagements between gestures and temporality. The first is physical gestures' ability to interrupt, alter, and change the course of time-in-the-moment and time on the page, as well as historical expectations around what is acceptable in a given moment, shifting to the not-yet-possible or lingering in what used to be possible and should be again, both anachronistic and imaginatively hopeful in terms of

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[10] Just as *Cartes* is contemporaneous with Capmany's *Quim/Quima*, *Room* and "Professions" are contemporaneous with *Orlando*. It is in "Professions" where Woolf describes the "Angel in the House": a rebuke of Victorian gender roles and itself an intertext referencing Coventry Patmore's nineteenth century idealization.

[11] The image also recalls her well-known notes on character development penned while drafting *Mrs. Dalloway*: "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters […] The idea is that the caves shall connect and each come to daylight at the present moment" (*Diary* 263). While this refers in part to how the complexities of individual's daily lives are interconnected, and the novel's capacity to make this interconnection "come to daylight," we should note that something parallel happens in the act of reading. The "present moment," then, would encompass not just that present, but this one, and mine, and yours and someone else's.

[12] "a conclusion which, one cannot help but feeling, might have been reached more quickly by the simple statement that 'Time passed' (here the exact amount could be indicated in brackets) and nothing whatever happened" (68).

gender, sexuality, and national politics. The second is imagined gestures' ability to re-order literary and critical genealogies, staging and re-staging intertextual gestures of what Carolyn Dinshaw calls "queer historical touch" (3). This subversive historical mode acts as a way of building community and relationality, bringing queer and feminist erotics to the fore despite, or in fact sometimes precisely because of, differences in identity and positionality. Just as we watch history repeat itself (as in, *why* does this ring as true in 2018, or 2024, as it did in 1971?), these novels that dilate time offer us the possibility to re-think history and historiography anew. Specifically, national and literary histories and narratives and their effects on particular gendered and racialized bodies—and how those subjects can respond, react, and resist.

Tracing hands: the meeting of two works

Capmany was not a direct contemporary—generationally, geographically, or socio-politically—of Woolf, but in the letter to an already deceased Woolf that stages a fictional encounter between the two of them, which appears in some editions of the text as a prologue and in others as an epilogue to *Quim/Quima*, she writes that she liked to imagine herself as such: "m'he imaginat sempre que érem de la mateixa edat i del mateix curs, tot i que vas acabar molt abans que jo la teva vida" (223).[13] In the letter, Capmany goes on to draw a similar parallel between their protagonists: "m'he inventat un personatge que és un calc del teu Orlando" (223).[14] "Calc," in Catalan, allows for multiple readings of just what Capmany's character is: simply a copy, which could also imply plagiarism; a calque, or borrowing of a phrase element of a foreign language that is translated word-for-word into a receiving language; and finally, an act of tracing—that is, the physical, embodied gesture of a hand following another image's contours. For Capmany, this gesture of tracing is not mutually exclusive with the claim that she has "invented" her character ("m'he inventat"). Woolf, too, emphasizes an embodied writing practice behind *Orlando* in a letter to Vita Sackville-West, her lover and the inspiration for Orlando. Woolf writes of her trouble getting started with writing, and of what happened next: "[I] at last dropped my head in my hands: dipped my pen in the ink, and wrote these words on a clean sheet: Orlando: A Biography. No sooner had I done this than my body was flooded with rapture and my brain with ideas" (Gilbert xi). Here we can see a relationship between hand and body, and between gesture and material page, in the process of composition, similar to the embodied gestures of what it takes for women to be able to write in "Professions" and *Room.*

Central to thinking about *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* are the generic and historical expectations with which each plays and grapples. While Woolf's text is a parody of a biography, which she conceived of as a romp and a "writer's holiday" from her usual work (Gilbert xi), Capmany's writing and publication of *Quim/Quima* came about as the result of a proposal from the Catalan publisher Emili Teixidor to "produce a book for a series of young readers."[15] (Critics often cite this as the reason for the occasional didactic tone of the novel, especially as compared to Woolf's.) Given Capmany's oft-professed interest in Woolf and her assertions of Woolf's influence on her own work, it does not come as a surprise that she used one of Woolf's texts as a point of departure. The choice of this particular work of Woolf's, rather than say, *To The*

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[13] "I've always imagined that we were the same age and in the same cohort, although you ended your life much earlier than I."

[14] "I've invented a character that is a copy/calque/tracing of your Orlando."

[15] See John Style's "Maria Aurèlia Capmany's *Quim/Quima* as a Catalan Response to Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*: an Instance of European Intertextuality."

Lighthouse, speaks not only to its potential to critique gender as a social construct, but also couches it in a mode by turns entertaining and subtly ironic; this seems especially important given the historical moment of *Quim/Quima*'s publication, which came after long decades of oppression and violence during Franco's fascist Falange movement, the Spanish Civil War, and the ensuing dictatorship (which was still in place when the book was published).[16] Given Capmany's political convictions—she was an anti-Franco and anti-Fascist activist and an involved member of the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (or PSC, the Socialist Party of Catalonia)— the book was a way to take on Francoist gender ideology that turned on repression of women's independence, as well as link it, inextricably, to the oppression of the Catalan language and its people. [17] As such, feminism as a response to patriarchy becomes analogous to *independentisme* (Catalan independence) as a response to dictatorship.

In addition to the letter's framing of Quim/Quima as a "calc," Capmany's narrator refers to Orlando as its character's "antecedent literari" ("literary antecedent," 83) yet always seems to be aware of the differences between the two texts. One, certainly, is *Quim/Quima*'s mode of orienting itself in relation to world events: we can note a more overtly political component in Capmany's text, which considers Catalonia a nation (the current moment, too, illuminates the political potential of that notion). Along these lines, the plot events of *Quim/Quima* take on a more engaged global scope: its protagonist accidentally travels to North America on a colonizer's ship (and levels a critique at the practices of the self-proclaimed governor), spies for Robespierre during the French Revolution, and participates—in drag—in the most important battle in Catalan history, on September 11, 1714, when the city of Barcelona fell to the Bourbons during the War of Spanish Succession. (The day is often considered by Catalans as the moment in which Catalonia lost independent sovereignty; September 11 is now known as the Diada, or Catalan National Day.) We might also connect the slightly more episodic structure of *Quim/Quima* to medieval forms of Catalan storytelling, such as *rondalles*, which would imply a cultural and linguistic literary genealogy.

Quim/Quima reveals another marked difference from *Orlando*, perhaps along the same lines of the text's intentional political engagement. While Orlando's change in gender has an uncertain cause, those in Quim/Quima are driven by the protagonist's own deliberate choices (although they do enter into an Orlando-like sleep each time); these gender changes themselves could be read as a small-scale re-writing of aspects of the self in works which themselves re-write historical events. Quim first becomes Quima around 1285, in order to be able to freely mourn the execution of Berenguer Oller, who led a revolt of artisans in Barcelona; it is the act of crying which seems to catalyze the gender change (79). Then, Quima, after dressing as a man to fight in the 1714 battle mentioned above, doesn't actually change back to Quim until 1840, when she experiences "l'horror de la cotilla" ("the horror of the corset") and feels despair for having to wear such a constricting piece of dress (223). While Orlando's name is a constant throughout the novel—although the name itself references Shakespeare's gender-bending character—Quim's name changes both in terms of gender, from "Quim" (masculine) to "Quima" (feminine) and back to "Quim." It also changes in terms of regional differences, slipping back and forth between

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[16] *Quim/Quima* was available to Catalan readers 14 years before a Catalan translation of *Orlando* was (although, of course, there was Jorge Luis Borges's 1937 Spanish translation). Capmany actually passed on translating *Orlando* into Catalan, perhaps because she'd already written her version; Maria Antònia Oliver was the translator, and the edition was published in 1985.

[17] See Palau (especially 56-57) and Style (73-74) for more details on the oppressive gender propaganda disseminated by the Falange movement's ironically named *Sección Femenina*, led by Pilar Primo de Rivera.

the Eastern Catalan "Xim" (corresponding to the masculine "Quim") and "Xima" (corresponding to the feminine "Xima") throughout.[18] This alternation suggests a pan-Catalan identity that unites Western and Eastern Catalonia (including the Balearic Islands), ultimately portraying a shared culture identity across minor linguistic regional differences that does not align with other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, namely the central Castilian region which is home to Spain's monarchical seat and national capital.

Gender affects professional vocation more markedly for Quim than for Orlando, as does class. Orlando is a poet throughout their entire life, and their centuries-long composition of their poem "The Oak Tree" reappears throughout the text as a whole. Quim/Quima is also a poet in the tenth century, but this vocation morphs throughout the novel and their (unnamed) poem slips away into other artistic pursuits. They are also, at various points: a painter's apprentice as Quima in the fifteenth century; and a journalist, a photographer, and university student working on a novel as Quim in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries. It is striking that of these, Quima's work as a painter's apprentice is the only time when she is a woman; the rest of the public artistic pursuits occur when Quim is a boy and a man. Although we do meet a woman photographer who is Quim's partner, she is British, which places her in a distinctly different sociopolitical sphere (201). (There are of course clear cross-cultural comparisons at work, given that this is adapted from a British text.) While there are many representations of strong, intelligent, and artistic women throughout the book, these are limited to the private sphere or are kept secret, such as when Lia Galluf, a love interest whose marked Jewishness foreshadows the violence of the Inquisition, reads and writes to Xim in thirteenth-century Mallorca; when Quima reads in her family's library in the mid-nineteenth century; and when Quima acts a spy for Robespierre during the French Revolution. These few examples demonstrate just how many events take place in both novels—the analysis that follows focuses on what I see as the most representative scenes from each.

Finally, both texts turn on intimate dedication. While Woolf's biography is dedicated to Vita Sackville-West, Capmany's is dedicated to Woolf herself. The epigraph is an excerpt from her letter to Woolf: "*Estimada Virgínia: ¿em permetràs que et dediqui aquest llibre: QUIM/QUIMA, les aventures d'un xicot —xicota— que trobava el món bell i mal fet i que per tant creia que tenia el deure de seguir vivint i procurar endreçar-lo una mica?*" (5). [19] The dedication uses the informal "tu" and the accent mark on "Virgínia" adapts even Woolf's name into Catalan. The language, we might say, attempts to intimately embrace its subject of dedication. As we will see, this gesture of reaching out through language will be taken up not only in the bodies of the texts themselves, but also via the bodies of their authors, establishing queer points of embodied intertextual encounter.

Steps, Mis-steps: Gestural challenges to normative gender

Gestures' relational quality comes to the fore in both *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* as the titular protagonists grapple with the contradictions, limitations, and possibilities of inhabiting bodies that change genders. Embodied transness and nonbinary fluidity, expressed through gestures, subverts gender norms and troubles fixed gendered hierarchies in both texts. In Woolf's

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[18] For economy, and following the novel's title, I will refer to the protagonist in general mentions simply as Quim/Quima throughout this chapter.

[19] "Dear Virginia: will you allow me to dedicate to you this book: *QUIM/QUIMA*, the adventures of a boy—girl—who found that the world was beautiful and badly made and for that reason believed that they had the right to keep on living and try to put it in order a little bit?"

text, this subversion is perhaps most prominent when Orlando is on her way back to England from seventeenth-century Constantinople—a context fraught with conflict between racialized empires—after her gender change from man to woman. Celia Caputi notes that "the text consistently *racializes* her/his sex-change," which takes place amidst an Orientalist backdrop (58).[20] Orlando contemplates what has changed in the ways in which she moves through the world, although "up to this moment she had scarcely given her sex a thought," continuing: "Perhaps the Turkish trousers which she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts" (108). The implication here is that Orlando didn't feel the full extent of changing genders because she was still in drag; and not just as a man, but as a not-English man. She weighs what being a woman now means in light of living her life until that point as a man in England, and the narration tracks this contemplation which occurs over multiple pages. Yet, as discussed earlier, tracking thoughts for Woolf's narration entails attention to bodily experience, this time even more heightened because Orlando experiences gender itself as embodied:

> 'Lord,' she thought, when she had recovered from her start, stretching herself out at length under her awning, 'this is a pleasant, lazy way of life, to be sure. But', she thought, giving her legs a kick, ' these skirts are plaguey things to have about one's heels. Yet the stuff (flowered paduasoy) is the loveliest in the world. Never have I seen my own skin (here she laid her hand on her knee) look to such advantage as now. (108-109)

"Stretching herself out a length," "giving her legs a kick," and "here she laid her hand on her knee" all suggest a staging or performance, one that not only draws attention to the structures and strictures of gender but also suggests how to go about subverting them. Although Orlando is dressed in new clothes which limit her movements, she doesn't quite perform received gestures of femininity.[21] Much as she tries on new clothing, gender, too, seems like a carapace to be presented to the outside world—in the form of small bodily movements into which she hasn't yet been disciplined. While Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity are today so well-known as to have permeated critical consciousness, I want to emphasize the role that gestures, specifically, play in this performative constitution of gender, particularly in its initial conception prior to *Gender Trouble* in a 1988 article published in *Theatre Journal* more often cited in feminist work around gestures. Butler draws parallels between theatrical performance and gender formation: "The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene" ("Performative Acts," 526). In line with this performance, "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gender" (519). So Orlando, "arriving on the scene" after a gender change, is well positioned to sense the "illusion." She reflects that getting the things she wants must now "be obtained by roundabout ways" (110); we might say that gestures themselves, which turn on subtlety and implication, are one such example, and a potential locus for flipping the script.

This scene continues as Orlando reflects on how her previous desires as a man bear on her current physical existence as a woman, and all the ensuing obstacles, connecting embodiment and temporality: " 'There's the hairdressing […] that alone will take an hour of my morning, there's looking in the looking-glass, another hour; there's staying and lacing; there's washing and

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[20] See also Paul Preciado's 2023 film *Orlando, ma biographie politique* for another approach to adapting this scene.

[21] See McNerney for more on clothing and gender changes in both novels.

powdering; there's changing from silk to lace and from lace to paduasoy; there's being chaste year in year out…' " (110). Through this thought process, Orlando reveals the timeline of embodied womanhood, from hour to hour, day to day, and year to year. Amidst this backdrop of monotony's continuity, it is in fact small gestural movements that draw attention to the changes in how she relates to others and interrupt the course of gendered time, by extension, heteronormative relations. At this last thought of chastity, the narrator continues:

> Here she tossed her foot impatiently, and showed an inch or two of calf. A sailor on the mast, who happened to look down at the moment, started so violently that he missed his footing and only saved himself by the skin of his teeth. 'If the sight of my ankles means death to an honest fellow who, no doubt, has a wife and family to support, I must, in all humanity, keep them covered,' Orlando thought. (110)

An obvious moment of satire—such a reaction for ankles! (although the novel is not shy in its insistence that Orlando, well, Vita, had *fantastic* legs)— gives way to deeper implications. The gesture of "toss[ing]" her foot and "showing an inch or two of calf," though seemingly innocuous and quotidian, is in fact seen as inappropriate for a woman, troubling the agreed-upon scene. The palpable sarcasm in Orlando's thoughts draws attention to just how consequential a woman's physical gestures can be, and how absurd it is that they can be seen as threating. But if they *are* seen as threatening, the narration seems to say, then let them be an actual threat to heteronormative embodied relations. Per Butler's formulation, Orlando here "contest[s] the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations" (531). We see a chain of gestures, in which Orlando's bodily movements resonate in the description and body of the sailor who "miss[es] his footing" in slapstick fashion. Although there is no touch between the two figures, there are bodily echoes. We can recall the steps metaphor of intertextuality from "Professions": unlike the continuing queer feminist genealogy that text represents with steps, this passage presents mis-steps—a different mode, that of interruption. Orlando, to borrow from the language of stage directions, has hit her mark, while the sailor's is woefully off—and its implications threaten his wife and family, that very nuclear structure of heteronormativity that forms the basis for the same society that wants to keep women powdered, laced, and chaste. The scene pokes fun at fears around queerness as a threat to family life and also shows its potential to disrupt it. Running parallel to the downward stumble of the sailor, there's also a bodily scrambling that occurs, as we are shown one body part after another—foot, calf, ankles—and also turns of phrase based in the body: "foot*ing*," "skin of his teeth." Reading this last phrase literally rather than figuratively, we might say that Orlando's gestures interrupt how bodies are put together, and what language can come of them and make sense of them. "Roundabout ways," indeed.

In this scene, Orlando's embodied reflections on what a gendered body can do are inseparable from implications of what a racialized body can do; yet while Orlando seems to be developing a burgeoning gender consciousness, her racial consciousness still seems tethered to white Englishness, even as she tries to abandon it. Throughout the scene, Orlando continually sees a kind of promise in "the gipsies"—her term—with whom she imagines skirting an arrival to England. This racialized fantasy, too, is marked by gestures: "if it [being a woman in England] meant conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, meant denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursing her lips, and restraining her tongue, then she would turn about with the ship and set sail once more for the gipsies" (116). Not only Orlando's gender, but her sexuality (she continues to note that she desires people of all genders) is under threat. The wider terms, "conventionality,"

"slavery," "deceit," "denying her love," are matched with limitations in terms of the gestures her body can make, which form a chain that runs perpendicular to the other, freer bodily movements she enacted on the ship: "fettering her limbs," "pursing her lips," "restraining her tongue." Ironically, though, just as she notes that she did not think about her gender when she was a man, she here has the privilege not to think much about her race, nor about the actual conditions of the "slavery" she uses as a metaphor. Numerous critics have written about Orlando's racialized slippage throughout the text, including Orlando's possible "gipsy" ancestry based on Sackville-West's own family history: Carroll notes that Orlando's "lineage is aligned with the gypsies in ways which posit her ancestors as both perpetrator and victim of colonial crimes" (16). Yet while the text sets up Orlando's shifting racialization in contrast to the stagnancy, confinement, and bodily impasses of English womanhood she continually confronts, she alone can access this type of slippage. In other words, the text establishes Orlando's narrative privilege—the ability to pass through time periods—as analogous to her embodied privilege—the ability to pass through racialized geographies; yet while both afford freedom to the protagonist, readers are presented with a false equivalence that doesn't correspond to the realities of racial positionality throughout the British empire.

At a similar point in the narrative of *Quim/Quima*, Capmany's narrator speaks directly about how Quima comes to learn the "art dialèctic" ("dialectic art") of gestural communication as a result of her first change in gender from man to woman. The scene takes place after she has slept from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century (1409) and begins work as a painter's apprentice for Jaume d'Ortofà in medieval Barcelona, which is reeling economically. Quima's choice to work for a living rather than thriving off of inheritance is new for her, and it is based in the class consciousness she developed while witnessing the domestic revolt of craftsmen led by Berenguer Oller just before her gender change. Quima, realizing she needs to acquire new clothes as hers are men's and nearly two centuries old, finds herself among the guilds of the narrow streets of the Gothic Quarter, amidst men's discussions about trade and currency. The narration tells us, echoing Woolf's ironic humor, that Quima knows she is now a woman and not a man because "va perdre del tot aquella impressió de ser important" ("she completely lost that sense of being important," 81) and later this sense deepens as she realizes being a woman is marked by "no ocupar un càrrec dirigent" ("not having a leading role," 89) in society. Her new class position, though, is inseparable from the effects of her change in gender, as the narrator makes explicit the contrast with Woolf's text: "L'antecedent literari de Xima, Orlando, va canviar de sexe en una època i en una classe que oferia una separació de sexes total" (83).[22] In other words, the blurring of the very strict distinctions between the places of men and women we saw Orlando lament above is precisely what will later cause trouble for Quima. In her new role as painter's apprentice, Quima, in close proximity to her guild master, paints the hands in his paintings, as referred to in the chapter title ("Les mans del mestre Jaume," "The hands of master Jaume"). Hands: those gestural vehicles, which come to stand in metonymically for all of the gestural encounters that take place over the course of the chapter.

As a woman in this socioeconomic environ, Quima is subjected again and again not only to unwanted flirting and sexual innuendo that she doesn't quite understand, but also to nonverbal gestures from men, harassment both psychic and physical; these mark the oppressive conditions of her new position and lead her to develop her own small movements to combat them. Jaume and the men around her wink, whistle, and more: Quima "[s]'acostumà també,

[22] "Xima's literary antecedent, Orlando, changed gender in an era and in a class that offered complete separation of sexes."

quin remei!, als cops al cul, als pessics intencionats, amb la tossuderia amb què tots, des de l'amo de la casa fins al vailet, es proposaven robar-li un petó" (84).[23] Meanwhile, she attracts the rancor of the women in the house, distant relatives and maids of Jaume, a widower, who want to marry him for his money. It is in this context that *Quim/Quima* re-writes the Orlando gestures scene from the ship, centering it instead around Quima's embodied interactions with another woman. When Joana, one such jealous sister-in-law, corners her, Quima is forced to act differently than she would if she were a man, and she's acutely aware of it:

> Consistia a no dir res, a deixar-ho tot amb sobreentesos. En lloc de dir : Sí, picar l'ullet. En lloc de dir : No, iniciar una rialla. En lloc de dir : d'acord, somriure. En lloc de treure's l'espada i obrir el cap al que s'atrevia a insultar-la : girar-se en rodó, fent voleiar a l'entorn de les sòlides cames el redol de la faldilla i murmurar 'Ho veurem!', subratllat amb una esplèndida rialla (88).[24]

As in Orlando, this passage has a stage directions-like quality with precise bodily movements that speak in "roundabout ways." Even when Joana approaches her and they enter into verbal conversation, Quima's response is physical: to "fer un gest amb els dos braços" ("make a gesture with her two arms") and then to "fer una carícia" ("do a caress," 88). The strangeness of syntax here—along with the ways it invites readers to imagine what these ambiguous descriptions might actually look like—underscores Quima's overt process of coming into her new positionality through embodiment, as she seems to ask (following Butler here), is this how I do my gender?

The "loss of importance" for Quima, then, corresponds with a loss of language, along with a renewed attention to how the body itself can speak to others—both less directly than when she was a man. Quima finds new ways of being understood which involve using gestures and nonverbal expressions in place of words and her legs in place of a (phallic) sword. The repetition of "en lloc de" (literally, "in the place of"; "instead of") points to a process we might read as substitution with a difference: the sense that each gesture reaches and ripples out beyond the mere words that it substitutes. As in *Orlando*, Quima's physical movements have the potential to undermine and subvert, precisely because of their subtlety. She speaks *with* her body, often in answer to this body coming under threat again and again. Until this scene with Joana, Quima had been unaware that Jaume had wanted to marry her, which was why he even took Quima on as an apprentice and taught her to paint in the first place. As Quima realizes this, the narration speeds up as she replays all those moments of attention now tinged with unease, paralleling her physical movements as she rushes through the streets where, for a Corpus Christi celebration, residents have taken to the streets dressed as devils and demons, an apt nonverbal image for the horrors to which she's been subjected. We come to learn that the chapter title "Les mans del mestre Jaume" does not just represent the hands he has taught her to paint, but rather, his own clawing hands always trying to approach her own, and her body. With the temporal privilege uniquely afforded to her, she finally *steps out* of the house, rushing out of the patriarchal system that turns on men's money with an ultimate gesture to culminate the chapter: an escape on

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[23] "got used to also—what choice did she have?—to smacks on the buttocks, to willful pinches, to the stubbornness with which all of them [gendered male], from the man of the house to the boy helper, attempted to steal a kiss."
[24] "It consisted of not saying anything, leaving it all to implication. Instead of saying: Yes, wink. Instead of saying: No, start to laugh. Instead of saying: okay, smile. Instead of taking out her sword and opening the head of whoever dared to insult her: turn around in a circle, making the ring of her skirt fly around her solid legs, and murmuring, 'We shall see!', underscored by a splendid laugh."

horseback, coupled with a triumphant laugh and a declaration that "Mestre Ortofà haurà d'ensenyar a pintar mans a qualsevol de les cunyades" (92, "Mestre Ortafà will have to teach any one of his sisters-in-law to paint hands").

Hands of power



Quentin Crisp as Queen Elizabeth I and Tilda Swinton as Orlando in Sally Potter's 1993 film *Orlando*

As we've begun to see, hands are a particular locus of gestural movement in both texts; they serve as metonymy for relationality because they present the potential for contact between subjects of uneven or unequal positionalities that often stand in for wider sociopolitical power dynamics. Both texts extend the stakes of intimate interpersonal contact via gestures into the heightened context of imperial court scenes. The above image from Sally Potter's film adaptation of *Orlando* shows a gesture of caress between Quentin Crisp's Queen Elizabeth I and Tilda Swinton's Orlando as one laden with sexual charge, with imperial power, and, with the additional filmic layer of Crisp in drag—one more turn of the gender-bending screw.[25] Beth Freeman contends that queer temporality brings the past and present into contact and is present alongside national and cyclical concepts of time, which corresponds to her excellent readings of "*Orlando*'s aesthetic of lesbian fingerplay" (110) as an alternate mode of writing embodied historiography. We can apply this intertextually to *Quim/Quima*'s representation of—sometimes fraught—erotic contact not only with Iberian history but with Woolf's text and Woolf herself. *Quim/Quima* adapts *Orlando*'s erotic and humorous scene of offering Queen Elizabeth I a bowl of rosewater into a scene of Quim meeting Queen Isabel II (notably, Isabel is the Spanish equivalent for Elizabeth). The scene in *Orlando* occurs near the very beginning of the work, when Orlando, on his knees, partially glimpses the queen:

> Such was his shyness that he saw no more of her than her ringed hand in water; but it was enough. It was a memorable hand; a thin hand with long fingers always curling as if round orb or sceptre; a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand; a commanding hand, too; a hand

[25] Image source link: https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/orlando-1993.

> that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; a hand, he guessed, attached to an old body that smelt like a cupboard in which furs are kept in camphor; which body was yet caparisoned in all sorts of brocades and gems; and held itself very upright though perhaps in pain from sciatica; and never flinched though strung together by a thousand fears; and the Queen's eyes were light yellow. All this he felt as the great rings flashed in the water and then something pressed his hair. (16-17)

We should note here the transition from "saw" to "smelt" to "felt," a sensorial chain that seems to become synesthetic, scrambling body parts and their functions. However, it is touch, specifically via the queen's hand, which seems to drive Orlando's process of imaginative extrapolation that verges on fantasy.[26] The narration moves from "he guessed" to a more certain, "the Queen's eyes *were* light yellow" (emphasis mine). Yet how does he know her eyes are light yellow—an unlikely color to begin with—if he is looking down? The description seems to mirror his imaginative process based in metonymy, as a string of semicolons highlight the repetition of "hand," which multiplies out to create possibilities of "body." The very structure of the sentence, then, works to move from creating the body of the sentence to the body of a historical figure, and just after this the narrator, in an analogous fashion, ruminates on "if it is possible from the hand to deduce a body" (17). Yet this process seems to become even more certain than reality itself: it is "something"—that uncertain stand-in—that "presse[s] his hair." Parallel to this interpersonal touch is a gesture of wider relationality: "a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall"—somehow, somewhere, as unimaginable as what the queen looks like. The hand becomes a metonym for her great power, a stand-in for the body of the empire she directs. Similarly, Orlando will barely take notice of the vast effects of this imperial power until later in the text. All he can think about is that "old body"—he can't square this royal power with the aging woman in front of him, and this would explain the separation between the string of "hers" and "hands" and the ultimate title "Queen." Thus, "a head to fall" can be read a kind of phallic disappointment too, even a castration or submission. This implication later continues in the form of Orlando becoming a ringed servant of the queen: he visits her, and she presses his head into her lap, leading to what Freeman refers to as a "militarized orgasm" (109) that coincides with the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada: "He rose, half suffocated from the embrace. 'This', she breathed, 'is my victory' — even as a rocket roared up and dyed her cheeks scarlet" (236). We see that the complement of "a head to fall" is the "rocket roared up" that positions the queen as a phallic woman.[27] Sexual ecstasy, in the body, crosses with imperial ecstasy in the sky.

The corresponding scene in *Quim/Quima* takes the relationship between the body of the protagonist and the body of the queen a step further. In re-writing Woolf's already-tactile text, Capmany's scene emphasizes the ability of bodies to touch within and between works, toeing the

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[26] This process parallels a moment that will soon follow in the family crypt: Orlando physically touches his ancestors, in what Freeman refers to as "tomb fondlings" (109): "he would take a skeleton in his and bend the joints this way and that. 'Whose hand was it?' he went on to ask. 'The right or the left? The hand of a man or woman, of age or youth? Had it urged the war-horse, or plied the needle? Had it plucked the rose, or grasped cold steel? Had it—' but here either invention failed him, or what is more likely, provided him with so many instances of what a hand can do that he shrank, as his wont was, from the cardinal labour of composition" (51). This moment could be read as a stand-in for the challenges and modes of writing history, particularly one that foregrounds gender, as *Orlando* certainly does; each gesture, in fact, is linked to a stereotypically gendered action. Moving from gender to sexuality, Freeman notes that "Woolf's inside reference to 'what a hand can do' alludes to this sort of flexible erotics between women as, also, a historiographic method" (109).

[27] Here too, we might think of Mrs. Ramsay with her knitting needles in *To The Lighthouse*.

line between matter-of-factly close and intimately erotic. We see touch not just between literary bodies, but also between national ones: *Orlando*'s scene references the defeat of the Spanish Armada, after all. This imperial defeat resonates with the context of the re-written scene, when Quim goes to meet Queen Isabel II whose reign (1843-1870) is known for ceding some monarchical power to the parliament; notably, the dialogue between the two of them is written in Spanish, given that the crown is based in Madrid. At a certain point in their conversation, the queen extends her hand, and Quim is at a loss for what to do next; the text, like *Orlando*, plays with its protagonist's potential for being both anachronistic *and* behind the times: "La reina va seguir rient i va allargar la mà, una mà grassoneta, plena d'anells, de dits rodons i roses" (173-174).[28] This hand, like Queen Elizabeth I's is "full of rings," although her "pudgy" fingers are markedly different from the other queen's "crabbed" ones; physical contrast stands in for national contrast, in a critique of monarchic gluttony that extends to the elite ruling class, and it is one that would likely still resonate given the dire scarcity of the early years of the Franco dictatorship. The narration continues, and finally, based on humorous social cues of others present at the court, Quim realizes that he must kiss the royal hand:

> En Quim es va avançar i besà la mà a la reina. Feia olor de llessamí la mà reial, una olor tan intensa que li pessigollejà el nas. En Quim es va sentir perdut, un esternut monstruós creixia en espiral gola amunt, envaïa les fosses nassals, maldava per sortir. Va prémer les dents, va inspirar l'aire amb força, un so inquietant, com un sanglot, va obrir-se camí entre tants impediments i les llàgrimes van brollar dels ulls d'en Quim en abundància (174).[29]

Although the humor of this scene is decidedly more slapstick than its parallel scene in *Orlando*, this moment makes Orlando's "felt" even more embodied, from imagined to actual scent, provoked by a touch. The contact here is more intimate, given that it's a kiss, and as a result, the queen's body and its accoutrements "invade" his senses and ultimately produce a bodily reaction in him: the perfume makes him sneeze, and in an effort to hold it in, he sobs. The possibilities for this scene of touch are multiple: we could read it as a sort of transmission; exchange; or even as a parody of ejaculation, given the increasing speed of the clauses joined by commas (adapted from the semicolons in Woolf's passage), that the sneeze "toils to get out," and that ultimately another liquid (tears) is released from his body. Although both scenes play with the implication of the then-young male protagonist's sexual submission to a powerful woman, contrary to what Freeman describes as the queen's "militarized orgasm," this scene condenses the bowl scene with the erotic war scene and maps the rockets onto Quim's sneeze, now implying Quim's own moment of sexual ecstasy, however accidental or adolescent. The culmination adds another layer of satire that loops back to critique imperial power mongering as a whole: " 'This', she breathed, 'is my victory' " becomes as adolescent as an accidental emission. This scene leads to Quim getting sent to post-Independence Mexico in 1862 with the Spanish army led by Joan Prim (who would later go against Madrid's directives); that Quim is out of place in this nationalist project

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[28] "The queen continued laughing and stretched out her hand, a pudgy little hand, full of rings, with round and pink fingers."

[29] "Quim stepped forward and kissed the queen's hand. The royal hand smelled of jasmine, a scent so intense that it tickled his nose. Quim felt lost, a monstrous sneeze spiraled upwards from his throat, invaded the nostrils, toiled to get out. He clenched his teeth, took a deep breath, a disquieting sound, like a sob, made its way through so many impediments and Quim's eyes gushed abundant tears."

with ties to former colonial rule seems to point not only to his anachronism but to a sort of spatial exiling as well: Quim, Catalan, doesn't "belong" in Madrid and all that it stands for. Yet we will see that, throughout the text, the protagonist can't fully step out of a connection to the Spanish empire.

Colonial contact: gestures of encounter

While the above scenes, in part, satirize imperial power through tactile encounters, there are episodes in both texts in which the protagonists become more deeply entangled in imperial and colonial embodied contact that is not primarily erotic, but rather disturbing or violent. The events of the novels move outside of the space of the European continent to places in the Global South connected to it by imperialist and colonialist ventures, in which Orlando and Quim/Quima partake to varying degrees, often at first accidentally or unwittingly; they both have to continually re-orient themselves to new temporal and spatial conditions, with all of the accompanying political implications. In this sense, the court encounter scenes which center the tension between the protagonists' physical, temporal intimacy and disjunction with monarchical power prefigure scenes that will extend this tension to the edges of monarchical empires. The complex power dynamics that arise there can be approached through Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone," which she defines as:

> the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict […] A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to reach other […] not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence. (8)

Although Pratt's analysis tracks first-person nonfiction travel writing from mainly the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the terms and tropes she establishes prove useful for critical readings of these close third-person historical fiction novels that pass through the same time periods and some of the same geographies, yet in a more episodic fashion. In both *Quim/Quima* and *Orlando*, contact zones are made literal through gestures that establish physical contact and emphasize the act of touching. "Contact" becomes a mode of negotiating difference, precisely *through* both embodied and imagined gestures; gestures also underscore cultural differences in representational and interpretive systems.

Despite the boom of Anglophone criticism around Capmany's adaptation in the 1980s and 1990s, few center Quim's fraught interactions with Muslim inhabitants of Al-Andalus, Xima's eighteenth century journey to what the text terms "Alta Califòrnia," or later, Quim's nineteenth century journey to Mexico. Meanwhile, more recent decades of critical work on *Orlando* not only mention but center scenes of racialization and racial violence. Indeed, any novel that takes on national historiography of a former imperial power, even through the form of satire or parody—and any criticism of those novels—will necessarily be implicated in narratives around coloniality, whether through direct attention, its lack, or some ambivalent in-between. In particular, traditions of European nation-building, and accounts of it, seem to need to set up a continental contrast in order to define themselves. This definition-by-opposition trope is apparent from the outset of both novels, which reference the "barbarian fields of Africa" (Woolf 11) and the refrain of "les terres d'Àfrica fosca" (Capmany 21), perhaps in a Hegelian vein that would set up a so-called "unhistorical" African continent in contrast to European novels that abound with

a dilated sense of past and present. It is hard not to view these references as critical blind spots in these feminist novels, given that the narration doesn't take enough distance from its topic to land firmly in the realm of irony or parody, as is the case in so many other moments in the texts when it is other characters, not the narrator, who put forth problematic views. While some critics discuss the narration itself as a parody of typical biographic writing (Caputi calls it "bumbling," 59), at times it feels to this reader that the line between parody and blind spot gets blurred—just how close can parody get without becoming its subject?

Both novels set up nation-building and the imperial ventures that accompany it as a particularly embodied and virile patriarchal project. Ochy Curiel, in an analysis she terms "una antropología de la dominación" ("an anthropology of domination," 28), highlights the deep connections between whiteness, coloniality, patriarchy, and heterosexuality, which produce a hierarchy of privileged dominators and marginalized others. Although Curiel's analysis focuses primarily on nation-building in modern Colombia, she notes the continuing hold of "Europa como la matriz civilizatoria más legítima" ("Europe as the most legitimate civilizing womb/matrix," 23), the myth whose forms are at play in both *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima*. Scenes of violence and domination, which have the effect of founding these long historical novels upon dead Black bodies, begin when Orlando and Quim/Quima are in their male form (and Quim in his first run as a man). In those moments, they partake, in very embodied ways, in violence and death. Many of these textual moments are almost too fleeting or too violent to even be called a contact zone: Pratt's "co-presence" seems nearly impossible because they often interact with dead bodies, not live people. Much critical attention has been paid to the shocking opening image of *Orlando*, in which the protagonist, notably "He," swings at the image of a decapitated Black head (11). For example, Freeman reads it temporally, stating that "'Africa' represents both Orlando's place in an imperial venture and a racialized, racist trope for the past itself" (108), whereas Caputi reads it as a critique of the white masculinity that drives European imperial ventures: "that brutality is deeply gendered, and deeply British" (57). In a text that will pay close attention to what makes gendered bodily movements, we can note the embodied rehearsal of white male Britishness: Orlando hasn't actually committed the violence of decapitation, but rather re-enacts it, rather childishly and pathetically. Notably, Capmany's text does not present a direct analogue, in what I consider to be an intertextual intervention that refuses to begin with such an overtly racist, patriarchal scene.

Yet other engagements with the scene take different, even embodied, approaches. In a recent exhibition curated by Tilda Swinton for *Aperture* and McEvoy Arts in San Francisco, the photography of Paul Mpagi Sepuya confronts what Vince Aletti calls the "casual callousness" (80) and persistent exotification of people of color that pervades European twentieth century art by re-staging the opening lines of the text.[30] His photograph (pictured below and one of many in a rich series) implicates the viewer: we can't but see our own reflection in the glare of the gallery lights. Sepuya multiplies frames within the photograph as well: each pane of the glass door and the glass table, along with their shadows and reflections, invite readers to consider, figuratively and physically, where they are standing. The photograph asks what kinds of bodies are visible and legible to move freely through the spaces of art, historical narrative, and the gallery itself—and which others are relegated to background, detail, "local color," static portrait, or even a still life (going back to the romance language etymology of "nature mort" and its implications of death). Sepuya replaces *Orlando*'s piece of a body with the implication of a full body. Rather than a head dangling down, Sepuya presents his own arms swinging up: one holding a camera that

[30] Image source link: https://a.storyblok.com/f/59954/x/b9a1d7425c/19-aperture-vince-aletti-on-orlando.pdf.

turns the lens back, surrounded by bright sunlight, the other in a gesture reaching upwards, threatening to defy the confining space of a single frame—and by extension, the flattening or making caricature of a subject full of movement and life.



Paul Mpagi Sepuya, *Untitled*, 2019

As we've seen in earlier examples, gestures in these novels are gendered: gender limits just what kind of gestures our protagonists are allowed to do, and these are enforced by discipline, in the forms of both punishment and praise. In contrast to the moments of foundational racial violence as a component of narratives of imperial nation-building when Quim and Orlando are men, the novels later present them in scenes as women (or in Quim's case, also as a man *after* being a woman) in which their interactions with colonial subjects are much more ambivalent. In turn, we are more likely to see lingering gestural interaction rather than a swift impulse of movement to kill, strike, or wound.[31] There is a range of these types of interactions in both texts, and the novels insert their characters in colonial narratives at times more self-consciously than others. *Quim/Quima*'s longer time span and perhaps Capmany's overt political commitment (socialism, anti-fascism) make the novel even more densely packed with historical events, and its

[31] For example, in a moment that seems in part to inspire Xima's reflections in the ship scene cited above after her gender change, Orlando, upon immanent arrival as a woman in England in the ship scene sited above, reflects, " 'And that's the last oath I shall ever be able to swear,' she thought: 'once I set foot on English soil. And I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army, or prance down Whitehall on a charger, or wear seventy-two different medals on my breast. All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea and ask my lords how they like it" (113).

protagonist more directly implicated in them, than *Orlando*. While current Catalan independence sentiments (which, it should be noted, span the political spectrum from right to left) might appear to distance the region from the Spanish crown's imperial endeavors, Catalan military and missionaries were leading participants in the colonization of the Americas, and Capmany does not shy away from this troubling history of violent encounters in her text. As the editors of the recent issue of *GLQ Cuir/Queer Américas* put it, working against "the depoliticized framework of the cultural mosaic," or modern nation-state myths that purport *mestizaje* as harmony: "The encuentro is not a utopia" (322).[32] In fact, we might say that it is precisely the situated place-ness of an "encuentro" or encounter between communities, and all its constituent tensions, that keeps that temporal moment and gestures that arise there from being harmonious.

In the late eighteenth century, sometime after 1783, Xima's fictional history crosses with that of a real historical figure, Pere (also known as Pedro Ignasi) Fages, one of the first Spanish colonial governors in present-day southwest U.S. and Mexico. Xima finds herself on a boat sailing to a "Nou Món" and a "Nova Espanya" ("New World," "New Spain," 180) she's never heard of before, and, upon arrival has an extended encounter with Akimel O'odham people, the original inhabitants living on their ancestral land. Although this is their native self-denomination, the novel, following the Spanish colonists, refers to the native community as "Pima." Through Xima's personal experience, we learn about the other colonizers and missionaries who have come to the land.[33] Xima, as she often does, attempts to understand the context in which she has found herself, and to establish as her ideological and political stance in relation to that context. On the one hand, she is often laughed at and dismissed by other colonizers, who don't know she used to be a man. On the other hand, even in her naivete and ignorance of the context, she benefits from the power of having arrived with the Spanish colonizers—and her embodied interactions throughout the episode dramatize this tension. We can extend Pratt's theorization of the contact zone to account for at least some of the ambivalence that arises; we can also use what she calls the "anti-conquest" to describe the ways in which colonizers or "explorers" (particularly those with less direct connection to state authorities) attempt to minimize the harm they inflict during imperial encounters through the process of narrativizing.

Xima's arrival to the Americas foregrounds not only time's relationship to narratives of coloniality, but also to Xima's own unique position in relationship to time, riddled with delay, anachronism, interruption, and jumps. In an extension of the earlier scene of monarchical uncertainty, she doesn't know who the king is (she guesses one from centuries prior) and is subjected to ridicule by the paternalistic, arrogant Fages. Yet despite Fages's airs of superiority grounded unsteadily in white supremacy, the narrative makes it clear that his own sense of time is impacted by his colonial positionality:

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[32] Scholar and dance practitioner Thomas Talawa Prestø offers the metaphor of "the pressure cooker," an alternative to "melting pot." He describes "dancing in the pressure cooker" as "dance practices that spring from people in a pressured situation, such as enslavement, segregation, apartheid, forced migration, war, homophobia, transphobia and gender injustice." (From a guest Zoom lecture in Latanya d. Tigner's Modern class, UC Berkeley, October 2021).

[33] "els seus noms Portolà, Serra, Constansó, Perés, Crespí, Alberni, Moragues, Romeu, Jorba, Picó quedaven units als primers poblats, als primers forts, a les primeres missions" ("Their names […] remained tied to the first towns, the first forts, the first missions," 135). These names, and the erasure of indigenous ones, persist precisely in the Bay Area, where I'm writing from on ancestral Chochenyo Ohlone land: Huichin, part of unceded Lisjan territory (Sogorea Te'). See Sogorea Te' website and https://native-land.ca/ for interactive territories map.

> A les llunyanes terres de l'Alta Califòrnia els passava sovint que no sabien ben bé qui manava per les capitals del món. Quan creien que havien aconseguit el favor d'un ministre, ignoraven que ja era mort o caigut en desgràcia; empresonaven els anglesos que es filtraven a la missió i rebien amb palmes els francesos sense saber que Espanya era aliada d'Anglaterra i enemiga de França. Però, realment, descomptar-se de tres reis ja era una mica massa.[34] (132)

This passage's presentation of time is actually turns some of the temporal lag, so often applicable to Orlando and Quim/Quima, onto the colonizers, rather than taking up the imperial stereotype that colonial subjects, far from the imperial continent, are behind the times. This turning of the temporal tables also undermines justification of so-called civilizing missions, which, of course, were just the opposite. The moment makes it clear that norms around whom one is allowed to appropriately interact with in this geopolitical microcosm is already muddled—Xima's unique presence just pushes it further. The narrative sets the scene for a time-space critical of, rather than ruled by, coloniality, which opens up the possibility for Xima to question, in body and later in voice, the legitimacy of the imperial enterprise in which she has found herself implicated.

The novel stages Xima's first encounter with Pima people as one which is only possible through gestures, touch, and non-verbal sound, given their lack of shared language; temporally, though, this interaction is marked by a simultaneity which stands in contrast to the temporal disjunctures at which the protagonist so often finds themself. The scene takes place in the liminal space of dawn, a trope of ambivalent possibility present from the first scene of the novel; it seems to have the potential to exist with one foot outside of the same kind of colonial structures Fages has implemented and to cast doubt upon them. The narration follows Xima's point of view in close third person narration which dilates to a wider third person that, however, never encompasses the perspective of the men Xima encounters as they each observe each other:

> Eren homes, havien de ser homes, no podien ser altra cosa. Aquella harmonia, aquella bellesa dels cossos àgils i nus no semblava humana, però Xima sabia com era fet un home, encara que no n'hagués vist mai cap que es passegés nu amb tanta noblesa [...] Xima somreia i es va asseure al marge d'un terraplè i els va fer un gest perquè s'acostessin. Un dels indis es va acostar, devia ser molt jove, rera una cortina espessa de cabells els ulls brillaven com agulles de picar per entre un plomall d'estruç clavat en un capell de gala. L'indi alçava el cap per mirar per sota el cabell i xiuxiuejava unes paraules i allargava la mà signant el cap de Xima, el mocador que ella duia enrotllat amb dues voltes i un nus, com els mariners. Després va signar el seu collaret, acostant el cap amb un gest que posseïa una expressió de tendresa.
>
> I Xima va dir en veu baixa :
>
> —Fem barates? És això, que vols?[35] (133)

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[34] "In the faraway lands of Alta California it often happened to them that they didn't well know who was in charge in the capitals of the world. When they thought that they'd curried the favor of a minister, they didn't know that he was already dead or out of favor; they imprisoned the English that had infiltrated the mission and received the French with palms without knowing that Spain was an ally of England and an enemy of France. But honestly, missing three kings was a little much."

[35] "They were men, they had to be men, they couldn't be anything else. That harmony, that beauty of the agile and nude bodies didn't seem human, but Xima knew what men were made of, even though she'd never seen one who walked nude with such nobility […] Xima smiled, and she sat down on the edge of an embankment and gestured to them to sit down. One of the Indians came over, he had to be very young, behind a thick curtain of hair his eyes

The scene, which could be framed as a relational struggle, or struggle to relate, is structured by smiles, gestures to sit, gazes, and pointing gestures. Xima, who has by now experienced her own fair share of gender confusion, seems at first to apply that binary matrix to the people she encounters: "They were men, they had to be men, they couldn't be anything else"—or literally, "any other thing." An intertextual moment, this echoes Woolf's opening lines which describe Orlando: "He—for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it" (11). Capmany's narrator seems to take a cue from that opening: is this how we approach new subjects and write about them?

In both texts, an imperial gaze requires a quick imposition of categories that reinforce hierarchies. (In Chapter 4, I will return to Pratt and the question of colonial gaze, namely the verticality that it implies—and how feminist horizontality can work to counter it.) María Lugones notes, extending the work of Oyèrónké Oyéwùmi, that binary genders "woman" and "man" in the Americas are themselves categories tied to European colonial patriarchy (1). However, in contrast to the opening of *Orlando*, rather than only determining gender, we might say that the struggle in *Quim/Quima* here has to do with determining not only whether these people are men or women, but also whether or not they are less than human ("no semblava humana"), due to racialization by the colonizers: "la idea que els indis no eren homes, que les índies no eren dones" ("the idea that the Indians [masculine] weren't men, that the Indians [feminine] weren't women."139); this negotiation is also present in Xima's employment of the noble savage trope ("nu amb tanta noblesa"). Working against these dehumanizing representations so prevalent in fictional and historical writing, Sylvia Wynter challenges the idea that certain racialized individuals stand outside of the category of human. She calls attention to the purposeful conceptual slippage between human, man, and Man by dominant groups, referring to "our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself" (260). The effects of this "overrepresentation," though, extend beyond western bourgeois men. Despite Xima's tenuous association with being a man ("Xima sabia com era fet un home"), the narration of Xima's point of view still grapples with an un-intelligibility marked by epistemology that revolves around the dominance of "Man": it emphasizes, in a pretty stereotypical quasi-anthropological fashion, the men making whispering and howling sounds, as well as their manner of dress which also ties them to animals. Not quite "the fashion of the time," but a fashion that exists in a time-space outside of what Xima has experienced thus far, and although she too is costumed in this rehearsal of encounter, it is precisely her wearing her scarf like the sailors that subtly aligns her with conquest.

Yet as the scene progresses, the narration seems hesitant to fix the ever-shifting Xima in such a category. The scene is one not just of metaphorical contact, but of physical contact as well, as Xima and the man engage in an exchange of costuming objects:

> Va desfer el nus del mocador i l'esplèndida tofa de cabells va caure per damunt de les espatlles i li va emmarcar de negror la cara bruna de tant de sol del viatge. Un so càlid, profund, d'admiració va sonar com el gemec d'una cornamusa en l'aire fi de la

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shone like hatpins underneath an ostrich feather hanging from an elaborate headpiece. The Indian lifted his ear to look out from under his hair and whispered some words and extended his hand, pointing at Xima's head, at the scarf that she wore wrapped twice and knotted, like the sailors. Then he pointed at his necklace, tilting his head with a gesture that had an expression of tenderness.

And Xima said softly: "So we trade? Is that what you want?"

> matinada. Xima va allargar el mocador i l'indi es va treure el collaret i l'hi va oferir amb la mà que li quedava lliure.
>
> —Toquem i toquem —va dir Xima—. Ets molt desconfiat.
>
> El gentil, aquella absoluta nuesa indicava a Xima que no havia estat batejat, va nuar-se el mocador a l'entorn del coll i llavora va fer una correguda, va recollir una pedreta, va amagar les mans rera l'esquena i després les va presentar closes a la tria de Xima.
>
> Xima va jugar una estona llarga a aquest joc beneit d'amagar la pedra. Es va acabar de sobte, perquè el sol ja era alt i el toc de trompeta del campament va fer una escampadissa, com si hagués estat la campana d'estudi que anuncia l'hora de plegar. (133-134) [36]

Xima, too, is now physically racialized by the description: "her splendid mass of hair tumbles over her shoulders and framed in darkness [lit. "blackness"], her face browned from so much sun from the trip." Their earlier positions are reversed as the Akimel O'odham man, too, seems to admire in his looking, as if he, too, is appraising her, and the sound he makes "like the moan from a bagpipe," echoes Xima's earlier appraisal of his nudity, verging on the erotic. In parallel with the futility of language in the scene we can see a mirror, but a preverbal one: the rhyming sounds of "Xima" and "Pima." Their game with the stones is completely governed by gesture: the pointing we can only assume happens as Xima chooses the hand she believes holds the stone. It is also governed by touch; at least in the tactile realm, however briefly, there is a kind of horizontality in relations represented by the interchangeability of the stone: unlike Orlando's rosewater offering or Quim's kiss to the royal hand, the stone can either be in one hand or the other, in the same way that power and control passes back and forth between Xima and the man over the course of the scene.

However, such equilibrium cannot last: the trumpet's sound breaks that relationality, laying bare what Pratt calls "the mystique of reciprocity," which itself attempts to hide the uneven nature of colonial relations—while pointing straight at it.[37] It must be said that to even close read this scene represents a kind of erasure: written from Xima's perspective of semi-

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[36] She undid the knot of the scarf, and her splendid mass of hair tumbled over her shoulders and framed in darkness [lit. "blackness"] her face browned from so much sun from the trip. A warm, deep sound of admiration sounded like the moan of a bagpipe in the fine air of the early morning. Xima held out the scarf and the Indian took off the necklace and offered it to her with his free hand.

"We touch and touch," said Xima. "You're very suspicious."

The gentile—that absolute nudity indicated to Xima that he hadn't been baptized—knotted the scarf around his neck and then ran off, picked up a little stone, hid his hands behind his back and then put out closed hands for Xima to choose.

Xima played this silly little hide-the-stone game for a long while. It ended suddenly, because the sun was now high in the sky and a trumpet from the camp sounded its horn, as if it were the school bell announcing the end of the day.

[37] Pratt's theorization of a 1799 British travel narrative provides a historical analogue (although on a different continent, Africa) for Capmany's fictional text and can be applied to the scene of colonial encounter in *Quim/Quima*: "Reciprocity […] is the dynamic that above all organizes [the] human-centered, interactive narrative. It is present sometimes as a reality achieved, but always as a goal of desire, a value. In the human encounters whose sequence makes up [the] narrative, what sets up drama and tension is almost invariably the desire to achieve reciprocity, to establish equilibrium through exchange" (78). This exchange, in the scene with Xima, seems to be a way to sidestep what Pratt terms "the greatest non-reciprocal non-exchange of all time: the Civilizing Mission" (83). Yet such is the "anti-conquest": it attempts to efface differences and uneven power dynamics in the service of a semblance of reciprocity, and, I would add, it drags national epistemologies and modes of narration into that project.

unwitting colonialist, it never grants interiority to the Akimel O'odham man. Mignolo's writing underscores the limitations of such a scene: "Decolonial gestures […] cannot be dictated by imperial subjects but should come from the creativity and the engagement of (de)colonial subjects" ("Decolonial Gesture"). In the same vein, there might be a drastically different, incommensurable way to (re)interpret this represented scene of actions, gestures, and images, from the perspective of the Akimel O'odham subject or wider community, that the narrator and we as readers are completely ignorant of. Pratt highlights il/legibility as a striking feature of the contact zone: "to be read, *and to be readable*" (7); in other words, just because a subject expresses something, even via gestures, doesn't mean its intended meaning will reach the recipient. This challenge to representational and interpretive systems is something Ticio Escobar discusses in relationship to aesthetics, images, and ritual performance, drawing a distinction between how these are represented and interpreted in western belief systems versus in Ishir and Guarani communities. Escobar highlights the difficulty of even defining "image," undermining Saussurean signifying logic. He argues that certain indigenous ritual and aesthetic practices ultimately have the potential to destabilize western concepts of representation and their constituent binaries, as well as the potential to resist contemporary hegemonies: "Resistir la visualidad hegemónica requiere movilizar imágenes potentes; imágenes dotada de un plus de pulsión que las permita circular a contramano, o al margen de la lógica de la mercancía. Imágenes capaces de enturbiar la transparencia del *theatrum mundi*, burlar el círculo de la representación y lanzarse obstinadamente a iluminar indicios posibles de sentido" (307).[38] It is precisely in the circulation of images "contramano"—"in the wrong direction" but "literally against the hand [of authority]," an etymology likely drawn from semaphore or other bodily gestures for directing traffic—that allows for the possibility of interpreting the *Quim/Quima* theatrical scene otherwise, troubling the exchange's apparent reciprocity and its implications for the global circulation of coloniality.

Xima's presence, for her part, does pose a fleeting temporal and embodied interruption to Fages's colonial presence. When she questions his violent attitudes and actions towards indigenous communities, she looks him straight in the eye and he is unable to reciprocate: "Xima va mirar dret als ulls del governador, d'aquell home alt i gros, que acalava els ulls quan ella el mirava" (137).[39] During this gestural standoff, Fages's justification for why she must obey and do as he says is: "Per què jo sóc blanc i fort i bo" ("Because I am white and strong and good," 137). This alleged certainty of syntax which yokes together adjectives as if they naturally belong side-by-side, though, is subtly undermined by his inability to meet Xima's gaze. Xima repeatedly refuses to accept Pere's upholding of white supremacy in colonial conquest, implicitly questioning the yoking: "Tots els homes són iguals [...] L'única cosa que els distingeix és la riquesa i l'educació" ("All men are equal [...] the only thing that distinguishes them is wealth and education,"137). Xima doesn't explicitly acknowledge gender or race in her response, and that absence is telling. Yet the scene does allow us to see that the same type of entitlement and superiority which allows Fages to brush women off with a laugh is on a continuum with his framework of seeing indigenous communities as less than human, which is to say, Man.

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[38] "Resisting visual hegemony requires the mobilization of powerful images; images endowed with extra force which allows them to circulate in the wrong direction, or at the margins, of the logic of goods. Images capable of disturbing the transparency of the *theatrum mundi*, laughing at the circle of representation and stubbornly throwing itself towards illuminating possible signs of meaning." Another translation possibility for "contramano" would be "against the grain," a well-deserved Benjaminian intertext ("against the grain") as Benjamin is so prevalent in Escobar's text.

[39] "Xima looked straight into the eyes of the governor, that big and tall man who lowered his eyes when she looked at him."

Whenever women in this environment, Xima included, question the patriarchal status quo enforced by Fages, they get quickly relegated to domesticity and mundane societal tasks like dressing and dancing, where they are less likely to pose a threat because the impact of public speech is limited.

Xima's gender and unwillingness to enforce racial hierarchies undermines colonial heteropatriarchy's all-encompassing reach, but to what extent? Xima expresses her discord, but she is ultimately powerless to change the course of that violent colonial history—and what's more, we learn her next journey is with French natural scientists in the Americas. In line with the episodic nature of both texts (that distention of the epic hero's journey), particularly *Quim/Quima*, the protagonists' unique ability to cross time periods allows them to get whisked off into the next temporal geographical scene. In other words, the very same narrative mechanism that allows for liberated questioning of individual gender expression also allows for a privileged abandoning of racialized others. As a result, gestural encounters in the contact zone represent a fleeting moment in time, a solidarity that never quite has a chance to ripen, leaving us to imagine disaster in its wake—backed by the history we know to be true. These moments in *Quim/Quima* grapple with, yet never quite succeed in, reconciling radical proposals for Catalan independence or freedom from the Spanish nation-state with their own imbrication in its imperial foundational violences, leaving readers with that empty open palm, no stone to be found. Yet the temporal experience, the memory of the weight of the stone, might linger: unlike Fages's downward glance, Xima's mere presence in these fictional versions of historic events allows readers a backwards glance, the beginning of meeting the gaze and bearing witness.

Intertextual gestures and the limits of touch

Adrienne Rich describes an intertextual process that could be read as extending Xima's physical act of looking into a representation of burgeoning feminist consciousness: "The sleepwalkers are coming awake, and for the first time this awakening has a collective reality; it is no longer such a lonely thing to open one's eyes. Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering a text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (18). In other words, re-vision allows for revision, and the singular "seeing man" gives way to a collective of feminist awakening represented by the act of eyes opening. The scenes from *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* above certainly attempt to tell history otherwise and allow readers the chance to enter the telling "from a new critical direction," which is compounded by the backwards glance of between half a century and a full one. As we have seen, Woolf and Capmany question—to varying degrees—the very genre of the biography as imbricated in patriarchal and imperial knowledge systems. As such, historical and literary texts themselves become intertexts. Capmany, of course, layers this with another intertextual layer, that of *Orlando* itself. What I'd like to focus on here is how her oeuvre also engages again and again intertextually with Woolf's overtly feminist nonfiction work, often staging it in encounters with fellow Catalan feminists. This wider perspective allows us to analyze intersectional feminist intertextuality, particularly in order to put forth conceptions that focalize moving bodies of gendered and racialized subjects. Woolf develops her feminist intertexts through representations of herself and other women writers in her nonfiction, in which feminism leans white, wealthy and also queer. Meanwhile, at first glance, Capmany appears to focus mostly on gender and class, with glimmers of implied queerness. However, in her letter to an already deceased Woolf that is published as part of *Quim/Quima*, she begins to tease out differences based on ethnic and cultural contexts. Capmany is able, ultimately, to reconcile across embodied difference, whether due to

shared European identity (however fraught), bourgeois upbringing, or the force of sheer admiration. Yet, if we widen the transnational feminist intertextual perspective to a U.S. context, we see that 1980s women of color writers take this critique further, illustrating that due to questions of class and racial violence, reconciliation across certain differences may not be possible. This generative impasse takes the form of intertextual revisions and re-visions that emphasize embodied subjectivity, reaffirming the concept of "survival" in material terms.

Capmany often deploys the epistolary as a mode of staging intertextual gestures. The hybrid of dramatic monologue under the guise of letter (a "direct" invocation of voice) was in fact a preferred genre of Capmany's, as well as a particularly important genre for Catalan women writers; intertexts, for Capmany, always include a consideration of Catalan context even as they reach outwards. Capmany's *Cartes impertinents*, as we saw at the outset, frequently cites and adapts Woolf's nonfiction work, namely *Room* and "Professions." In *Cartes*, Capmany herself points out the epistolary genre as gendered feminine, especially in bourgeois Catalonia: "Els escriptors d'ofici - els homes - van concloure que les dones han nascut aptes per al gènere epistolar, com els canaris han nascut aptes per a cantar, dins una gàbia penjada a la paret d'una galeria de l'Eixampla. La carta permet les expansions del cor - les dones són sentimentals -, excusa el desordre - les dones no tenen capacitat de síntesi -, no cal que les llegeixi ningú, tot just el destinatari si té prou paciència" (9).[40] Capmany's simile reveals the irony: the letters permit expansion precisely by confining women to a specific genre, just as women in Barcelona's turn-of-the-century bourgeois expansion, the Eixample, kept women confined to decorative rooms in the area of the city by that same name. (As Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's* Own, "letters did not count"; 65). Capmany's performing of expansion in the extended syntax of the last clauses breaks free of the cage, showing its limitations and poking fun at the genre—meanwhile, her own prolific work across many genres stands as a testament to this critique.

Heu conquerit les cambres de la casa que fins avui eren propietat exclusiva dels homes. Sense excessiu treball ni grans esforços ja podeu pagar un lloguer. Però només és el començament de la llibertat. La cambra és vostra, però no hi ha res a dins. L'heu de moblar, decorar, compartir. ¿Com la moblareu, la decorareu? ¿Amb qui la compartireu i sobre quines bases?

VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Carreres Femenines. La Mort de l'Arna* (recull pòstum).

Estimada amiga:
Distingida senyora:
Molt senyora meva:
Benvolguda companya:
Estimada Caterina, Mercè o Isabel...

Epigraph[41] and first lines[42] of Capmany's *Cartes impertinents*

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[40] "Career writers—men—concluded that women had been born ready for the epistolary genre, like canaries had been born ready to sing, inside a cage hung from a wall in a gallery of the Eixample [a historically bourgeois Barcelona neighborhood that saw a turn-of-the-century renaissance; literally "expansion"]. Letters permit the expansions of the heart (women are sentimental), excuse disorder (women aren't capable of synthesizing), no one has to read them, just the recipient if they have enough patience." Accessed via HathiTrust.

[41] "You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men. You are able, though not without great labour and effort, to pay the rent. [You are earning your five hundred pounds a year.] But this freedom is only a beginning--the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms?" (Woolf *Death* 153). Note that an equivalent to the bracketed text is not included in Capmany's own epigraph. Accessed via HathiTrust.

[42] All gendered feminine: "Dear friend: / Esteemed lady: / My dear lady: / Dear friend: / Dear Caterina, Mercè, or Isabel…"

Letters, like gestures, imply relationality in their assumed recipient; Capmany opens *Cartes* by orienting toward a range of genealogies that call forth physicality, embodiment, and staging. The first quote above is an epigraph from "Professions" which also picks up on the "room of one's own and five hundred pounds a year" motif from the work by the same name. This choice of epigraph seems relevant for obvious reasons: Capmany is invested in women's freedom from gendered oppression and all that comes with it. "Professions" is also the text in which Woolf mentions that she began her career through letters which became published articles, often oscillating between third and first person: "You have only got to figure to yourselves a girl in a bedroom with a pen in her hand. She had only to move that pen from left to right—from ten o'clock to one. Then it occurred to her to do what is simple and cheap enough after all—to slip a few of those pages into an envelope, fix a penny stamp in the corner, and drop the envelope into the red box at the corner" (*Death* 149-150). Yet there are also some less obvious reasons I think Capmany may have summoned up this text which turns on physicality: writing as an embodied gesture of "mov[ing] that pen from left to right" and becoming a writer outside the space of the domestic as a gesture of "drop[ping] the envelope." There, too, is the embodied writing experience that Woolf variously narrates as "she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say" (152) and "telling the truth about my own experiences as a body" (153); how can we express what is "unfitting to say"? In her metaphorization of the Angel in the House, Woolf turns to the nonverbal: she crystallizes Victorian gender ideals and limitations into a representation that straddles the realms of figurative and physical; although the Angel is a phantom, she still moves through Woolf's own space. Woolf recounts, nearly in the form of stage directions, "she made as if to guide my pen"; followed by "I turned upon her and caught her by the throat" and when that doesn't work, "I took the inkpot and flung it at her" (151). She asserts: "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of the woman writer" (151); this is a genealogical struggle in which in order for a new lineage to begin to exist, its Victorian predecessors must be killed off. Even when she kills the Angel, however, the problem of telling the body persists. *Orlando* as a text takes this one step further: it not only tells the body, but tells the gendered body otherwise, in ways that slip the grasping hand of patriarchy.

Alongside these embodied and gestural Woolfian intertexts, Capmany stages a group of anonymous, universal Catalan women recipients in the opening lines of *Cartes* (also pictured above), by using standard gendered forms of address to women in letters, ranging between formal and informal. Although the last of the opening lines appears to contain some relatively common Catalan names, it's significant that the list includes Caterina and Mercè: for Catalan readers, this would likely call up two of the most famous Catalan women writers, Caterina Albert (better known by the pseudonym Víctor Català)[43] and Mercè Rodoreda.[44] Invoking them is a mode of

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[43] Born Caterina Albert, Català (1869-1966) came into prominence as a writer with a scandal: her dramatic monologue *La infanticida* was deemed by the judges of the 1898 Jocs Florals d'Olot to be inappropriate for a woman to write; afterwards she adopted the pen name Víctor Català, which only briefly maintained her anonymity and which literally means "Catalan victor" (see Castellanos et. al.). There's a certain irony that the "matriarch" of Catalan letters started her career with a dramatic monologue called *Infanticide*; we could say this runs parallel to the violent act Woolf describes in killing the Angel, a necessary eschewal of limitations around what women—so often aligned with their bodies—could and should do.

[44] In the context of Catalan women writers, Rodoreda (1908-1983) is often the next chronological step after Víctor Català. Rodoreda spent much of the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship in exile. Her most well-known novel, *La Plaça del Diamant*, which is set in part during the war, is recognized as one of the most important of

reviving, calling them into the space of this new feminist text; the combined result forges national and international feminist genealogies. Although Woolf and Capmany both emphasize the importance of killing off unwanted literary predecessors (that Oedipal model espoused by Harold Bloom), their writing highlights their work to recover others, more in the vein of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who were writing contemporaneously with Bloom, and with Capmany. Palau notes Capmany's continued role in creating a feminist genealogy throughout her career: her focus on "confeccionar la cadena de les genealogies femenines que ens han precedit" (26).[45] As critic, Capmany established lines of transmission between Catalan women writers: her own career not only following Català's but reviving her work through editorial and publishing work, her translations of women writers (most notably, Simone de Beauvoir and Marguerite Duras)[46] from other traditions to bring their texts to Catalan readers, and also supporting the careers of the younger feminists she trained, such as the writer and journalist Montserrat Roig. Capmany's work in gender and feminism beginning in the 1960s in Catalonia is often cited by feminists of later generations as foundational for their formation, particularly during the Franco dictatorship. As the epigraph and opening lines of *Cartes* show, this genealogy moves not only backward in time to touch on known precedents, but forward in time to touch unknown recipients.

Ever the epistolarian, Capmany closes *Quim/Quima* with a letter which, due to its intimate first-person point of view, feels more like a monologue yet still calls up relationality—this time with a version of Woolf herself. The letter stages an imagined scene between the two authors in which gestures, touch, and contact are mobilized as a mode of mediating between disparate subjects during a cultural encounter; this resonates with repeated scenes throughout both *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima* in which the protagonists come into fortuitous meeting with well-known literary figures. Chana Kronfeld's formulation of a "bi-lateral" process of intertextuality dovetails with both Woolf's and Capmany's non-traditional representations of temporality. The theorization eschews the dichotomy between a Bloomian anxiety of influence and a poststructuralist conception of an authorless "tissue of citations" (119); in doing so, it recovers the potential for intertextual agency and relationality. This "bi-lateral" conception opens up the possibility of tracking not only Woolf's influence on Capmany—how Woolf has touched her—, but how Capmany's text opens up new ways of reading Woolf—in other words, how her text touches back, queering time in the process.

Much has been written about the vast and varied adaptations of Woolf's work within and beyond Anglophone literary traditions—an intertextual process Brenda Silver refers to as

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contemporary Catalan literature. Like Català's dramatic monologue it, too, features ambivalent, even grotesque, depictions of pregnancy and motherhood—and grapples with how women can come into voicing and writing.

[45] "Creating the chain of feminist genealogies that have preceded us."

[46] For some time during the 1960s, translation, mostly from French and Italian but also from English, for Edicions 62 and other publishing houses, was Capmany's main source of income. Of Capmany's translations, many are crime novels; Pilar Godayol points out that she was interested in that genre because "no tan sols atesa la possibilitat de crear-ne un empelt en català, sinó també a fi de normalitzar-ne el llenguatge" ("[She] not only attains the possibility of creating a graft into Catalan, but also the aim of normalizing the language there"). She explains Capmany's interest in translating the philosophical language of Sartre for similar reasons. We can see, then, across the genres of Capmany's work, a commitment to Catalan linguistic politics and recovering a Catalan national identity and culture. Other authors she translated include Jean Paul Sartre, Georges Simenon, Marcel Proust, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Cesare Pavese, and Italo Calvino. English allowed her to engage firsthand with the history of suffrage in England and the United States, which she put into comparison with the Iberian Peninsula in her nonfiction work.

"versioning" (13)—, and even about how *Orlando* itself takes on adaptation.[47] In her reading of texts that take up Woolf's work, Susan Stanford Friedman proposes an alteration to a long history of feminist intertexual approaches that turn on the metaphors of fabric and weaving, proposing instead to theorize intertextuality spatially, in a way that considers the metaphorical overlaps of webs and networks. What she calls "migratory and indigenized intertextuality" (264) falls short, though; how can we contend with a metaphorical spatial concept of intertextuality that doesn't fully consider the actual *geographic* (that is, concretely spatial) conditions of imperialism, colonialism, and uneven political power and cultural capital within and beyond the European continent? Similarly, Friedman seems invested in the process of how ideas travel, which limits the theory's ability to acknowledge and account for the ways in which subjects and texts differ greatly in their freedoms. She states: "The cultural traffic in ideas knows few impermeable boundaries" (263). This may be true for some canonical dominant culture texts, but on the whole ignores real conditions of who can actually participate in this allegedly boundless "traffic in ideas" (whose language feels a hair too close to other, more violent, kinds of trafficking). Friedman, in closing, evokes a few lines from Capmany's letter to Woolf, citing the English version from Style's article. This citation of a citation, undertaken at such a remove from its full context, seems to employ the translated phrases as an illustration of proof of theory, but ultimately illustrates the limitations of the so-called "impermeable boundaries."

This chapter has attempted to contribute to existing readings of *Quim/Quima*'s intertextual relationship to *Orlando* by putting forth an embodied approach to intertextuality and adaptation, which centers gesturally relational subjects within often-fraught wider political and cultural contexts. Capmany's letter to Woolf foregrounds this approach from the beginning: she begins by dramatizing the difficulty of addressing this figure she so respects yet with whom she feels a deep collegial affinity. She then "recounts" a fictional Woolf's words of encouragement that in her adaptation of *Orlando* she: "Imita, imita sense escrúpols perquè no ho aconseguiràs mai. Com més fidel siguis al model que estimes, més seràs tu mateixa. Pots repetir tranquil·la el mateix vestit, la roba dibuixarà sobre el teu cos uns plecs inimitables, i el perfum, el mateix perfum sobre la teva pell bruna farà una altra olor" (224).[48] In this moment, Capmany uses the informal "tu" and approaches Woolf's own body, using dressing as a metaphor for intertextuality. While Pilar Godayol reads a celebration of difference here, I wish to emphasize that this does not remove the complexity of relations between two authors from rather different positionalities. We should recall Vita Sackville-West's reluctant assertion in a letter to Woolf on being the inspiration for Orlando: "I feel like one of those wax figures in a shop window, on which you have hung a robe stitched with jewels […] [H]ow could you have hung so splendid a garment on so poor a peg" (Sackville-West 288-289). Whereas Sackville-West's description absents the body and replaces it with a "wax figure" and "poor peg," Capmany re-endows the process of intertextuality with embodiment, in her emphasis on uniqueness of folds on a "cos" ("body") and the individuality of the "olor" ("scent") of her "pell bruna" (brown skin). She presents not only a woman's body but an ethnically othered one, located in a fractured Europe. Yet there is certainly a hint of the erotic that links it queerly to Woolf's own "I tried a sentence or two on my tongue": the presence of the

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[47] See Martín-Valverde on pastiche, parody, plagiarism, and homage, including a discussion of "The Oak Tree" being modeled off of Sackville-West's own work and Capmany's own writing on pastiche; and Style on European intertexts.

[48] "Imitate, imitate without scruples, because you'll never attain it. The more faithful you are to a model that you love, the more you will be yourself. You can calmly re-wear the same outfit, the clothing will draw on your body inimitable folds, and the scent, the same scent on your brown skin will have a different smell."

bodies beneath the clothing, the intimate proximity between bodies that allows for a sensing of scent.

Capmany's letter to Woolf, then, moves from intertextuality as the physical gesture of "calc" ("tracing") with just the hand (with perhaps an implied caress) to a process that touches her body and Woolf's, and even the sociopolitical spheres in which those bodies gesture and move. To borrow Woolf's narrator's words: from the hand, she deduces a body. Capmany talks about how she saw herself as incapable of writing like Woolf *because* of her body: "m'imaginava que per tenir dret a escriure novel·les calia ser alta, prima, plana de pit i llisa d'anques com tu eres" (224).[49] It's clear that Capmany's focus is not just who has the right to write novels, but what kinds of *women* have the right to write novels—an intimate crossing of genre, gender, and racialization.[50] Capmany distances herself from whiteness, a stand-in for wider political relations. Particularly in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, Catalonia is marked in its uneven position as being closed off from Northern Europe, a result not only of the forced Castilian standardization of Spain, but also of the postwar inward turn of Spain as a whole during the early decades of the dictatorship. For Capmany, though, the body, presented as a site of difference, is also the site of contact and possible permission; the dedicatory letter celebrates the gesture of re-wearing as a gesture of re-writing. As such, intertextuality becomes an intimate, embodied process that not only copies, but reveals new possibilities (the "folds") and imagines an alternative to present temporal conditions.

While Capmany's text is one of many by women and feminist writers that engages with Woolf's writing, her approach of admiration is markedly different from contemporaries of Capmany in other geographic and cultural contexts.[51] In particular, 1980s U.S. women of color writers push back against Woolf's reputation as universal literary antecedent for all women writers. This often centers around dissent to "Room," whose legacy looms large and at times gets untethered from material conditions; these critiques lay out the limits of the generalizability of Woolf's context, text, and formulations, through acts of revision. For example, Alice Walker re-writes passages of Woolf's text to speak more directly to the experience of Black women who are descended from formerly enslaved women, performing the revision with such phrases like "change this to" and "insert" (235, 239, 240). Audre Lorde, in the landmark 1980 speech "Age,

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[49] "I imagined that to have the right to write novels, one had to be tall, thin, and flat-chested, with slim buttocks, as you were."

[50] This attention to what types of bodies have the right ("tenir dret") to write is not an uncommon move for Capmany. In the introduction to her 1966 *La Dona a Catalunya*, Capmany justifies her work and also talks about how she was raised in a male environment, with male instructors. She then contrasts her own physical characteristics with these cerebral lessons: "la meva veu massa aguda, les meves formes rodones, la meva indumentària florida i les sentències de Leibniz" ("my too-high voice, my round shapes, my flowered dress and Leibniz's sentences," *La dona a Catalunya. Consciència i situació*, 13). In Capmany's explanation, then, we might read an implicit acknowledgment of the subversive power of the individual female body to change and re-signify the "sentències" she engages with.

[51] A well-known example from Latin America: the Argentine writer, critic, and translator Victoria Ocampo also wrote to Woolf, but to a real Woolf. Ocampo's affect is one of admiration—the perceived excess of which led to a fraught relationship between the two women. Yet, still, Ocampo is careful, like Capmany, to draw attention to their regional differences: "Según dice usted, les da [a las mujeres] este consejo por egoísmo: *Like most uneducated english-women, I like reading –I like reading books in the bulk.* [...] Ante todo, por mi parte, desearía confesar públicamente, Virginia, que *like most uneducated southamerican women, I like writing*" (103-104). ("According to what you [Ocampo uses the formal "usted"] say, you give them [the women] this advice out of selfishness […] Above all, for me, I would like to confess publicly, Virginia […]") In this ironic pronunciation, Ocampo too, re-writes Woolf's phrase. Ocampo's SUR imprint made its way to writers in Barcelona: during a visit to Capmany's archive, I spotted a SUR edition of the Spanish translation of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (*Al Faro*).

Race, Sex, and Class: Women Redefining Difference," re-visits a seminal concept without citing Woolf directly: "a room of one's own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a typewriter, and plenty of time" (116). She speaks specifically about Black women's lived experiences contra white women's willful elision of difference under the broad umbrella of "woman": "There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word *sisterhood* that does not in fact exist" (116). In line with the struggles and wider trends of the historical moment which lay the groundwork for what we now understand as intersectional feminism, these texts focus on the concept of difference as key to understanding the conditions women writers must contend with—and therefore as key to feminisms and their constituent intertexual genealogies. It should be noted that many of these writers were in dialogue and intimate collaboration with one another, and their work reflects that, both in the creation of anthologies and on the individual page. For example, even in the small grouping of texts I'm citing here, Rich quotes Lorde, and Anzaldúa quotes Walker—intertextuality that crosses racial and ethnic categories.

More specifically and more relevant to embodied conceptions of intertextuality, though, are the ways in which their work emphasizes difference in terms of physical demands placed upon working class women of color of marginalized positionalities. While Capmany in her letter emphasizes differences in appearance such as skin and body type, her U.S. women of color contemporaries, also emphasize the labor and physical conditions they must endure that limit their access to the privilege of writing. While Capmany's letter underscores the difficulty of coming to write novels specifically, Lorde draws a link between material facts and choice of writerly genre: "Of all the art forms, poetry is the most economical. It is the one which is the most secret, which requires the least physical labor, the least material, and the one which can be done between shifts, in the hospital pantry, on the subway, and on scraps of surplus paper" (116).[52] Gloria Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers," also penned in 1980, picks up on the form of direct address we've seen from both Woolf and Capmany, yet speaks directly to the specific audience of "Dear mujeres de color, companions in writing," later, "My dear *hermanas*," nuancing that broad "sisterhood": "How to approximate the intimacy and immediacy I want. What form? A letter, of course" (165). Like Lorde, Anzaldúa rejects Woolf's "room" out of politicized necessity: "Forget the room of one's own – write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals, between sleeping or waking. I write while sitting on the john. No long stretches at the typewriter unless you're wealthy or have a patron – you may not even own a typewriter" (170). We see recurring liminal spaces that stage the physical and societal marginalization of working-class women of color writers, emphasizing writing as one of many embodied actions in their daily lives.

While Capmany pulls Woolf close, Walker, Lorde, and Anzaldúa establish distance for the purposes of nuancing how we in the U.S. understand women's artistic labor through feminisms. Yet while Capmany's tone is much more admiring overall, and her approximation more intimate, reading her letter to Woolf *through* the theoretical contributions of U.S. women of color writers allows us to see how the letter subtly flips the script: she has been influenced by Woolf, and yet Woolf cannot answer or talk back. It's a shift in the power of cultural capital, putting words in the mouth of and gestures in the body of another. In this sense, Woolf's embodied image becomes a site of projection for Capmany: idealized, racialized, eroticized.

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[52] See also the liminal spaces in Lorde's "A Litany for Survival" which Rich seems to allude to in the above quote: "For those of us who live at the shoreline / […] who love in doorways coming and going."

Staging gestural loops

One last performance in closing: a video clip that culminates points of encounter between *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima*, Woolf and Capmany. This is from a televised 1977 interview with another Catalan feminist author who was Capmany's former student at Escola d'Art Dramàtic Adrià Gual, Montserrat Roig, on the show *Personatges* ("Characters"). In the context of speaking about seeing herself as a novelist above all and about the types of novels she is most interested in, Capmany says she's an avid reader and reads everything, but that there are certain texts she always returns to and could read for the rest of her life. These include works across European traditions by Stendahl, Narcís Oller, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Thomas Mann, Colette, and, of course: "sóc capaç de tornar-me a començar a llegir, de cap i de nou, tota la Virgínia Woolf" ("I can go back and read Virginia Woolf's work all over again").

Although it is no surprise by now that Capmany credits Woolf as a major influence, what's striking here is to encounter Woolf's persona through Capmany's own voice and physical gestures, marked, too, by her age and Southern European positionality. The mere naming of Woolf resonates throughout Capmany's body: as she says that she'd like to read Woolf "de cap i de nou" ("all over again") she gestures forward with the back of her right hand, in a returning circle that seems to indicate this temporal loop, and then runs the palm of her left hand tenderly across the table in front of her.[53] The hand looping can be read as a gesture of potential, of re-reading, of re-viving. This is an embodied parallel to another loop Capmany sets up in her letter to Woolf, musing that Woolf will one day be able to read and respond to *Quim/Quima*: "Pensant en tu, pensant que un dia futur et llegiràs aquest llibre nou que he fet, he explicat la vida de Quim, també anomenat Xim, també Quima o Xima, i llavors em diràs que el teu Orlando era diferent" (226).[54] Possible in Capmany's present moment? Not quite. Possible in the temporal moment of a "dia futur"? Just maybe. In the chapters that follow this one, I'll continue to work with this comparative mode of difference as alleged impasse—and what gestural encounters are possible beyond it, before it, and after it.

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[53] See 40:10 in interview, which can be found at the following link: https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/personatges/arxiu-tve-catalunya-personatges-maria-aurelia-capmany/2823357.

[54] "Thinking about you, thinking that one day in the future you'll read this new book I've made, I've explained the life of Quim, also called Xim, or Quima or Xima, and at that point you'll tell me your Orlando was different."

CHAPTER TWO

Sensing Beyond the Self: María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends*

In the last chapter, I lingered on Maria Aurèlia Capmany's gesture of tracing and caress as an embodied form of intertextuality that links feminist authors and texts across geographies and temporalities. The playwright whose work is the focus of this chapter, María Irene Fornés,[1] often engaged with a range of intertexts while creating new plays, from archival family letters to found materials to extensive citations to adaptations of canonical works (Robinson 17).[2] Marc Robinson points out a certain intimacy: "The sensuality of all this work is not lost on Fornes. She has said that one reason she quotes other writers so often is that she likes the feeling of typing their words. Here, her vision of the shapeliness of language is fulfilled: She literally caresses the text" (18).[3] Embodied feminist intertextuality, then, from tracing to typing, undermines the boundedness of an individual writerly subjectivity from the outset of the composition process. Considering a key question from the last chapter, we could say that Fornés takes up revival, not only in idea or in concept, but in body; she integrates touch and rhythm as an intimate form of relating across temporal and geographical restrictions. Such an approach poses a challenge to Julia Kristeva's semiotic formulation that "The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity" (37, emphasis in the original). That Fornés "liked the feeling of typing their words" not only calls attention to embodied forms of textuality, so central to theater-making, but also aligns with the forms of feminist feeling I will highlight in Fornés's landmark 1977 *Fefu and Her Friends*. This chapter moves between two interrelated aspects of potential intersubjectivity: from relational gesturing to sensing as another. By rehearsing collective, ensemble forms of embodied resistance, these modes of approximation, ever closer, pose a challenge to patriarchal violence that attempts to limit women's movement.[4]

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[1] I am following the Spanish-language norms for accent marks in Fornés's name, although some critics I cite Anglicize her name by removing the accent marks. Speaking of names, Michelle Memran, who made a documentary about Fornés's Alzheimer's, has a lovely turn of phrase: "Maria 'call me Irene' Fornes" (*Brooklyn Rail*). Many Fornés critics who were her friends, contemporaries, and students, refer to her simply as "Irene."

[2] See Robinson 17-18 for further details on intertextual sources. Of particular relevance to this chapter: "The last act of *Fefu and Her Friends* is dominated by a long speech from Emma Sheridan Fry's 1917 *Educational Dramatics*" (17), and, although Robinson doesn't mention it, my hunch is that Fornés lent Fry's first name to the character who delivers the intertextual speech, Emma. It is also noteworthy for this project that although Fornés composed just one play in Spanish (*La viuda*, her first), she adapted a number of Spanish-language plays into her English compositions, including Federico García Lorca's *La boda de sangre* and Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño*.

[3] Robinson goes on to describe Fornés's conception of writing as "collaborative," "engagement," and "companionship" (18-19). He also presents a tableau, perhaps inspired by Fornés's own work with staged tableaux: "Fornes began her writing career sitting across the kitchen table from her onetime roommate, Susan Sontag" (18). For such an emphasis on intimacy, it does seem a bit strange to me that Robinson refers to Sontag as "onetime roommate," rather than acknowledging that the two were in a relationship.

[4] Image source link: https://www.them.us/story/themstory-maria-irene-fornes. Memran is the director of the documentary *The Rest I Make Up*.



Fornés by Michelle Memran

Fefu (as I will refer to it throughout), along with *Mud* (1983) and *The Conduct of Life* (1985), is one of Fornés's most well-known plays from a prolific body of work spanning from the 1960s to 2000.[5] While Fornés was active in the downtown Off-Off-Broadway theater scene as a costume designer and playwright since the 1960s, and as a playwriting teacher at INTAR (International Arts Relations) since the 1970s, it was not until the 1990s that feminist theater critics' attention led to a critical boom. More recent criticism centers Fornés's influence as a woman of color playwright who launched INTAR's landmark Hispanic Playwrights-in-Residence Laboratory in 1981, trained a generation of younger Latinx writers, and influenced many others.[6] This expansion of Fornés criticism nuances earlier trends that focused on her so-called "lesser known" status which often precedes writers at the margins of normative white male canons; for example, Ryan points out that even in 1986, *The Village Voice* referred to her as "America's Great Unknown Playwright." A queer Cuban immigrant to New York (she first came in 1945 at the age of 15), Fornés herself often eschewed such identity labels. José Esteban Muñoz contends that such eschewal does not foreclose, but rather facilitates, resistant potential, and he (de-)situates it in a wider theater history context:

> Her refusal or reluctance to embrace an uncritical model of Latina identity is a critical and theoretical act. Only a few of Fornés's plays actually feature Latino and Latina characters […] Even so, I contend that all of her dramatic personages represent Latina/o affective reality. Their way of being, and their modes of negotiating the interpersonal and the social, stand as thick descriptions of ethnic feeling within a hegemonic order. Fornés's oeuvre stands out from the mainstream of American theater partly because one is not easily able to assign motivation to her characters. Traditional narrative arcs of plot development are all but absent in her work, a difference that is often interpreted as the

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[5] For a decades-based approach to Fornés's biography and oeuvre with a deliberate intention to focus on lesser-known plays, see Scott T. Cummings's *Maria Irene Fornes*.

[6] These include Cherríe Moraga, Caridad Svich, Octavio Solis, Nilo Cruz, and Eduardo Machado, to name a few. Patricia A. Ybarra emphasizes the community and interchange between many of these playwrights, reminding readers that "these writers at across the table from each other at María Irene Fornés's workshops at INTAR" (23). INTAR, located in Hell's Kitchen, continues to produce the work of leading and emerging Latinx theater artists.

> avant-garde nature of her plays. Such a reading is only half right, however. This particular mode of avant-gardism can be characterized as representative of a specifically transcultural avant-garde. Her plays appear mysterious to North American eyes because they represent a specifically Latina/o *manera de ser* (way of being). This mystery is not accidental, nor it is a problem of translation; it is strategic, measured, and interventionist. (*Sense* 14)

Muñoz's reading distances, carving out space between Fornés's "transcultural" engagement and that of other exclusively U.S. playwrights, while simultaneously not confining these types of distinctions to strictly geographical limits. Muñoz emphasizes "Latino/a affective reality" (which in other parts of the book he links with "brownness") that results in "thick descriptions of ethnic feeling within a hegemonic order" throughout all of Fornés's work. [7] I see this corresponding with textures that arise in *Fefu* that bridge affect and embodiment to make demands of readers and audiences alike: sticky, bristle, muddy, prickly, pointed, slippery. One of *Fefu*'s most well-known images can't but provoke a somatic response. In one of the titular character's first bits of dialogue, she describes the fascinating revulsion of "turn[ing] over a stone in damp soil." In contrast with "that which is exposed to the exterior… […] smooth and dry and clean," that which is underneath is "slimy and filled with fungus and crawling with worms. It's another life that is parallel to the one we manifest. It's there" (10). In addition to reading this moment, as many have done, as a metaphor for the unconscious or for Fornés's own composition process, we could connect this alive "underneath" with the resistant potential now constellated across Black studies, Global South, and queer of color critique, such as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's "undercommons," and Macarena Gómez-Barris's "submerged perspectives" (1) and "muck" (xx) as alternatives to extractivist logics. As I'll discuss in Chapter 4, Ana Mendieta takes up analogous forms of turning in the earth—but with her own body rather than an object, so that the peering underneath becomes an investigation of what makes embodied humanness.

Another overlapping critical approach would be to group Fornés with other feminist and/or queer playwrights who were her relative contemporaries, such as Caryl Churchill, Paula Vogel, and Ntozake Shange. Although composed at the crest of second wave feminism, *Fefu*, comprised of a cast of eight women, is set during the ebbing of modernisms: "New England, Spring 1935" (4). And like those well-known Modernist novels *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, it takes place over the course of a day (noon, afternoon, and evening correspond to the play's Parts I, II, and III, respectively; 4). Although Fornés, perhaps partly in jest, claimed that she wanted a time "before Freud became popular and infiltrated our social and emotional lives" resulting in "an automatic disbelieving of everything that is said" (Marranca 85), the backwards glance recovers the potential for women to have *always* moved through space in their own ways, even before the feminist struggles of the 1960s and '70s.

It was not common then (and perhaps not even so common now) to see an all-women cast, including queer women, partaking in moments of everyday life that take on a more

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[7] Muñoz theorizes "brownness" in relation to "brown people," but also beyond that; for example as "people who are rendered brown by their personal and familial participation in South-to-North Migration patterns," or by "vulnerability to the contempt and scorn of xenophobes, racists" (3). "Brown" for Muñoz also extends beyond the human. Theorizing "brownness" is in fact the project of the entire book, but for more see especially the editors' introduction and "The Brown Commons."

heightened significance as the play goes on.[8] Part I shows the staggered arrivals of the women—Cindy, Christina, Julia, Emma, Paula, Sue, and Cecilia—to Fefu's house to rehearse a performance for an education fundraiser. Fefu plays host, and the other women reunite amidst a flurry of conversation and movement. We learn of a strange game involving a gun Fefu plays with her husband that foreshadows the play's final, shocking moment. Part II is comprised of four scenes staged simultaneously in different parts of the theater space and repeated four times for each quarter of the audience; this experimental staging draws attention to how women's bodies move through space. Fefu shares personal troubles with Emma; Cindy and Christina talk about Fefu, and Cindy recounts a disturbing dream; Paula and Sue muse about relationships, and Cecilia's entrance brings up old feelings for Paula; Julia hallucinates a patriarchal nightmare. Part III gathers the women and the audience back together and builds their collective engagement, as the friends rehearse the fundraiser performance and start a spontaneous water fight. A number of conflicts come to a head: the pain of a breakup for Paula and Cecilia, and a major altercation between Julia and Fefu, after which Fefu fires a gun offstage and Julia falls still onstage. The ending is demanding in its ambiguity, and its stakes are precisely those of embodied feminist relationality.

Yet these plot points only tell part of the story. The play is rich in a range of conversations and interactions between the women. These are often silly and funny and playful and deep and troubled and flawed—that is, ordinary, and human. The play takes place in Fefu's home and stages men offstage: we never even hear them speak; a few of the women imply their presence just outside the house. Yet the play never loses sight of the wider context. The play's very first line, spoken by Fefu, is "My husband married me to have a constant reminder of how loathsome women are" (7). This utterance sets up an arc that, in part, measures the realms and reaches of patriarchal violence and the damages it does to women's embodied subjectivities. Amidst this, though, we watch the characters fully inhabit the spaces they move through, whether in idle lounging, raucous play, or somewhere in between. Still, the play does not fall into easy tropes of women and domesticity: the women frequently enter, exit, and even act from offstage in ways that make porous the boundaries between inside and outside. This porousness is connected with experimental staging that moves the scenes in Part II off of the stage and out of the main theater, inviting the audience to leave their seats and be in closer proximity to the scenes. In Part III, that porousness continues, this time between sensing characters and sensing audience.

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, gestures push at the limits of the personal. In *Fefu*, gestures, scripted by stage directions, don't simply remain within the embodied sphere of the actor whose task it is to realize them. This chapter considers gestures in *Fefu* as one mode of embodiment that does the work of establishing feminist relationality within the play. Such relationality spans from deep intimacy to startling violence, and it eventually tips into intersubjectivity that undoes the boundedness of individual embodied experience. I'll first consider key gestural moments in the text of the play that draw attention to the relationship between written stage directions and embodied performance. I'll then focus on how the experimental staging of Part II, which moves the play off of the stage and out of the main theater to other smaller spaces within the building; inviting the audience to leave their seats and get much closer to the actors and other audience members results in a heightened somatic awareness that lingers into the events of Part III. I center the influence of other experimental performance

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[8] Some notable and relatively contemporaneous plays with all-women casts include Shange's *for colored girls* (1974); Maureen Duffy's *Rites* (1969); and Jane Chambers's *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* (1980). Thank you to Elisenne Yun and Lorene Tapellini, respectively, for sharing these last two plays with me.

art on the play's development, namely the horizontal and improvisational investigations tied to the rise of postmodern dance in 1960s New York. In the process, I'll also bring in my own experience at a recent revival of the play. *Fefu*, I argue, culminates in an expanded intersubjective relationality between two of the play's main characters, and also in the audience's tuning to their own and to others' embodied sensation, the potential of which continues even after the curtain drops. What emerges: a shared feminist feeling, collective forms of embodied resistance, with the potential to challenge limitations imposed upon women's bodies by patriarchal violence.

Stage directions: gestures between language and movement

Theater, which crosses from page to stage, allows for a unique consideration of gestures. Stage directions, those words within a printed play, that genre within a genre, can specify everything from background to mood to movements both codified and uncodified, not only representing gestures in text, but also suggesting how they will look in embodied form onstage. My contention, analogous to this project's wider claim that gestures in literary texts are not supplemental but crucial to understanding them, is that stage directions do not simply "accompany" speech in plays, such as dialogue or monologues. I follow the recent work of Bess Rowen, who claims that "stage directions are the site of an encounter between written language and the nonverbal, embodied aspects of performance" (3). I here want to emphasize that this "encounter" bridges text, readers, actors, and audience. The history of stage directions involves a two-way translation: a playwright's written indications for actors' movements *and*, historically, the notation of movements performed by actors before plays were published and circulated. I'll be focusing here on Fornés's stage directions in *Fefu*, but it bears noting, as with any other textual genre, that not all stage directions follow the same format. Although there are certain historical conventions and schools of theater (realism, absurdism, and so on)—well-documented by theater critics and theater historians—that affect what stage directions look and sound like, there is much individual variation according to the playwright and the play, as well as variation within a given play. [9]

So many of the stage directions in *Fefu* ask characters to engage in everyday movements. They run, wave, read, observe, kiss, sit on laps, lounge on couches, make tea, sip liquor. While this everydayness might be typical in many plays that take place in domestic spaces, its presence in *Fefu* is twofold. First, the play's nuanced representation of women—and only women—going about a range of individual and interpersonal activities is feminist in and of itself because it allows them to relate to one another in a range of different ways. The women often display an ease and comfort with each other, evident from their first verbal and physical interactions, for example: "(*Still embracing Fefu, Emma sees Julia.*) Julia! (*She runs to Julia and sits on her lap.*)" (19). Second, the everydayness present in many of *Fefu*'s stage directions serves to throw into relief other gestures and modes of embodiment that, in various ways, lie beyond the realm of the real. This ranges from a disturbing game that Fefu and her (offstage) husband play that involves her shooting an unloaded gun at him, to hallucinations and alternate realities whose locus is almost always Julia,

[9] For a useful synthesis of the history of stage directions between print and performance as they've been read in key debates in theater history and performance studies, see Rowen 5-12. Especially relevant to the present chapter is Rowen's emphasis on a predominant strain of criticism that reads stage directions purely semiotically as language on the page—this makes sense given the decades in which said criticism was being produced, but Rowen's work and my own both attempt to recover the body *as part of* sign systems and certainly beyond the page.

and later, Fefu. However, we could say that this un-realness is a way of making strange that which is quotidian for some women but really shouldn't be: patriarchal violence.

Of all the characters in *Fefu*, it is Julia whose modes of embodiment are most representative of the complex role of gestures and gesturality in the play, precisely because they call relationality—to self, to others onstage, to others offstage, to audience, to shared reality—into question. As a disabled woman in a wheelchair, Julia might first appear to have the most limited movement, and she is at times overcome by a hallucinatory state that absents her from conversation. (We learn through dialogue that before the action of the play Julia became paralyzed from the waist down, the somewhat inexplicable result of a hunting accident in which she was nearby a deer that was shot; this, of course, gives weight to the shooting scenes and foreshadows the play's final moment.) However, the stage directions during Julia's Part II scene open up into forms of movement, particularly gestures, not otherwise seen over the course of the play; for this reason, I am not in agreement with critics who read Julia only as a passive symbol of the effects of patriarchal violence. While all the other characters have at least one scene partner in Part II, Julia is mostly alone in her scene (Sue enters only briefly at the very end to bring her soup), with just the audience to witness the strange, disturbing hallucinations she dips into and out of throughout. Fornés's stage directions at the scene's opening indicate that Julia is in a makeshift bedroom in Fefu's house, and they also stage the scene outside of the (mostly) realist setting that we have taken for granted in the play thus far, beginning with the set and costuming which open up an alternate time-space for Julia: "*There are dry leaves on the floor although the time is not fall. The sheets are linen. Julia lies in bed covered to her shoulders. She wears a white hospital gown. Julia hallucinates. However, her behavior should not be the usual behavior attributed to a mad person. It should be rather still and luminous*" (33). Here, we can already see Fornés bending straightforward stage directions to suit Julia's state, moving into a more open-ended, even lyrical mode, rather than specifically directive; Rowen terms this mode "affective." Julia's hallucination takes the form of a monologue recalling "the judges" (33), which we come to understand comprise a force that controls her body and its life and death. Over the course of her monologue, we learn that that force sounds a lot like patriarchy, imbued with a kind of metaphysical presence that resides *within* Julia. Although she is covered to her shoulders (once again appearing limited in movement), gestures are key in modulating her hallucination, whether she is speaking against or in agreement with her oppressors; she embodies the struggle between forces of patriarchal control and feminist resistance. I am not merely setting up a binary here, but rather, drawing attention to the range of movements between those two poles that Julia embodies and that will later resonate within Fefu.

Like all of the other scenes in Part II, the text of Julia's monologue immediately foregrounds bodies, specifically women's bodies experiencing forms of patriarchal violence. Julia describes an unnamed "they" and later an unnamed "he," all "judges" who question her and torture her for some unspecified offense, quite possibly the simple fact of existing as an independent woman: "They clubbed me. They broke my head. They broke my will. They broke my hands. They tore my eyes out. They took my voice away. They didn't do anything to my heart because I didn't bring my heart with me. They clubbed me again, but my head did not fall off in pieces" (33). [10] Besides the violence Julia describes, underscored by the repetition of syntactical structure, we see a subtle crossing between the literal and the figurative in her body,

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[10] This description of torture resonates with Fornés's *The Conduct of Life* which takes place during the dictatorship of an unnamed Latin American country, as well as the descriptions of political violence I outlined in Chapter 1, particularly El Luminoso and state police in Eltit's *Lumpérica*, as well as the "they" of "Epic Poetry" and "He" of "Love Poetry" in Cha's *Dictee*.

where each body part stands in metonymically for its functions. "Head" seems to be related not just to her skull, but to the ideas within it, and "heart" is something that could be physically attacked or metaphorically left behind. Accordingly, Julia's gestures lie right on the threshold between literal and figurative. When talking about an imperative to smile, she says: [11]

> I go along with that because if I don't…
>
> *(With her finger she indicates her throat being cut and makes the sound that usually accompanies that gesture.)* (33).

And shortly thereafter:

> (She repeats the throat cutting gesture.) (34).

Although that gesture and its accompanying sound are often used lightly and figuratively in everyday interactions, here it takes on a much more sinister cast, as in: "death is near," or "death was near," or "I'm in danger," or "we are all in danger." The gesture and sound transport the audience into the realm of Julia's hallucination, where women's bodies are under threat by patriarchal ideology and control.[12] Such a phenomenological process occurs not just through presenting a familiar gesture, but also by presenting a familiar gesture in an unfamiliar context and asking the audience to interpret its significance in the moment. In fact, it is precisely this disjunction that makes additional demands of the audience—and if they are willing to engage in this interpretive and imaginative work, they may find themselves implicated not just in thinking minds, but in sensing bodies.

Julia's scene leaves little room for doubt, particularly for the contemporary feminist reader or viewer, that her speech and embodiment—her vocal tightness and paralysis—are a symbolic representation of the limiting effects of patriarchal violence. As Julia speaks, at times, she seems to parrot patriarchal ideology. The following speech takes on the quality of a recitation, and the stage directions indicate that "(*Her voice becomes gravelly and tight in imitation of the judges*)." This "tight"-ness in itself represents a limiting and closing off from her own fully embodied self:

> He said that all those parts must be kept clean and put away. He said that women's entrails are heavier than anything on earth and to see a woman running creates a disparate and incongruous image in the mind. It's anti-aesthetic. Therefore women should not run. Instead they should strike positions that take into account the weight of their entrails. Only if they do, can they be aesthetic. He said, for example, Goya's Maja. He said Ruben's women are not aesthetic. Flesh. He said that a woman's bottom should be in a cushion, otherwise it's revolting. He said there are exceptions. Ballet dancers are exceptions. They can run and lift their legs because they have no entrails. Isadora

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[11] Although this scene's language is rather abstract, I think that contributes to the power of its relatability: for me, for example, this moment always conjures up the recent campaign against sexual violence that involves posters saying "Stop telling women to smile."

[12] This threat seems to be a response to the so-called threat that women's bodies (starting with orifices: "the genitals, the anus, the mouth, the armpit," 33) pose to all realms of said control.

> Duncan had entrails, that's why she should not have danced. But she danced and for this reason became crazy. *(Her voice is back to normal.)* She wasn't crazy.
>
> (*She moves her hand as if guarding from a blow*).
>
> She was. He said that I had to be punished because I was getting too smart. I'm not smart. I never was. Neither is Fefu smart. They are after her too. Well, she's still walking!
>
> (*She guards from a blow. Her eyes close.*) (33-34)

Julia's speech presents a collection of women represented in and performing art with various degrees of freedom to exist, and literally to move, according to patriarchal authority that exists in the space of the (disembodied) logos "He said," "he said," "He said," "He said," "He said,"—one in which she too, and Fefu, are directly implicated, and perhaps the audience as well, whether from past experiences or current presence with Julia . Women's bodily materiality—"entrails" and "Flesh.", so weighty it can stand as its own sentence—corresponds to a need to limit certain kinds of everyday bodily movement, as well as aesthetic forms and genres that represent or are based in movement. Goya's Maja is reclined, which for the "He" seems to connote a submission to patriarchal norms. So, too, is Julia herself; the stage directions indicate that "*Julia lies in bed covered to her shoulders*"—although the audience watches her struggle to break the stagnant tableau (33). Perhaps even more threatening than painting's two-dimensionality is women's three-dimensional movement: Julia references dance, with the implied historical shift from ballet's dominance to the rise of modern dance in the early twentieth century. Ballet, of course, requires specific kinds of disciplining of women's bodies, and in part Isadora Duncan was responding to such discipline by moving *in excess* of balletic forms. The irony: the external gestural excess—modern dance's spirals, floorwork, flexed feet, sharp angles—are not framed as such by this patriarchal logic, but are instead turned into inward excess, to "entrails" and the mental state of "crazy," a word that appears repeatedly throughout the play.[13] Julia's monologue sets up an analogue between patriarchy's need to limit women with "entrails" in life and art and Fefu who is "still walking": they think for themselves, they move as they wish.

Throughout Julia's monologue, though, we see what happens to women who move in excess, which is to say, at all. The language of the scene is a complex and poetic rendering of the reaches of patriarchy and misogyny. (e.g. "Women's spirit is sexual. That is why after coitus they dwell in nefarious feelings" (35)). Particularly striking, however, are the ways in which this violence reverberates in Julia's own body. Her gestures, which do not actually require anyone else to physically do anything to her or even be present in the room in order for her to experience the bodily sensations, mark that she has internalized the violence of patriarchal ideology—and that she is simultaneously struggling in body and mind to resist it. In addition to the above "(*She moves her hand as if guarding from a blow*)," and "*She guards from a blow. Her eyes close.*)," many instances of hallucinated violence repeat throughout the scene, such as:

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[13] The reference to "entrails" here also resonates with Fefu's Part I comment, after fixing her toilet, that "Plumbing is more important than you think" (15) and "revolting" resonates with Christina's Part I accusation that Fefu "find[s] revulsion exciting" (9; this is what prompts Fefu's "turning over the stone" musings). This resonance is one more point of connection between Julia and Fefu, besides Julia's explicit mention that Fefu is "still walking"; the play sets up an intersubjective relationality between the two. Besides the "you" of the judges, whom she thinks will kill Fefu, Julia breaks from her hallucinatory dialogue to speak directly to an imagined Fefu: "Oh, dear, dear, my dear, they want your light" (34, perhaps a homonymic reference to the deer in the incident that left Julia paralyzed).

(*her head moves as if slapped.*)

Don't hit me. Didn't I just say my prayer?

(*A smaller slap*.)

I believe it. (35)

In both instances, the stage directions move from a hypothetical rendering of the gesture to a more direct integration of it: from "*as if guarding from a blow*" to "*guards from a blow*" above and from "*as if slapped*" to "*A smaller slap*" here. The language moves from the subjunctive to the present tense in the stage directions, and because stage directions implicate movement, the violence is internalized in textual language *and* in body.

The aspects of Julia's embodiment during the monologue that demonstrate an internalization of discipline and punishment represent a somatic training that runs counter to much of what the other characters, including Julia herself, are able to engage in throughout other parts of the play: free, unbridled, embodied movement and speech. Returning to the text above, then, the edict that "they [women] should strike positions that take into account the weight of their entrails. Only if they do, can they be aesthetic" seems to be the opposite of most everything we have witnessed and will witness throughout Fornés's play, so feminist because it affords so much movement to women characters, and even to audience members. With a water fight, hugging, kissing, running, yelling, and singing, no one ever really stays still, and even if they appear to be so, we become more and more aware of smaller movements like gaze, light touches, turns of the head.

Julia's monologue, with its gestural moments, makes the audience itself her scene partner—and by extension, an embodied part of the ensemble collective of the play as a whole. For Deborah R. Geis, who takes up feminist readings of Brecht's *Gestus*, *Fefu* inaugurates a series of Fornés plays that allow for a re-inscription and reclaiming of women's bodies by their coming to voice *through* their bodies, despite violent contexts such as patriarchy and authoritarianism. She contends that women's monologues in particular break open acts of representation by calling attention to the disjunction between words and the embodied moment of their speaking:

> Perhaps this is one reason why so many women playwrights have been drawn to the monologue form: to some extent, the gestic monologue marks a *locus* for the struggle for female subjectivity as it enacts the "drama" of the gendered speaking body and its polyvocal signifiers. The monologue's conquest of narrative space might thus be viewed as a reification of the feminine "subject-in-process." (293)[14]

In this sense, Julia might at first glance appear to be the most evocative "subject-in-process" as she "struggle[s] for female subjectivity" in speech and in gesture against patriarchal representation. In fact, however, so are all of the women: we see each of them take up "narrative space" throughout the course of the play, in relatively equal ways. Although dramatic action surrounds Fefu and Julia, no character seems to be peripheral to any others. More than just

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[14] While I assume Geis's use of "conquest" is supposed to counter patriarchal dominance, I would trouble that word's imperial and misogynistic charge by saying that "holding space" or "inhabiting space" is even more apt for *Fefu*.

narrative, this ensemble structure is markedly embodied: we see characters try out many different modes of physically interacting with other women, coming into and out of contact.

The role of the audience is key in this gestic, gestural process: they notice the gap between words and the embodied moment of their speaking, which then challenges the representational systems that traditionally dominate. A sense of collective struggle: we watch characters grapple with what it is that makes them characters, or subjects, rather than simply perform those parts to maintain an illusion or full suspension of disbelief. Yet, as I've begun to demonstrate, what happens in *Fefu* isn't the typical witnessing we might associate with viewing a play. Particularly in Part II, audience members' sense of their own embodied subjectivity is called into play, in to play, and into the play. As the audience members themselves proceed from scene to scene, the stakes of the play become clear: how to realize embodied queer and feminist relationality despite the violence of patriarchy on those very bodies?

Staging for characters and audience: *Fefu*'s improvisational score

Fefu's script connects viewers' affective movement with physical movement. Bess Rowen, in her discussion of stage directions "that are written in ways that are performative and affective," draws attention to "how we think through other people's moods and feelings with our own bodies," continuing: "Affective stage directions move us. Sometimes that movement is physical, sometimes it is internal, but either way the ability *to move* is the source of their power" (4, 11-12, emphasis in the original). As Rowen indicates, stage directions bring physical and emotional movement in multiple senses: actors move, they are moved, the audience is moved. In *Fefu*, while Parts I and III take place in "[t]he living room" and "the entire audience watches from the main auditorium" (4), Part II (which includes the Julia scene discussed above) takes place in "[t]he lawn, the study, the bedroom, the kitchen." The text at the beginning of the play, where the setting and characters are described, also states:

> The audience is divided into four groups. Each group is led to the spaces. These scenes are performed simultaneously. When the scenes are completed the audience moves to the next space and the scenes are performed again. This is repeated four times until each group has seen all four scenes. Then the audience is led back to the main auditorium. (4)

This formulation is a stage direction, but for the audience rather than for the actors. On the level of stage directions—that is, text that describes movement, typically for the actors or production team—Fornés directly implicates the audience. They will not sit; instead, they must move their bodies through space in order for the play to be the play. While this experimental innovation was so lauded by critics of the time that Robinson has hypothesized that it led Fornés to write another version of the play without it,[15] there is still more to say. Namely, because of the audience members' physical involvement, they cannot but feel and sense the effects of the play in their bodies. The staging sets up a feminist horizontality by inviting a sense-based, somatic solidarity

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[15] "The most disconcerting of Fornes's revisions affects *Fefu and Her Friends*. In 1996, Fornes created a one-set version of the play, eliminating the need for mobile spectators. She has said that she made the change for practical reasons, to allow theaters to produce it for larger audiences. (The four scenes of the original second act require intimate playing spaces.) But those who know of Fornes's aversion to theory might reasonably suspect a more devious motive: The new *Fefu* upsets nearly twenty years of criticism about the political and philosophical significance of her original, nonlinear structure. It is as if Fornes feared that her innovation—so exciting in its day—was turning duller and more conventional each time a critic told her what it meant" (20).

that runs counter to the patriarchal violence done unto women which the characters recount, and even participate in, throughout the play.

However, this phenomenon doesn't just occur by telling the audience what to do or by forcing them to move through the space through the stage directions—"the strings of the puppeteer" (148) to adopt Rowen's phrase—or even by simply releasing audience members into the wild, so to speak. Rather, it is mix of sensorial stimuli and the characters' own dialogue that helps bring the audience into a more embodied reception of the play, although that embodied reception will take on its own subjective contours which could even shift with each day or each viewing. Just a few minutes into Part I, Fefu picks up a rifle and fires a blank at Philip, her husband, who is offstage. To Fefu's unwitting friends who scream, and to unwitting audience members who never fail to jump in their seats, it seems that she has shot Phillip dead. The audience soon learns that he is just fine, however, because Fefu shot a blank. Although Fefu passes off their game as trivial, "smil[ing] proudly" and "blow[ing] on the mouth of the barrel," the play itself does not (and later, we learn that this relationship seems to be causing Fefu great pain). Rather than simply moving on from the moment, the play offers a sensorial processing of it. Christina, unlike Cindy who has introduced her to Fefu, does not dismiss the startling gunshot as a passing occurrence or one of Fefu's eccentric quirks:

> CHRISTINA: It sounded like a cannon shot.
> CINDY: That was just gun powder. There's no bullet in a blank.
> CHRISTINA: The blast alone could kill you. One can die of fright, you know.
> CINDY: True.
> CHRISTINA: My heart is still beating.
> CINDY: That's just fright. You're being a scaredy cat.
> CHRISTINA: Of course it's just fright. It's fright. (12)

Christina insists: on the volume of the sound, on the fear it produced in her body, on the somatic residue of that fear ("My heart is still beating"). That she notices and names the connection between physical feeling and emotional feelings invites the audience to pay attention their own reactions, too. It would be strange if, after that sound "like a cannon shot," one's heart *weren't* still beating, but the neurobiological cue might go undetected if it were not for Christina's lingering; she serves as a sensitive proxy for the audience's own embodiment. From the outset of *Fefu*, the audience is brought into the space of performance—not just by the sensorial demand of the shot, but by an invitation to somatic attunement that is renewed and built upon as the play progresses. Rather than read this moment only as foreshadowing, though, I contend that this scene acts as a sensorial *rehearsal* for Julia's later possible death after Fefu fires the gun again. Even though the play ends just after that moment, we've already had a chance, with Christina's invitation, to process the sensory input, rather than simply be shocked by it.

Christina's reaction is but one example of how the characters' own intimate dialogue about bodies and the movement of their own bodies invites the audience into the space of shared embodiment. Although Part I opens with the shock of the shot, Part II allows for the characters and audience to sense more subtly and slowly; the play *makes space* for audience to be impacted differently, in a more embodied way—they are literally and figuratively brought into the space of performance. Notably, every one of the scenes in Part II calls attention to women's bodies in space, and in relation to others. As Geis points out, many of these scenes have to do with "senses of identity […] in contradiction to their view of men," especially patriarchal authority figures: doctors, instructors, policemen, and judges as we saw above (296).

This focus on bodies, which often foregrounds gestures, invites the audience to sense their own bodies in space, and in relation to others. As I was in the process of drafting this chapter, I had the great fortune of being able to see a live performance of *Fefu* at San Francisco's ACT, directed by Pam MacKinnon, and this invitation to sensing became even more apparent. Take, for example, the scene between Emma and Fefu, set "on the lawn," the very first line of which is Emma's: "Do you think about genitals all the time?" (27).[16] For a quarter of the audience, perhaps uncertain as to what will happen next now that they are in a new viewing configuration, that is the first line they hear. When Fefu says she doesn't, Emma continues:

> EMMA: […] Each person I see in the street, anywhere at all…I keep thinking of their genitals, what they look like, what position they are in. […]
> EMMA: I mean, how can businessmen and women stand in a room and discuss business without even one reference to their genitals. I mean everybody has them. They just pretend they don't.
> FEFU: I see. (*Shifting her glance from left to right with a fiendish look.*) You mean they should do this all the time. (27-28)

Part of the comedy, of course, comes from the fact that now everyone in the space will be thinking about their own and each other's genitals! But not just thinking about them. Precisely when the audience finds themselves out of their traditional theater seats and among one another in a new configuration, Fefu invites looking with her gestures. The conversation invites audience members to be aware of and *sense* their own and others' bodies, in fact the most private and intimate parts. Besides obvious alignment with the feminist strategy of reclaiming sexuality through attention to the body, Emma's questions lead to wider ones. Each person in the audience will have a different embodied experience of exchange lines: some might dare to look around following Fefu's own glances, while others will train their gaze to do anything but that. (The production I saw staged the actors up on a balcony above the lobby, allowing audience members the relief of having somewhere far from themselves to look.) Yet others might feel the feeling of their own genitals, along with pleasure or strange sensations or self-consciousness about "what position they are in." It feels funny to write about this, but I think that's the point. Fornés offers up shared comic discomfort as a means of relational embodied engagement. Following characters to a room with other audience members in the context of performance calls our attention back to things we don't often consider: what do I feel like and look like when I'm watching a play? What's my posture like? Where is my sensation, my desire? How do others perceive me? What kinds of being-with are possible, or foreclosed, if someone else perceives my body in ways that I don't?

As the above questions suggest, establishing embodied feminist collectivity brings its fair share of complexity, and the scenes where characters discuss, consider, and enact forms of embodiment can sometimes be much more serious or more troubling than Emma and Fefu's initial comical exchange. The process leads the characters and audience to consider modes of embodiment that resist patriarchal claims to women's bodies. This is the case in Julia's scene (as I discussed above) and in Christina and Cindy's scene in the study; in fact, these Part II scenes resonate in that both tell of alternate spaces of consciousness (hallucinations and dreams,

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[16] In a wonderful moment in the production I saw, Fefu's response, "Genitals? No, I don't think about genitals all the time" was delivered as "Genitals? No, I don't think about genitals *all* the time"—the nuances of tone and voice (and resulting humor and playful familiarity in relationship between characters) live performance can help draw out.

respectively), where patriarchal violence occurs and comes to bear on reality in turn. Cindy describes in great detail a dream that includes a violation of her body and her subsequent refusal:

> Then he grabbed me and felt my throat from behind with his thumbs while he rubbed my nipples with his pinkies […] I said to him, "Stop and listen to me." I said it so strongly that he stopped. Everybody turned to me in admiration because I had made him stop. I said to him, "Restrain yourself." I wanted to say respect me. I wasn't sure if the words coming out of my mouth were what I wanted to say. (32)

It seems this "he" is a doctor, although the text is so rife with different "he"s—including a professor and policemen—that it is hard to be certain, and this confusion contributes to the sense of nightmare. Cindy's description is so vivid, its physical blocking so specific, that it calls on viewers to imagine the assault, maybe even to feel it *because* they are imagining it. I think a number of viewers might immediately recall—in memory and in body—past instances of unwanted touch. Notably, it is the vocal power behind what Cindy says ("I said it so strongly"), rather than the actual words, that works, and it provokes a physical response: "Everybody turned to me." While Cindy describes this breach of physical boundaries and the compounding effects it has on her and others, the audience also finds itself in more intimate space with Cindy and Christina, and with each other. How will they orient themselves? Will they tilt their head? Wince or grimace? Gasp in shock? Sigh in recognition? Take a step back? Lean forward? How can we be close with one another in a reality where closeness can also be unwanted, and violent?

The Part II scenes are immersive experiments in intimacy and distance, dispersal and collection, for the characters and for the audience. Difficult moments yield, elastically, to subtle possibilities; openings snap closed; scenes seem to linger even after we've turned away. Take, for instance, a reunion between Cecilia and Paula, whom we learn used to be lovers. Paula has spent the earlier part of her scene in the kitchen with Sue working through her ideas on the duration of love affairs and break-ups. The playfulness and familiarity the two share, jousting verbally and nonverbally, stands in contrast to the later stilted contact between Paula and Cecilia, who enters after Sue leaves. Sue finds ice cubes with sticks in the freezer (a sort of makeshift popsicle Fefu made in Part I before they arrived: a weird, sweet joke) and then "(*She tries to put the ice cube behind Paula's ear. They wrestle and laugh. She puts the stick in her own mouth. She takes it out to speak.*)" and later "(*She puts the ice cube [back] in the tray and looks at it.* […] (*She puts the tray away.*)" (38). While Paula seems surprised that Sue puts the ice cube back in the tray, Sue shrugs it off; after their physical contact, an indirect exchange of material fluids, a fear of contagion, gives way to accepted intimacy. Paula's playful engagement dissipates when Cecilia enters: the stage directions have the women busy themselves in the kitchen as their exchange plays out, turning their backs and speaking in short, clipped phrases. We get the sense that Cecilia and Paula had a meaningful relationship that left Paula reeling, and she shares the abandonment and ensuing distance she feels: "Now we look at each other like strangers" (40). Cecilia tries to bridge the distance, "(*Reaching for Paula's hand.*)" (40). It is not clear from the stage directions alone whether their hands will actually meet, and the play often dilates and suspends these types of moments of possible contact.

This matter-of-fact portrayal of queer relationships, particularly between Cecilia and Paula, is represented not just through dialogue but also through gestures, which we are continually called to pay attention to. In this sense, the stage directions create space for embodied interactions that were less represented in the theater of the time. There is something moving about witnessing intimacy, in all of its complexity and contradiction, so close-up; it brings up the

possibility for *feeling* the intimacy in one's own body. Vinson Cunningham writes of his experience of Part II at the 2019 New York revival: "The otherworldly effect was this: on the lawn (the last stop for my group), when Fefu's hands grazed those of her friend Emma […]—this play is, among other things, a map of little erotic touches—I felt my hand grazed, too" (*New Yorker*).

Even as someone familiar with the text of the play and who took pleasure in reading it specifically because of the complexity of the relationships between women that it represents, in seeing *Fefu* live I was moved to witness a further deepening of this complex relationality beyond what I had imagined. This was most striking as I watched the characters share space and react to one another, beyond words and even beyond stage directions.[17] There was a moment when Emma held Fefu's face in her hands. There was a moment when Paula wiped tears from her eyes after hearing Emma speak. There was a moment when Fefu, after a physical altercation with Julia, gave up and dropped her head onto Julia's torso and took a long full breath. There was a moment when five of the other women watched Cecilia kiss Paula, with, varyingly, surprise, concern, care—in attention above all. Moments like these eschew easy characterizations of relationships; words like the titular "friends," as well as "lovers," "ex-lovers," "girlfriends," "new acquaintances," "friends of friends," "college dormmates," don't quite do justice to the range of relationality held within so many scenes; the play begs for more expansive forms of conceiving of embodied relationality in time and space. Can you stretch out on your friend's couch? Can you sit on your friend's lap? Can you put your hand on your friend's leg without thinking? The inquiry feels queer in the most expansive version of that word, and yet also completely matter-of-fact, drawing our attention to what might get lost, or even invisibilized, in daily life. Sara Ahmed contends that "[q]ueer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy" (107).

Throughout *Fefu*, we are constantly called upon to read, or at the very least make space for, nonverbal forms of embodiment that force us to revisit our initial categorizations or assumptions. Neither the characters, nor the introductory textual information that typically precedes a play, offers exposition at the outset about how the women know, relate to, or have related to each other. Fornés simply mentions setting and lists the characters' names without any additional identifying or demographic features, and it is only well into Part III when we learn at least some of the women went to college together. In the absence of textual context, the audience must turn to other cues. Per Rowen, "Gestural choreographic stage directions highlight the commonplace nature of nonverbal communications, and the cultural tools we use to both make, and make meaning of, unfamiliar bodily movements. The affective information within choreographic stage directions is transmitted bodily and read bodily as well" (147). Rodríguez, too, draws attention to role of the nonverbal in expanding signification: "Dance, sex, touch, taste, gestures, and utterances all blur the lines between the sexual and the nonsexual, as they allow us to imaginatively resignify sensory practices of meaning making." (135). Synthesizing these approaches, we might say that the audience doesn't simply take in the embodied, sensorial information; rather, they are taken in.

Fefu, in its embodied moments of relationality, offers up a new possibility beyond interpretive openings: *improvisational* openings that extend from the playwright to the text to the characters to the audience. The stage directions throughout each scene in Part II discuss timing,

[17] Robinson asserts that: "[T]o Fornes's eye the unselfconscious gestures made by a character pausing between two more emphatic actions best express what he or she is really thinking" (11).

which leaves space for the actors to improvise based on how long the scenes run, and guides them on how each scene resets and wraps up on the last repetition. For example:

> (*If Fefu's entrance is delayed, Emma will sing a popular song of the period. Fefu re-enters with a pitcher and two glasses.*) (30)
>
> (*The door opens. Fefu looks in. Her entrance may interrupt Cindy's speech at any point according to how long it takes her to reach the kitchen.*) (32)
>
> (*At the end of the fourth repeat, when Fefu invites them for croquet, Cindy says, "oh let's play croquet" and they follow Fefu.*) (33)

Beyond allowing for a technical reset of props, these stage directions take contingencies into account. Emma may sing a different song each time, and depending on when Fefu enters the Cindy/Christina scene, not only a part of Cindy's speech but also up to five additional lines of dialogue may or may not be spoken, deprioritizing the words themselves in favor of the play's collective ensemble structure. The fact that the actors repeat the scenes means that, in a necessarily Derridean fashion, they will be performed slightly differently each of the four times. Rather than focus on an overwhelming semiotic ever-proliferation, though, I want to highlight that not only is capaciousness built into the script, but so too is an allowance for the audience's own embodied reactions and ways of moving through space. This can be banal and also profound: when I saw *Fefu*, someone's phone rang right in the middle of Paula and Sue's scene, and one viewer placed a caring hand on another's leg after a shocking noise cue during Julia's scene.

Although Robinson highlights an analogous improvisational quality of Fornés's composition process without naming it as such, I insist on the term *improvisational* because it helps to bring into relief Fornés's feminist approach within a wider experimental arts context of the time. Robinson delimits what he sees as unique to her style: "[I]n her willingness to respond to found material and chance encounters Fornes hardly differs from most artists. What *is* different is her reluctance to emerge from this experimental state. The promise (or threat) of constant transformation—of a world in which everything seems temporary, one fragile version among many—is preserved in performance" (16).[18] For Fornés, then, there is always the drama of writing drama: how to even temporarily fix something—life—that's always moving and changing? Fornés's continual compositional reorientation—improvisational in its openness to shifting and outside forces—leads her to put her characters into similarly experimental situations. We witness them constantly striving to put words to their own experiences and perceptions, as even in the same paragraph or sentence they double back, restate, revise; this processing also happens in their movements across the stage, on it, and off of it. This "experimental state" permeates *Fefu*: each interaction feels like an investigation, not one which wants to "get to the bottom of things," but one which relishes the impossibility of that very phrase. Robinson notes that the characters and setting of *Fefu*, too, arose for Fornés by chance:

> The characters of *Fefu and Her Friends* came to her when she wandered into a Manhattan thrift store and saw a rack of dresses from the 1930s—six of them for six women. Later,

[18] Fornés was in/famous for rewriting at even the very last minute before a performance, and for each new edition of a play. Robinson talks about how she gave 22 new pages to actors in *Joan of Arc* on opening night (19-20).

> when she was touring a loft being considered as a theater for the production, and passed through its 'backstage'—a kitchen, an office, a storeroom—she decided to rework some half-finished scenes, setting them in each room, and to stage the play environmentally, for an audience as mobile as she had just been. (16)[19]

"[W]andered into," "passed through": even this language shows a porousness in (Robinson's reading of) Fornés's own subjectivity, one which she then opens up to the audience, inviting them to walk in her shoes, allowing the audience to be "as mobile as she." This invites the potential for more embodied relationality—but how exactly does that come to pass?

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Historically speaking, *Fefu* arrives in the wake of a particular aesthetic and political moment: the play draws from and resonates with the recent legacy of what were seen as radical, democratizing innovations of the downtown New York performing arts scene of the 1960s and '70s, themselves drawing inspiration from and contributing to the wider context of happenings, be-ins, conceptual art scores, and Civil Rights and Vietnam War protests of the 1960s.[20] *Fefu* takes up the use of improvisational techniques and situational uncertainty, which result in an attuned horizontality between viewers and performers that has the potential to undermine a "high art," elite performance context; combining innovative staging with a script focused on women's embodied experiences, the play inaugurates a new kind of feminist "being-with" for performance-goers. This will later become typical of other kinds of feminist performance art by Fornés's contemporaries in the late '70s, and into the early '80s, as I detailed in the previous chapter, and as I will discuss in the Chapter 4 in relation to Ana Mendieta's work with horizontality.

Such an approach necessarily emphasizes the importance of process over (ephemeral or nonexistent) product, what happens *during* a work of art or performance—and not just for performers but for the audience. Fornés spent many of her early years in New York at Judson Poets' Theater, where she designed sets and costumes and also premiered many of her early plays in the 1960s. The Judson Poets' Theater was housed in Judson Memorial Church at 55 Washington Square South, which was also home to Judson Dance Theater, the birthplace of U.S. postmodern dance around precisely the same time.[21] Judson housed alchemical creative work across artistic mediums, as Scott Cummings details:

> The presence of a dance company, a theater, and an art gallery under one roof made Judson a low-budget, community-based, experimental performing arts center where painters, poets, dancers, musicians, and actors crossed paths on a regular basis, leading to numerous collaborations across disciplines and both practical and theoretical examinations of what makes dance dance, what makes theater theater, and so on. This

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[19] This would later become eight women, but the point still holds: happening upon the dresses led her to envision the characters.

[20] See Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces*, particularly "Before and after 1968: dance, politics, and the avant-garde."

[21] Judson Memorial Church still exists as a home to arts performances and political activism, including by Movement Research which continues many of the investigations of Judson dance while also challenging its largely white legacy. See their publications, *Movement Research Performance Journal* and *Critical Correspondence*.

> open dialogue between art forms and the blurring of the boundaries between them became an essential part of the 1960s avant-garde centered in Greenwich Village. (36).

It is this porousness between boundaries and categories that seems to have seeped into the work of many of those working at Judson, even long after they'd left the scene. Cummings argues that *Promenade* (1965) is Fornés's "most Judsonesque play," (the criteria being "a free and experimental approach to performance events and a madcap often ironic delight" as key traits of the Judson Poets' Theater, 37), but in fact we can see the enduring influence of the wider Judson context, including the Judson Dance Theater, in *Fefu* as well.

While there was certainly a range of work going on at Judson[22]—by, to name a few artists, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, Deborah Hay, Fred Herko, and Trisha Brown—much of it shared an experimental attitude toward dance and performance norms. Rainer would later call this "the spirit of that time: a dare-devil willingness to try anything, the arrogance of our certainty that there was ground to be broken and we were standing on it" (225). Rainer describes some of the earliest Judson performances in 1962, which greatly expanded "dance" as it was known:

> David Gordon performed his inspired proto-feminist solo *Mannequin Dance*, in which he wore a blood-spattered lab coat and sang all the verses of *Second Hand Rose* and *Get Married, Shirley, Get Married* in his guff baritone while descending in a slow-motion pivot to the floor. Also on the program were Fred Herko on roller skates with an umbrella; Carolee Schneeman's *Lateral Splay*, in which a dozen or so people scuttled across the space as low and fast as possible. (223)

Jill Johnston, a dance critic for the *Village Voice* known familiarly as "Judson's critic"—and even as its "inimitable champion" by Rainer (289), and later, famed feminist and lesbian separatist and experimental writer—tracked the rise of postmodern dance at Judson. Even from Johnston's earliest pieces, her language gives way to gestural, rather than technical, ways of describing the performances. For example:

> He [David Gordon] did some movement nobody ever saw before. Like the body bent off center, the head awkwardly strained back, the elbows squeezed into the ribs as the flattened hands and forearms made the painful beauty of spastic helplessness. As though the body were straining, yelling, against an involuntary violence. (39)

And on Deborah Hay's "All Day Dance":

> The pure vitality of thrusting jumps (the kind you might see in a child careening down a sand dune), of crashing falls of baseball slides, and of hard swift rolls on the floor combine easily and probably after no thought of combination, with a different kind of vitality more dance-like, in the flat arm flings, long jet-stride walks, vibrations, triplets with port du bras, wide zingy turns, and high fast leg extensions. The six dances, in shirts and faded dungarees, make all this activity cling and separate in a clear open space in a continuum of dynamic tension and release. (40).

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[22] I'll use this to refer to Judson Dance Theater from now on.

Put simply, the more variables included in a work, the less fixed a work can be—and this pushes at the very limits of what constitutes "dance" or movement itself and the words we use to conceptualize it. Even when describing more "dance-like" movement, Johnston makes recourse to words like "jet-stride," and "zingy"; the gestural movement forces the audience to reconsider their own faculties in relation to the performance, and language starts to move differently too.

Johnston's involvement wasn't limited to writing or to the verbal: Rainer, in a chapter on her relationship with Johnston, emphasizes that "the nonverbal part of this contact remains the clearest part of the memory because it was something that reoccurs periodically in my irregular meetings with JJ" (289). In particular, Rainer describes a 1964 performance she did with Johnston at the Washington Square Gallery, right nearby Judson. Rainer herself engaged in:

> some rushing toward the front row of the audience and flinging myself into a lap […] did this several times. […] She [Johnston] was standing with her legs spread and I may have dived thru or twined around them. It was a time (early sixties, definite [Anna] Halprin-[Simone] Forti influence on improvisation) when if you saw someone's legs spread you dived thru. What else was there to do with someone's spread legs? Jill later said that she was very surprised at my trying to 'relate' to her; she had really never expected anything like that. (293)

Rainer emphasizes relationality here, but through the improvising body rather than through language. While Johnston—by no means a naïve participant—was surprised, Rainer highlights a wider movement context of the time: the invitation to tune towards someone else's embodied subjectivity and move accordingly. As Rainer's anecdote shows, Judson research called into question embodied relationality—particularly, embodied relationality across subject positions.

In line with such an approach, if performers are also in closer proximity to the audience, due to working in small community spaces or stretching the space of performance itself, they will all encounter, each time, contingencies affect the "outcome" of the performance as a whole; this is true of *Fefu*, too. Less emphasis on the final product or result resists not only capitalist consumption but also patriarchal mastery. Muñoz develops his theorization of gesture in part through a case study on Fred Herko, a queer Judson dancer.[23] For Muñoz, queer performance, and in this case, what he refers to as Herko's 1964 suicide "performance" (a "jeté out the window," *Cruising* 147), challenges heteronormative concepts of time, including death as finitude, and possesses utopian potential across temporalities: "The gesture is utopian in that it resists the goal-oriented tautological present. The gesture is a cultural supplement that, in its incompleteness, promises another time and place. Thus, through Herko's twitch [in an Andy Warhol screen test] we see the gesture as the choreography of the not-yet-conscious" (162). Note the complementary tension between "supplement" and "incompleteness": it's as if gesture, in its too-muchness, actually manages to create space for potentiality by drawing attention to the very ideological conditions that dictate what constitutes the proper "enough." In Herko's "choreography of gesture," which includes his final leap, Muñoz reads "a politics that may not

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[23] As Muñoz points out, Herko had a somewhat different style than other Judson artists, some of whom were working in a more stripped down or minimalistic style: "Herko's camp theatrics are always mentioned when he is included in the history of postmodern dance. In many ways he did not conform with the aesthetic codes that dominated the movements of which he was a part" (150). Muñoz's reading helps to recover the wide variety of Judson performances over the years, where even other performers known for more bare performances also experimented with excess in movement and props.

have the overarching coherency of a movement yet but may nonetheless represent a valuable interruption in the coercive choreography of a here and now that is scored to naturalize and validate dominant cultural logics such as capitalism and heterosexuality" (162). He continues:

> A gesture is not a full-fledged resistance, but it is a moment when that overwhelming frame of a here and now, a spatial and temporal order that is calibrated against one, is resisted. (162)

Herko's queer performance, charged as it is with what some would call "tragedy" but which Muñoz recovers reparatively (following teacher Eve Sedgwick) as utopian potential, shares a queer gestural practice of resistance with *Fefu,* whose final scene also might appear to be tragic if taken at face value. Following Muñoz, even if the characters' resistance may appear fleeting and the struggle against patriarchal violence futile, the play's wider framework—that is, the women's movement throughout and the audience's own movement and intimate witnessing—invites us to pay close embodied and sensorial attention to these "moments." This embodied process, which in *Fefu* involves not one but eight women, opens up alternative temporal possibilities of collective resistance through imagining, moving, and sensing beyond oneself and beyond current sociopolitical constraints.

While there are a number of major works on Judson dance,[24] and of course a number of detailed studies on the work of Fornés, few to my knowledge focus on the concrete details of how Fornés's involvement in the wider Judson context may have influenced her plays, particularly *Fefu*. Regardless of whether she was in attendance at the performances described above, Fornés's play brings the research of downtown postmodern dance, somatics, and improvisational movement to Off-Off Broadway stages, or rather, spaces. *Fefu* also shares a particular set of queer and feminist questions with those central to some of Judson's dancers around: how gendered bodies move in the space of performance; gendered everydayness, including quotidian gestures; dancers' proximity to the audience and its gaze; and marginalized experiences not widely treated in dance. Perhaps most exemplary of this phenomenon in the Judson context is the work of Rainer, whose dances and later, writings and lesbian and queer films, show continual embodied interrogation of her own positionality and oeuvre. Feminist critics have detailed the contributions in Rainer's work over the course of decades. Rebecca Chaleff highlights a number of feminist interventions in the 1966 *Trio A*, perhaps Rainer's best-known dance and one of three dances known collectively as *The Mind Is a Muscle*.[25] For example, that "all areas of the stage are used equally, effectively democratizing the performance space" (Chaleff 75)[26] certainly finds an

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[24] The work of Ramsay Burt and Sally Banes are perhaps most canonical. See also *Radical Bodies* for illuminating accounts of East Coast-West Coast co-developments (particularly the work of Rainer, Anna Halprin, and Simone Forti) in improvisational practices.

[25] I am referencing *Trio A* because of its historical place in the Judson canon as it relates to Fornés, but it bears emphasizing that Rainer's body of work includes so much more in terms of gestural intervention in the realms of feminism, queerness, antiracism, antiwar, and anticapitalism. This includes dance, performance art, and film. See especially *MURDER and murder* (1990) for a representative example.

[26] Although Chaleff notes that this is "albeit a performance space demarcated by the segregation of artistic spaces" (75), this was less the case in *Fefu*'s first production setting and cast and certainly even less so in recent revivals in New York and San Francisco. Given Fornés's positionality, her written work, and her pedagogical commitment to mentoring Latine playwrights, her legacy has not undergone the same critical reckoning that some of her Judson Dance contemporaries (even Trisha Brown in Chaleff's piece) have.

analogue in *Fefu*, which takes "all areas of the stage" even further to "all areas of the theater." The timing of the four simultaneous Part II scenes picks up on *Trio A*'s eschewal of musical accompaniment and tempo: "Its length is therefore determined by the time it takes the individual dancer to fulfill its series of tasks, not by an outside indicator of time" (Chaleff 76). Time, therefore, is based on the movement of bodies through space, which includes space for lags, hiccups, dilation, and rush. This also allows for, in Rainer's work, tasks that correspond to women's movements outside of the domestic sphere, and in *Fefu*, tasks that involve performance for its own sake, rather than to fulfill some sort of wifely duties, thus resignifying domestic space.[27] Rainer also noted that *Trio A* "would be about a kind of pacing where a pose is never struck" (MoMA), an excellent rejoinder to the patriarchal edicts Julia delivers in Part II: "Instead they should strike positions that take into account the weight of their entrails."

Besides *Fefu*'s similarities with postmodern dance pieces like Rainer's that are choreographed (however experimental or loose the choreography, for example, in following tasks rather than counts), we can also see the play's resonance with another line of performance work that came out of Judson: improvisation, somatics, and tuning scores.[28] Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith, both Judson dancers, went on to teach at Bennington College in Vermont and continued to develop contact improvisation, a style of dance that develops in-time from contact and touch between the movers, often involving weight-sharing, lifts, and rolls. One of their students and collaborators was Lisa Nelson, who created tuning scores, a process that began in 1974 and then came to reverberate in the New York dance scene in the years just before *Fefu* debuted. [29]

Just as musical scores present a path through a piece of music, later picked up by conceptual artists as instructions that create a work of art, tuning scores present dancers with open-ended prompts for movement, perception, and sensation. Tuning scores can take many forms, but they are often a set of prompts, guidelines, or suggestions that can be interpreted subjectively—in contrast to choreography which fixes or even disciplines a set of movements. For example, a score could be: "we will dance for 10 minutes with our eyes closed," or "we don't have to be dancing the whole time; we can sit and observe," or "when the music stops, we will continue moving." Over the course of such a score, which can be individually or collectively proposed and composed, and which can last anywhere from minutes to hours, participants' somatic attunement often develops. Tuning goes beyond the visual, towards other senses and wider energy fields. For example, one dancer might pick up on another's pace, repeat a gesture,

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Chaleff also discusses that "the performance is organized as a series of tasks that do not accumulate; the performer does not have a character or persona; the performer never returns the viewer's gaze," which she connects to the work of feminist film critic Laura Mulvey (75).

[27] For another version of domestic resignification, see Martha Rosler's 1975 performance art video "Semiotics of the Kitchen," which undermines wifely tasks *and* the reduction of them to mere signs by semiotics through a series of gestures where Rosler robotically yet menacingly interacts with kitchen appliances, including an alphabet series that culminates in a "Z" made by slicing a French knife through the air. See also photos from Ana Victoria Jiménez's 1978-1981 *Cuaderno de tareas* in *Radical Women*, whose photos of what appear to be men's arms performing women's household labor brings attention to the gendered nature of these tasks. Many thanks to Nicole Trigg for sharing the Rosler video with me.

[28] Another related development was Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering technique. It should be noted that, like other movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s that were exploring consciousness and perception, many practitioners turned to Eastern spiritual practices, some more responsibly than others. See, for example, Deborah Hay's *My Body, The Buddhist*, as well as Foster for additional critical framing.

[29] I am grateful to Elizabeth Bobrovnikov for introducing me to Nelson's writing and for facilitating the experiential practice of tuning scores in our 2020 group study.

or even work against another's movement, turn away, or stop moving entirely—tuning is implicated regardless. This often results in surprising resonance: looking across the room and realizing someone is moving, in some way, *in relation* to you, much as Johnston looked down to see Rainer "diving thru" her spread legs. Nelson's work counters early judgments of improvisation as "less than" other forms of choreographed dance, precisely because of its ability to activate embodied experience in a collective context:

> *The Tuning Scores provoke spontaneous compositions that make evident how we sense and make sense of movement, exposing our opinions about space, time, action, and desire, and provide a framework for communication and feedback amongst the players.* […] *With the scores, we play with our desire to compose experience, to make our imaginations visible, to develop a sense of ensemble, and to transform our movement into dancing.* ("From the Archive," emphasis in the original)

Nelson's use of "sense" throughout underlines how "sensing," "making sense of," and "developing a sense of" are of a piece. Throughout the self-interview in which this text appears, she shifts from "I" to "we" as she answers her own questions, evoking the "ensemble" she speaks of—and here we can remember *Fefu*'s ensemble cast. Alva Noë writes of the tuning scores as microcosm of what he calls "active" perception and consciousness even outside of the world of dance and movement: "To be in the score you must be a dancer, *and* an observer of dancers. You must be performer *and* audience member" ("Tuning the Body," emphases mine).

Let's linger on the *and*. While, textually speaking, *Fefu* is not the most improvisational play ever developed—it indeed has a script, set lines, and does not require actors to ad lib all the time—what does feel improvisational is the staging: the openings created in the scenes' repetition, which requires actors *and* audience to move through space, resulting in what, to borrow Nelson's phrasing, we might call "spontaneous compositions." The process activates improvisation's emphasis on tuning and attunement, whether to one's own embodied sensations or to those of another, with a renewed attention to where the two cross. Embodied improvisational possibilities bring somatic attention not just to one's own body and sensations, but to others'. This can lead to a cultivation of intersubjective feminist relationality, however subtle or intense: the audience moves from a "feeling for" to a "feeling *as*," which stays with us even after Part II has concluded.

The embodied effects of this tuning necessarily move beyond the individual. Johnston's emphasis on the ensemble nature of Judson performance demonstrates how that context laid the groundwork for novel political and aesthetic modes of relationality. In "Which Way the Avant-Garde?," originally published in August 1968 in *The New York Times* (whose markedly less "underground" readership suggests the rise and scope of the movement over just six years), makes links between postmodern dance as a revolutionary aesthetic form, an eschewal of e/valuation, and an eschewal of individualism:

> Implicit in the work of the three artists discussed above is an attack on this very elemental premise of traditional Western dance: the projection of a start supported by a hierarchical imperialist organization (e.g., the kings and queens of the ballet, the tragic heroes and heroines of the modern dance). While I'm at it, I should mention a few other correlative notions that are also under attack. These are, of course, the trappings of any hierarchical system: the pomp and splendor and glamour and spectacle and spectation and seduction and virtuosic accomplishments required by aristocratic expectations.

> Every underground movement is a revolt against one authority of another. The dance underground of the sixties is more than this natural child-parent affair. The new choreographers are outrageously invalidating the very nature of authority. The thinking behind the work goes beyond democracy into anarchy. No member outstanding. No body necessarily more beautiful than any other body. No movement necessarily more important or more beautiful than any other movement. [30] It is, at last, seeing beyond our subjective tastes and conditioning, always admittedly operative, to a phenomenological understanding of the world. (117)

Of course, given the relative contemporaneity of these declarations and the movement itself, Johnsoton could not have known that postmodern dance would come to hold a revered post in the dance hierarchy. But her conviction speaks to Fornés's aesthetic and political heritage: this downtown arts scene that, according to Johnston, went *beyond* "democracy" (the latter a word so often used in Judson critique) by opening up space and attention, what Johnston aligns with "a phenomenological understanding of the world." [31] And another "beyond": "seeing beyond," which I would amend to "sensing beyond."

The way Fornés sets up Part II of *Fefu* translates this horizontality, a legacy of Judson dance, into the realm of theater by presenting the four scenes as equal in their simultaneity. No scene "needs to" come before another; rather, they coalesce into a whole differently for each section of the audience as they move through the spaces, and this embodied process shapes the collective experience of the play. [32] Fornés's play not only represents, through dialogue or gestures, an attention to embodiment, but also invites the audience to create their own score. The resulting sense of improvisational possibility works to counter limitations to women's movements that the characters themselves experience and describe. The space of the performance offers up an alternative: more free embodied movement not just for the characters, but also for the audience, who are invited to participate in more embodied, sensorial ways. Once the audience has experienced Part II in their bodies, they are changed—tuned, attuned to the characters and to those around them, each in their own way. They sit back in their seats, but they hold it with them. The play seems to say, winking: don't forget what this horizontality, this intimacy feels like.

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[30] Johnston's language here, particularly the last sentence of the first paragraph and the "no"s of the second paragraph, echoes Rainer's 1964 "NO Manifesto," which begins "No to spectacle, no to virtuosity." Dig the intertextual interplay between critic and dancer to the point that it blurs intersubjective boundaries. The "NO Manifesto," like *Trio A* which it accompanied, gets an extraordinary amount of critical attention to the point that it sometimes obscures Rainer's varied and long career. Rather, it should be treated as a historical document from a specific historical moment: a feminist response to modern dance performance norms. I also think that it can be read, in part, as an ironic "provocation" as Rainer herself calls it, rather than wholly at face value. Rainer herself writes: "That infamous 'NO manifesto' has dogged my heels ever since it was first published. Every dance critic who has ever come near my work has dragged it out, usually with a concomitant tsk-tsk. The only reason I am resurrecting the here is to put it in context as a provocation that originated in a particular piece of work […] to do what the time honored tradition of the manifesto always intended manifestos to do: clear the air at a particular cultural and historical moment" (263-264).

[31] Fornés, too, often gets associated with a phenomenological framework. Cummings describes Fornés as "an untutored phenomenologist" (46, although it would not surprise me if she'd been "tutored" too). See also Diane Lynn Moroff's *Fornés: Theater in the Present Tense* and Stanton B. Garner, Jr.'s *Bodied Spaces*.

[32] Per Robinson, Fornés's characters: "are responsive to their passing fancies, ready to adjust their temperaments and rewrite their itineraries according to the emotional weather of the moment […] The fragmentation of *Fefu*'s second act is in keeping with this openness to change: There are four different, equally valid paths through the play" (15).

Still sensing

If Part II draws our attention to bodies in space, Part III focuses on the senses, and sensing bodies. Of course, these are not separate, but rather interconnected aspects of embodiment—and Part III seems to be investigating those connections not only within, but between bodies. It is also in this final part that the relationality between the women builds: from a rehearsal for a performance and a water fight to various climaxes, including, on the one hand, Cecilia kissing Paula after the latter presents an emotional monologue on class positionality; and on the other hand, Fefu having a hallucination of Julia walking, Fefu confronting Julia in an intense fight, and finally, the play's last moment: Fefu fires a gun offstage and Julia, onstage, appears to die. Throughout most of the play, and perhaps most densely temporally and spatially packed in this final Part III, there is a simultaneity that mimics life: conversations at the crosshairs of others' talk, the mumblings and grumblings between friends about another friend, subtle verbal and nonverbal exchanges, individuals deep in conversation, and physical intimacy that gets interrupted. Sometimes, if you blink, you'll miss it.[33] The characters, too, move frequently between onstage and offstage in this final part, whether active in speech or merely witnessing. (Witnessing, too, is often a part of tuning scores.) Regardless of how active or "passive" the characters may appear to be, they are partaking in the scene through their witnessing and even their unwitting affective and somatic reactions. There is a physical and sensorial approximation, emphasized by gestures, that ultimately underscores the complexities of embodied relationality between these women to the point that it seems to exceed individual subject positions.

An invitation to collective sensing opens Part III, extending the embodied movement of Part II. The stage directions at the opening indicate that: "*As the audience enters, two or three of the women are around the piano playing and singing Schubert's 'Who Is Silvia.' They exit. Emma enters, checks the lights in the room on her hand, looks around the room and goes upstairs. The rest enter through the rear. Cecilia enters speaking*" (43). These parallel entrances, not just of the characters, but also of the audience, carry over the embodied connections forged during Part II: just as the characters enter in a staggered way, so too does the audience. Notably, the stage directions say it is "*two or three of the women*," rather than any particular character, and this openness makes space for improvisation and sets up more of an equal distribution among the characters; it might even allow for a reading in which these "women" are not so different from those in the audience. Although the audience is about to be seated for the remainder of the play, they have a chance to continue the sensorial connections established in the preceding parts by listening to the sound of the music and the singing. Even when they are on their way to their seats, Emma, who we will soon learn is the performer of the group, serves as a sensorial stand-in: checking the lights on her hand shows an attention to her own body in light and space, even heat. (The production I saw also led me to understand that this hand movement serves as a warm-up to the elaborate, continual series of gestures she will perform throughout her monologue during the rehearsal scene.) As we *experience* this, Cecilia talks about it; the first line spoken in Part III is: "Well, we each have our own system of receiving information, placing it, responding to it" (43). She discusses differences in interpreting sensorial input, concluding: "That is, I feel, the concern of the educator—to teach how to be sensitive to the differences in ourselves as well as outside ourselves, not to supervise the memorization of facts" (44). Although Cecilia is talking about education (pedagogy being

[33] See for example, when Cecilia unwittingly(?) puts her hand on Paula's leg in the middle of a full group scene: a simple yet powerful gesture that provoked an audible "ooh!" from the couple sitting in front of me.

something Fornés herself was no stranger to), this sensorial sensitivity seems to counter the "memorization of facts"—"memorization of lines" we might say—in theater as well. Such sensorial sensitivity doesn't take just one form; throughout the play, the eight women model different modes of somatic, embodied engagement in the face of occurrences from violent to quotidian to joyous. Fornés's continual interest in what she referred to as "moment to moment" (following teacher Lee Strasberg, quoted in Memran) foments a theater which is never simply by rote, a process which opens up new possibilities for sensing oneself, sensing others, and, often, the approximation of the two.

The porousness between characters and audience continues as the women chat before beginning a rehearsal for a performance fundraiser, a topic which doesn't allow us to lose sight—or sense—of our own relation to the performance. As in the rest of the play, what appears to be a fleeting conversation turns out to be quite profound and philosophical. A major representational, sensorial question is a stake: how is a play a rehearsal for life itself? Earlier in Part I we see:

> SUE: I had no idea we were going to do theatre.
> EMMA: Life is theatre. Theatre is life. If we're showing what life is, can be, we must do theatre.
> SUE: Will I have to act?
> EMMA: It's not acting. It's being. It's springing forth with the power of the spirit. It's breathing. (21-22)

A rehearsal, in these terms, is in fact a calling up of the embodied subjectivity and its innate capacities and senses. And if this is the case, it follows that if Sue can act simply by "being" and "breathing," it follows that what the audience has just done, moving around during Part II, also counts—so in a way the audience has rehearsed before the women's own rehearsal. This "life is theatre" / "theater is life" interchange is also true of the Part II scenes: the audience hears snippets of others' conversations while moving between the scenes or waiting for them to start, much more fluidly than a typical intermission structure. (I heard about someone's new sneakers, another's relationship drama, yet another's conjectures about what would happen next.) Emma's "showing what life is, *can be*" (emphasis mine) is representative of the play as a whole: breaking down boundaries between what the audience witnesses, their own experiences, and those of the actors leads to a sense of radical possibility, an offering to notice while considering alternatives. As the women take turns rehearsing their parts in Part III, we get to see them working collectively, not by rote, not taking for granted, shifting around who will speak when and how, all the while processing that sensitivity to differences Cecilia mentioned. Paula, for example, says "I'm sure I will just stand there and go blank" (45). The women replicate the audience structure by serving as their own audience, complete with a mini-stage on the stage itself: "(*Fefu begins to move the table. Others help move the table and enough furniture to clear a space in the center. They sit in a semicircle downstage on the floor facing upstage*" (44). As such, there is an attention to how bodies move and sense in space and in relation to other bodies, like reminding each other to breathe (e.g., 46). Now that the audience has been in close contact with the characters, this onstage audience serves as proxy, and the threads of embodied experience can stretch from the characters to those seated in the house.

As we saw earlier with the eschewal of "the strings of the puppeteer" via Rowen, Fornés's relinquishing of full authorial control in the stage directions allows for more spacious potential in the women's relationality. Part III contains two extended scenes that, while not explicitly demarcated as such within the script, stand as two parallel moments that involve some degree of

improvisation. Much as we felt the sense of improvisational moments in Part II, here there is a structure to what will go on in each scene within Part III. As with an improv or tuning score, we have a loose structure of where we're headed, where we need to start/end, but what happens in between, particularly when it comes to exact blocking, is up for grabs. For example, when Fefu goes to wash the dishes, many of the women offer to help, and they wind up getting into a water fight over who will do it—perhaps jesting at women's socialization into the domestic. The stage directions indicate, as Julia and Cindy have a serious discussion: "*While the following conversation goes on, Emma, Sue, Cindy, and Julia engage in water fights in and out of the living room. The screams, laughter, and water splashing may drown the words*" (50). Although she does include occasional blocking, rather than specify exactly how the women throw the water, Fornés emphasizes the overall feeling. The script allows the women to move through the scene, to the point that the script's lines themselves are subordinated ("*may drown the words*") to other forms of collective voice and embodiment.

What happens during the water fight will depend on the relationships between the actors; maybe it will be different each night, maybe it will involve genuine surprise. The scene I witnessed was playful, chaotic, and beautiful: so rarely do we actually get to see grown women *playing*. (This of course is markedly different from Fefu's gun game with Phillip—more collective, less terrifying.) They actually get wet, and maybe some remain soaked through the rest of the play, or have to change their clothes, or feel out of breath. Again, "theatre" and "life" cross—and maybe the audience gets a little splashed too, maybe they imagine the water on their skin and clothes. Besides allowing for more free embodied expression to take shape, with material, physical effects, water also takes on symbolic potential—but not just one. We might think of baptism, of renewal, of bacchanal, of sexual pleasure. The idea of a fight that involves both shock and joy, togetherness with a hint of violent confrontation, serves as a microcosm for the play as a whole. In each of these Part III scenes, *Fefu* seems to ask: is this a performance? How about this? Are you performing too?

What, for this play, seems to constitute a performance are moments that work to destabilize, scramble, or blur subject positions. This happens *through* embodied movement, whether through the gestures of the characters themselves, the audience's own intimate approximation to the characters, or intersubjective relationality between the characters.

Intersubjective gestural resonance

What does it mean to feel so deeply for another, so intimately, that you take on their embodied experiences? And what are the limitations and possibilities of this resonance? In *Fefu* intimacy cannot but bring violence, and vice versa. We see Fefu and Julia engage in deep conversation where only they understand one another—and also fight brutally. We see Cecilia and Paula process deep pain years after a breakup—and deep attraction upon reuniting. *Fefu* does not shy away from these extremes of embodied relationality, but rather includes points along the continuum that connects them, ultimately putting forth a feminist intersubjectivity that culminates in the play's final moments.

Although at first glance the play might appear to present the unintentional death of Julia at the hands of Fefu, a closer look at gestural and sensorial embodiment in the final scenes destabilizes those fixed subject positions and states. Shortly after the water fight, Julia's divergent sensory perception that we witnessed so clearly in her Part II scene shifts to Fefu, who seems to "take on" hallucinating from Julia:

> (*As Paula goes upstairs, Fefu comes down the steps. She is downcast. The lights shift to an eerie tone. Fefu hallucinates the following: Julia enters in slow motion, walking. She goes to the coffee table, gets the sugar bowl, lifts it in Fefu's direction, takes the cover off, puts it back on and walks to the kitchen. As soon as Julia exits, Sue's voice is heard speaking the following lines. Immediately after, Julia re-enters wheeled by Sue. […] Fefu stares at Julia*.) (55)

The difference between this hallucination and Julia's Part II hallucination is that we as audience actually *see* what Fefu is seeing; it is not the other women, but only the audience, with the help of the "eerie lighting," who sense what Fefu does. By contrast, in Julia's hallucination, the audience has to read through her voice and gestures to understand whom and what exactly she might be hallucinating. The intersubjective crossing between the two women is palpable: Fefu is still, and Julia is once again the gesturing body here—and, crucially, she can walk. The sugar bowl, itself another kind of Chekhovian prop set carefully as directed by the stage directions a few pages prior (54: "*The sugar remains on the table*"), is the site of an un-codified gesture by Julia: she "*lifts it in Fefu's direction, takes the cover off, puts it back on and walks to the kitchen*." While the meaning of the gesture may be unclear (we could call it an offering, a reaching out), the relational connection between Julia and Fefu *is* clear: Fefu is the recipient.

The incident goes unexplained, but a few minutes later, Fefu confronts Julia in a verbal exchange that also implies an embodied and sensorial exchange that both women seem to be acutely aware of. (Fefu initially speaks about her problems with Philip, and it's clear she has shared a deep bond with Julia, although it is unclear exactly what kind.) This goes beyond the feeling of empathy to a shared sensory perception, as described by Fefu: "(*She looks into Julia's eyes.*) I look into your eyes and I know what you see. *(Julia closes her eyes.)* It's death. *(Julia shakes her head.*) Fight!" (59). The dialogue and gestures continue to focalize sight and eyes: the stage directions indicate when Fefu and Julia avoid each other's gaze and when they meet it, as in this line from Fefu which reverses the directionality of the one I've just cited: "(*Julia looks at Fefu.*) Don't look at me. (*She covers Julia's eyes with her hand.*) I lose my courage when you look at me" (60). Their shared sensory perception coalesced around vision(s) acts as an intersubjective bridge between the two women, one that for Fefu is frightening; she says "And you're contagious. I'm going mad too" (59). Fefu keeps insisting that Julia "fight" for her life, first alone, then "Fight with me!" and finally implores that she walk, to the extent that she "*starts shaking the wheelchair and pulling Julia off the wheelchair*" (60). Strikingly, it is amidst this violent confrontation that Julia seems able to offer a genuine prayer ("May no harm come to your head," which repeats for "will," "hands," "eyes," "voice," "heart" 60) that echoes but re-writes the earlier one; this one is not one imposed by the patriarchal forces that rule her hallucinations, but rather arises from an apparently relational sense of care. When I saw the production, Fefu released Julia, fell to her knees, and let her head fall into Julia's lap. The two women breathed together for a moment, their bodies merged.

Although the play provides its fair share of textual foreshadowing through dialogue (around the gun as well as around Julia's own sense of death, e.g., 53), I contend that the eyes and hand gestures that call focus to the head in the Fefu and Julia fight (particularly "*She covers Julia's eyes with her hand*") lay the nonverbal foundation for Julia's series of final gestures. Right after her fight with Julia, "(*Fefu gets the gun*)," saying she's going to clean it, and goes offstage (61). Julia, still processing the altercation with Fefu, says "She knew" (61), which we could read as an awareness of Fefu understanding her hallucinations, as well as a sense of intersubjectivity which could also include a sense of death. What follow are the last lines of the play:

> *(There is the sound of a shot. Christina and Cecilia run out. Julia puts her hand to her forehead. Her hand goes down slowly. There is blood on her forehead. Her head falls back. Fefu enters holding a dead white rabbit.)*
>
> FEFU: I killed it…I just shot…and killed it…Julia…
>
> *(Dropping the rabbit, Fefu walks to Julia and stands behind the chair as she looks at Julia. Sue and Cindy enter from the foyer, Emma and Paula from the kitchen, Christina and Cecilia from the lawn. They surround Julia. The lights fade.)* (61)

At no point do the stage directions indicate that Julia is dead, nor does the text make it clear that Fefu's shot killed Julia. Much depends on if we make the leap from "*Her hand goes down slowly. There is blood on her forehead. Her head falls back*," or from the "*dead white rabbit*" to "death." But one thing is clear: unlike Phillip, Julia does not get up. The specific series of gestures Julia performs seem to cite the gesture of Fefu putting her hands over Julia's eyes in the preceding scene. In this sense, we could read Julia's final actions as an intersubjective bridge to Fefu—and the fact that her eyes are no longer covered ("*her hand goes down slowly*") points back to their shared sense of sight, and visions.

Julia and Fefu come so close to each other that they—and we—can't fully parse out where one's embodied subjectivity ands and where another's begins. By the time we approach the end of the play, the audience experiences a sensorial, embodied porousness, too, and not just because of the shock of the second gunshot. The final scene puts us in the position of the characters: we all see the blood on Julia's forehead for the first time (vision, again). With this abrupt final moment, we must *continue* to reckon with our embodied perception of it, even after the lights fade and the curtain has gone down. As Christina has already primed us for sensorially early on in Part I, we feel our "heart is still beating" (12) long after we leave the theatre. An attention to collective sensing feels just as important as figuring out the symbolism and significance of Julia's death, or even if she is really dead. We could say: "Fefu suppressing feminist resistance that takes hold in Julia," "Fefu's fear of facing gendered pain," "Fefu unable to shake the patriarchal impulses she's internalized and which do harm to Julia," "Fefu killing off a part of herself that Julia represents," "sacrificing Julia so Fefu keeps living," "feminist empathy carried to its stereotypical extreme: madness." And we can also notice how all of these interpretations implicate *both* Fefu *and* Julia. After all, Fefu's "I" slips away, and her last word, and the last of the whole play uttered aloud, is "Julia." Processing any of these possible interpretations must all go through the sensorial, embodied experience of witnessing the maybe-death. Even while Julia may be dead, her presence resonates in Fefu's body and that of the audience. This reading follows the play's emphasis on depth of intimacy, challenging a purely narrative emphasis on pleasurable versus devastating plot events. Throughout *Fefu*, gestures draw not only our thinking attention, but also our embodied, sensorial attention into the realm of the play, creating the grounds for collective feminist feeling and intersubjective relationality.

When it comes to feminism, words alone cannot convey all that we have experienced in body. Patriarchal violence is quotidian; the plays' representation of it is unique. *Fefu* shows us that even if we haven't personally experienced some particular form of violence, there is great power in sensing as best we can what it is like for our friends, lovers, comrades, even strangers in the struggle, to experience it—whether that takes place in the theater, on the page, or on the street, as I'll discuss in the following chapter. If we are willing to approach such shared embodied

experience—call it full-feeling solidarity—in this way, then there lies the possibility to transform it, sensing into and gesturing resistance as a collective ensemble.

CHAPTER THREE

Performing Gestures of Political Resistance: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* and Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica*

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha stands at 63 Bluxome Street in San Francisco at 8:00pm on October 22, 1975. In what will be her first and only public performance piece outside of a museum or gallery space, she covers her eyes with a piece of fabric stenciled with the word "VOIX" (voice; also a homonym of "voir," to see) and her mouth with another stenciled "AVEUGLE" (blind). She unrolls a scroll with matching stenciled words that appear one by one:

WORDS

FAIL

ME

SANS

MOT

SANS

VOIX

AVEUGLE

GESTE



Theresa Hak Kyng Cha, *Aveugle Voix*, 1975.

In this piece, *Aveugle voix,* it is the last revealed word, "GESTE" (gesture) that invites attention. [1] The final point in Cha's moving list, yet the one most indicative of movement. Just after unveiling this word, Cha performs it: she squats down, barefoot, and begins to turn towards the canvas scroll she has just unrolled flat onto the sidewalk, hands outstretched, fingers long, palms eventually making their way to the flat canvas. Her hands palpate, grazing the empty whiteness of the canvas and the barely raised forms of its painted letters. Cha, elbows tucked between knees, places the full weight and mass of her body onto the canvas, which her feet, too, now traverse. Cha picks up her hands and head: now raised from the canvas, now touching it. The repetition of this gesture enacts "aveugle voit," ("the blind sees") implying that sight also happens through touch, as well as the homonym "aveugle voix" ("blind voice"); the gesture complicates facile correspondence between senses and body parts, between words and their significance.

Although it is Cha who performs the gesture, its effects are not limited to her as an individual. Those present will not only look or see, but also read and bear witness, as Cha herself models a mode of reading in which her body comes into literal, physical contact with the text. This contact produces a kind of shake that runs through words themselves; once the scroll is unrolled and as Cha moves among the words with her body, viewers can read the words in multiple directions: first in the order they are unveiled as listed above, and then from top to bottom, that is, beginning with GESTE once all have been revealed. We now have the possibility of "blind gesture" and "voice without words without me," for example. "GESTE," in the case of top-to-bottom reading, begins an act of reading with the implication of embodied presence that ripples through the syntax, undoing the hierarchies and valuations of normative grammar. It also extends an invitation to the reader: they must actively make choices about where and how to read, reorienting not just their gaze but their bodies in the process. Consider, for example, that one might need to tilt their head or take a few steps forward in order to see the full scroll. Cha models multivalence, not just in reading words but through the subtle physical gestures that come to constitute that process. Physical and figurative gestures cross in this performance, in a humbling of sorts: a canvas off the walls of the gallery, the artist lowered before the work that she cannot see or make an utterance about (remember, she is blindfolded, gagged), maybe even implying to the audience, *come join me here on the pavement where others have walked, which holds its own history of violence and art practices*. Although the South of Market area of San Francisco was home to a number of alternative art spaces at the time, Bluxome Street was named for Isaac Bluxome, a leader of the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance in the mid-19th century; the vigilante group was known for their pursuit and persecution of immigrant groups.[2] "GESTE": a mode of embodied political engagement with written text and history for both artist and reader. While we might think of "gesturing towards" as signaling a distance, Cha's gestures bring both artist and readers closer to, quite literally, the matter at hand.

Nearly four years later, on October 3, 1979 in Santiago, Chile, CADA (Colectivo Acciones de Arte) mounts its first political performance art action, during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, who came to power through a military coup on September 11, 1973 against the socialist presidency of Salvador Allende of Unidad Popular. CADA was a collective of

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[1] Image source link: https://bampfa.org/program/theresa-hak-kyung-cha-avant-dictee.

[2] http://sfstreets.noahveltman.com/#1990.
It is not clear to me whether Cha was aware of this history, but it resonates nonetheless, given her own family history and focus on the violence of immigration, which can be seen especially in the photo of Angel Island Korean graffiti, which comes just before the title page of *Dictee*.

multimedia artists, co-founded by Diamela Eltit, Lotty Rosenfeld, Raúl Zurita, Fernando Balcells, and Juan Castillo. Unlike those artists who chose exile during the dictatorship, they stayed within Chile and mounted critique and resistance from within; these art actions put CADA members at risk of detention, torture, and disappearance. Nelly Richard, the leading critic of Chilean art during the Pinochet dictatorship and post-dictatorship, as well as a prominent feminist critic, calls attention to CADA's use of "las dinámicas procesuales del cuerpo vivo y la ciudad" to bring political and aesthetic demands (ever intertwined) to the fore (15).[3] Natalia Brizuela, in a recent curatorial statement on Rosenfeld's art, emphasizes: "The privatization of all aspects of life was imposed in Chile under the Pinochet regime through an infrastructure of fear that emptied out the commons, through censorship and curfew" (Brizuela 165). Prior to the formation of CADA, Eltit participated in a seminar on Antonin Artaud led by Ronald Kay which culminated in a performance titled *Tentativa Artaud* that dramatized surveillance through gestures and gibberish speech. In a recent article, Anna White-Nockleby notes that, although Eltit did not participate in the performance, the work done in the seminar functioned as a "mode of registering the pain of torture in the context of the Pinochet regime" that Eltit and other CADA members would continue to investigate through embodied art action (87).

Eltit's first solo art action, *Maipú*, took place at night after state-imposed curfew at a site for sex work on a street of the same name as a public performance in 1980; it was filmed and subsequently edited by Rosenfeld into a film titled *Zona de dolor I* (Zone of pain I). The nearly 15-minute film documentation begins and ends with stillness in body and movement in voice. We first only hear Eltit, whose voice constitutes the strident "soundtrack" to the film, at times asynchronous with what we see on screen. She recites lines of text that describe the body parts of a "she" and an implied "I" over and over again, at the same pitch, in the same rhythm, and at the same pace, for the duration of the video. The litany accompanies Eltit, who is often only dimly lit. We see her seated inside the site and on the street outside of it, where she has just engaged in self-mutilation, cutting and burning the flesh of her arm, and the camera pans to her bare feet. The camera then cuts to Eltit reciting the text, rocking with the current of the meter. This discordant musicality and repetition will become recurring aspects of Eltit's work. Sounds that originate inside the body of the artist and force her to move, sounds with the potential to lodge themselves not only in the memory but also in the body of the viewer. The process is consonant with Francine Masiello's claim that "el modo en que nuestro cuerpo en su totalidad es estimulado en su encuentro con el poema" can eventually lead to "*otra* manera de hacer la política [en la poesía]: cuando abre un camino para llegar a considerar al otro, cuando ofrece la posibilidad de un intercambio intersubjetivo" (*El cuerpo* 9, 16).[4] Long after viewing *Zona de dolor I*, we take on its meter: ta TA-ta-ta-ta TA-ta-ta-ta ("su ALma es a la MÍa gemELa")… Maybe it makes its way into our voice: we hum it. Or into our gait: we walk it. Or into our arms: we swing it. Or into our fingers: we tap it, we type it. In other words, then, a public performance piece enters additional public spaces and private ones, transforming them along the way. Eltit's description and enactment of habitual gestures both in work and rest—washing the pavement,

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[3] "The processual dynamics of the living body and the city." Richard documents the work of CADA in her landmark *Márgenes e instituciones: Arte en Chile desde 1973*. That text is based on remarks from a seminar, and the work was initially published in English in Australia due to censorship.

[4] "the mode in which our body in its totality is stimulated by its encounter with the poem," "*another* mode of doing politics [in poetry]: when it opens up a path to come to consider the other, when it offers the possibility of an intersubjective exchange."

resting head on hand, touching forehead—seeps into our own. The present chapter emphasizes these indirect ways that resistance stays with us, resides within us, as the iterability of embodied gestures moves beyond the performer's own body and text.

Three years later, this recited text would become part of *Lumpérica* (1983); Rosenfeld's still images of Eltit in performance have since made their way into many editions of the text. Cha, too, continued work with both performance and written text, eventually publishing *Dictee*, which originated as an art book-compendium that bridges individual and collective histories of struggle through mixed media such as photographs, typewritten texts, and calligraphy, in 1982. *Dictee* and *Lumpérica*'s shared modes of critique, techniques, and chronological contemporaneity beg for a comparative analysis of the two works, which also set up comparative projects—across media, languages, and artistic and political practices—within themselves. *Lumpérica* and *Dictee* both put forth a variety of practices, genres, and styles, pushing language, syntax, and verse to their limits. The present chapter considers these two public performances and texts, modes of performance—both on the page and on the everyday stages of public and domestic space—that rehearse and deploy gesture as a practice of political resistance. The back-and-forth between page and public performance hinges on gestures; gestures in both artists' work complicate and later bridge a felt separation between literary representation and physical embodiment. Both Eltit and Cha engage with political oppression and violence that affect how (often, women's) bodies can move and voice themselves—be it with words or without them—within the texts and beyond them. The chapter contends that descriptions of iterable physical gestures and their discursive relationship to gestures off the page invite the reader to sense their positionality in relation to violence, and ultimately, spur them to resistant action. I work against the concept of "empty gesture," instead arguing that the open-endedness of certain gestures makes productive demands upon the viewer's and reader's own embodied subjectivity. These gestures, then, attain a kind of ontological completion and a temporal fullness through such relationality, as they come into contact with new readers and viewers.

In a literary historical sense, both *Dictee* and *Lumpérica* share a feminist postructuralist preoccupation with the resistant possibilities of ambiguous and multivalent signs, working in the wake of the decades that preceded their publication. Richard makes a case for the fragmentation of art forms and their movement outside of state institutions as a result of the loss of a unifying national narrative during the dictatorship and the violence which it imposed in daily life, everyday action, art practice, and political work. The process of constructing narratives, then, necessarily took other forms. Speaking of the "escena de 'avanzada'" of which CADA is a key example, Richard claims: "Se les llamó 'acciones de arte' a esas obras cuyas estructuras operacionales se mantienen abiertas y cuyos materiales (aconteceres biográficos, transcursos comunitarios) permanecen inconclusos, garantizando así la *no-finitud* del mensaje artístico para que el espectador intervenga en la obra y complete su plural de significaciones heterogéneas y diseminadas" (17).[5] I am interested here in what Richard refers to as the intervention of the spectator into the work itself. This certainly applies to words or symbols that artists deploy, a key local example being Rosenfeld's 1979 art action *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento*, in which she used white tape to turn white street lines in a suburb of Santiago into crosses or plus signs;

[5] " 'Art actions' were the name given to those works whose operational structures are kept open and whose materials (biographical events, community happenings) remain inconclusive, as such guaranteeing the *non-finitude* of the artistic message so that the spectator intervenes in the work and completes its plurality of heterogenous and disseminated meanings."

photographs of the action show her squatting over the pavement to do this.[6] Richard, in line with other postructuralist approaches, expands understanding of signs to include the signs emitted and enacted by the bodies that move through the public space of the city, yet her own intervention foregrounds the role of corporeal semiotics particularly within the political context of dictatorship:

> Además de la ciudad y su territorio vigilado por diversas señaléticas represivas, el cuerpo —físicamente castigado por la violencia de la tortura y la desaparición— se convierte en el otro soporte que privilegia el arte de la "avanzada". Como frontera entre lo público y lo privado (entre el diseño histórico y las tramas biográficas; entre el molde social y las pulsiones subjetivas), el cuerpo define un límite estratégico que el autoritarismo había buscado traspasar para difundir miedos y censuras en las dimensiones más recónditas del cotidiano. El cuerpo como zona sacrificial de ritualización del dolor que se auto-inflige una herida para solidarizar con lo históricamente mutilado en una misma cicatriz redentora (Raúl Zurita, Diamela Eltit) […] permitió que una gestualidad no codificada por el discurso público hiciera aflorar ciertos estratos de significación reprimida que accedieron así, somáticamente, a una fluyente superficie de lectura carnal. (18)[7]

The consequences, then, are that gestures themselves come to constitute an open-ended semiotic practice that begs intervention from the viewer or reader. To not assign a single meaning to a sign, amidst dictatorship or other forms of state violence that attempt to control both narratives and bodies and their interrelation, itself constitutes an act of resistance. While the practices Richard describes were certainly hyperlocal and responding to clear political conditions of repression, there is something shared between the work of Eltit and Cha which has precisely to do with the somatic intervention of this "un-codified gesturality"; and not just its existence, but its effects on the viewers of their performances and on readers of their texts, across temporalities.

Both texts represent aesthetic-political responses to state violence in part spurred on and funded by U.S. imperialism in East Asia and Latin America. While critique is not always explicit in the texts, whether by choice or by threat of censorship, the imperial contexts are inescapable. *Lumpérica*, for its part, takes on the U.S.-backed Pinochet dictatorship. The text's description and corresponding performance that stage the selling of bodies for consumption remind us that Chile was opened via neoliberalism for new kinds of colonial consumption and extractivism by the

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[6] See Rosenfeld and Brizuela, Figure 1. Brizuela also notes that this sign became an important one for CADA's interventions: "CADA invited Chilean artists to complete the demand 'No +' ('No More') by naming social and political needs in murals and graffiti throughout Santiago. […] All over Santiago on September 11, 1983, artists wrote on walls with demands of 'No + dictadura' ('No more dictatorship'), 'No + represión' ('No more repression'), 'No + torturas' ('No more torture')."

[7] "In addition to the city and its territory under watch by various repressive sign systems, the body—physically punished by the violence of torture and disappearance—becomes the other support that "avanzada" art privileges. As a boundary between public and private (between historic design and biographic events; between the social mold and subjective impulses), the body defines a strategic limit that authoritarianism had sought to surpass by disseminating fears and censorships in the most secluded dimensions of the everyday. The body as sacrificial zone of self-inflicted wound in a ritualization of pain to stand in solidarity with the historically mutilated in the same redemptive scar (Raúl Zurita, Diamela Eltit) […] allowed for an gesturality that is not codified by public discourse that allows the flourishing of certain strata of repressed meaning that allowed access to, in this way, somatically, a flowing surface of flesh reading."

U.S., inextricably linked to violence towards the indigenous communities of Chile.[8] *Dictee*, meanwhile, takes on the Japanese imperial occupation of Korea, the so-called Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the policing of immigration to the U.S., which Cha also experienced firsthand as an immigrant to the U.S. from South Korea in the early 1960s. *Dictee* foregrounds the U.S.'s involvement in the division of Korea and in the Vietnam War, whose effects were still palpable when Cha was working on the text. *Dictee* and *Lumpérica* dramatize the links between large-scale international political control and that of local and domestic patriarchal and gender violence, tracing parallels between world historical events and everyday embodied experiences.

An emphasis on the body as a source of writing also seems to be, in part, influenced by 1970s second wave feminisms, as well as the advent of performance art by women artists in which the body becomes the site of political and aesthetic practice; in a sense, performance art attempts to reclaim women's bodies and their autonomy contra patriarchal control by subverting its dominant sign systems. The connections between second wave feminisms and performance art turn on readings of postructuralism; we need only remember Hélène Cixous's "Beware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified!" and the nonverbal "laugh of the Medusa" (Cixous 319). However, it's important to note that, while feminisms and feminist performance art certainly share affinities across national and regional contexts, *Lumpérica* and *Dictee* come, respectively, out of what we could now term Global South and postcolonial contexts which have in common an interrogation of the hegemony of Global North and Western ideas and ideologies.

In other words, while these texts and performances certainly share an affinity with European and U.S. second wave feminisms, they also seem to be responding to them and critiquing them, in different ways. This is particularly evidenced in work by Latin American feminists in the 1980s (more or less contemporary with the texts) who held a number of dialogues and debates that later were published in anthologies considering Latin American feminisms' relationship to European and U.S. feminisms which sought also to elaborate critical genealogies that came from within their own traditions.[9] Eltit was involved in a number of these events; in the following chapter, I'll discuss how she and others returned to the work of the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral during the dictatorship to recover her feminist and anti-colonial writings. I see such dialogue and horizontal collective-based work as laying the groundwork for current Latin American feminist critiques that work to both decolonize feminisms and dismantle neoliberalist frameworks, as I discussed in the introduction with the work of Colectivo LASTESIS.[10] Cha, for her part, continued to critique the hegemony of French precisely through the process of engaging with it, as we see in the opening section of *Dictee* which pokes fun at the normative grammatical exercise of dictation; she also integrated Korean cultural practices into her art-making and writing. Notably, much of the early criticism of Cha's work sought to bring her into a Third World Women canon in which women of color critics in the U.S. worked in solidarity to reshape

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[8] Take, for example, the deforestation that Macarena Gómez-Barris describes in *The Extractive Zone*. Eltit also worked with Mapuche women in the 1970s and has continued work most recently with Kawésqar communities. For her account own of this, see "Literatura, trama y deseo."

[9] See, for example, *Escribir en bos bordes* (ed. Carmen Berenguer et. al.) and *La sartén por el mango: Encuentro de escritoras latinoamericanas* (eds. Patricia Elena González and Eliana Ortega).

[10] See also the work of Verónica Gago, Luci Cavallero, and María Pia López.

dominant white feminist narratives that did not deeply consider race or ethnicity.[11] While that work was crucial to thinking about women artists based in the U.S., in recent decades, there has also been a notable rise in U.S. retrospectives of and scholarship around Latin American performance art, particularly by women, as well as individual artist retrospectives through the lens of feminisms.[12] While not disputing the importance of these interventions, I hope to contribute to a more comparative hemispheric take, using the work of Cha and Eltit in conversation as a case study of shared gestural aesthetic and political strategies for resisting state violence and patriarchal control across regional and linguistic differences.

Both texts grapple with women's positionality, often crossing, intersubjectively, women figures in each of their works. Writing in part on Cha, in part on the work of other women postcolonial writers, and in part on her own experience, Trinh T. Minh-ha puts forth a mode of storytelling that is both gendered and embodied: "The world's earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand. In the process of storytelling, speaking and listening refer to realities that do not involve just the imagination. The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched. It destroys, brings into life, nurtures. Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and of transmission" (121). Although Cha and Eltit never met, their work partakes in similar modes not only of "body to body" transmission (beyond "his mind," as Minh-ha puts it, 126) which in turn becomes a key mode of resistance with the capacity to bridge not only individual bodies, but generations and national contexts. As a critic, I will track echoes in the modes of gesture each of these texts produces, with the conviction that placing bodies of texts alongside one another allows for their individual gestures to be viewed in a new light: resistance across time, resistance in retrospect. This chapter will put forth close readings of both key and seemingly minor moments in *Dictee* and *Lumpérica*, focusing on the ways that gestures foment political resistance in the bodies of the text, the artist/writer, and viewer/reader. I'll close the chapter with another comparative look, analyzing the filmic cuts/cortes in both texts through my own comparative intercutting which considers acts of re-membering and remembering, ultimately theorizing the ways that the gestures performed by bodies and enacted by language in the text continue to be embodied—and embodied anew—in contemporary acts of reading. Gestures in these texts, often both inviting and demanding in their ambiguity, are not merely ephemeral and in-the-moment; rather, they have the potential to lead to practices of embodied resistance across temporal and historical contexts.

Both texts eschew direct and straightforward meaning-making; both begin in a silence, yet not one that is complacent. At the outset of *Lumpérica*, we see the protagonist L. Iluminada writhing in a public square under the words of a neon sign ("sus labios entreabiertos y sus piernas extendidas," ("her parted lips and extended legs,"17). These parted lips seem to signify a sort of unrealized or repressed potential for speech as well as a double reading that places an emphasis on gender, sex, and women's bodies in motion.[13] *Dictee*'s unnamed protagonist "she," meanwhile,

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[11] In addition to the Kim and Alarcón compilation I mention below, Alarcón's Third Woman press also published the landmark anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, which features a photo from Cha's *Aveugle voix* performance in the section titled "Speaking in Tongues: The Third World Woman Writer."

[12] I am thinking of the *Holy Terrors, Arte ≠Vida,* and *Radical Women* shows and their respective catalogues and dossiers. As for individual artists' retrospectives, I am thinking, for example, of Lygia Pape and Lygia Clark (Brazil) at the Met Breuer, as well as Zilia Sánchez (Puerto Rico) at the Museo del Barrio and Carolee Schneeman (U.S.) at MoMA PS1.

[13] This recalls Luce Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together," and when read together, both texts seem to grapple with, and ultimately offer up possibilities for, what Irigaray describes as a gestural quandary: "If we don't

begins the text by "mimicking gestures with the mouth" (3), one way to define the dictation the title references, rendered feminine in French with the second "e."[14] Ironically, Cha's *Aveugle voix* uses words to at least in part convey the message that, in fact, "WORDS FAIL ME," and the texts seem to grapple with the very question of having to use written words, particularly in the context of national narrative as a form of patriarchal domination. Both texts dramatize subjects and bodies at odds with speech; not simply because speech is not possible, but because dissent is politicized as a radical act of subversion. "Speaking up," "speaking out," "speaking against"—all of these place already vulnerable subjects into even more vulnerable, precarious, dangerous positions.[15] Yet what I wish to emphasize is how both experimental texts *persist* in trying to write and speak, often through the body and its movements. Gestures—both physical gestures in performance art and descriptions of gestures in written texts—appear as an essential byproduct of communicative struggle (in line with what Eltit refers to as "remnants" as we'll see below). Gestures, and their continual rehearsal in these works, call our readerly and sensorial attention to this state of things, eventually provoking an embodied response during the physical act of reading. It is precisely because of gestures' ambiguity that readers and viewers are called upon to act, re-member, and, ultimately, resist.

***Dictee*: "body to body now"**

While the word "gesture" appears a mere number of times throughout *Dictee*, the instances in which it does foreground the potential of embodied movement as it crosses with textuality. These instances also seem to hang over the rest of the text, haunt it, so to speak. A brief but important note on form: *Dictee* is divided into nine nontraditional chapters, each with the name of a different Greek muse and corresponding genre (for example, "CLIO HISTORY"). These nine chapters are bookended by additional short texts and quotations (some in French and Korean), as well as images of historical figures, landscapes that take on semiotic significance, and Cha's own family members. The result could be called a collage, a compendium, an archive that bridges individual and collective histories amidst the struggle of what can and cannot be spoken in words, although it may be spoken in a different way: that is, expressed through sound, image, or, what this chapter will focus on, registered or articulated through the body. While the sections could certainly be read as stand-alone units, what is striking in a reading of the text as a whole are the ways in which descriptions, images, and words become overlaid, and their significance and polysemy resonate, expand, and transform with each new section. For example, there is a continued preoccupation with stillness/silence and movement/voice, as well as a continued, intergenerational, engagement with various "she"s and

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invent a language, if we don't find our body's language, it will have too few gestures to accompany our story. We shall tire of the same ones, and leave our desires unexpressed, unrealized. Asleep again, unsatisfied, we shall fall back upon the words of men-who, for their part, have 'known' for a long time. But *not our body*. Seduced, attracted, fascinated, ecstatic with our becoming, we shall remain paralyzed. Deprived of *our movements*" (214, emphases Irigaray's).

[14] This is a preoccupation that extends across Cha's work. See, for example, her video *Mouth to Mouth* (made in the same year as *Aveugle voix*), whose silence of voice seems to enact this mimicking by calling attention to only the mouth's movements. For a comprehensive timeline of Cha's work across media, see *Writing Self Writing Nation*, eds. Elaine H. Kim and Norma Alarcón.

[15] Cha lays this out directly in "CALLIOPE EPIC POETRY," which is simultaneously about her own mother and not about her own mother, a woman in Manchuria who has moved to escape Japanese occupation and whose mother tongue is Korean: "To utter each word is a privilege you risk by death." (45-46).

"mother"s. Historical events and figures, too, are layered palimpsestically over the course of the text, in a way that recalls *Orlando* and *Quim/Quima*'s personal-historical engagement but with a decided departure from Modernist or modernist-inspired approaches. There are striking resonances, for example, between the descriptions of the March 1, 1919 uprising in Korea, led by the young Yu Guan Soon, against Japanese occupation; the April 19, 1960 student protests against the "U.S.-installed Syngman Rhee government" (Kim 20); and a direct reference to June 25, 1950, the start of the Korean War; and for U.S. readers, there's the additional unspoken echo of protests against the Vietnam War. It should be noted that, across the various chapters of *Dictee*, these historical figures and events find themselves right alongside Joan of Arc and Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux, as well as Cha herself in the moment of writing (e.g. 1978, "Eighteen years pass," 85) and Cha's own mother, in feminist kinship and shared struggle. It is gestures—the physical movements and the words that describe them—which, in my reading, constitute the connective tissue of the fleshed-out body of the text. In other words, we cannot read resistance in this text without attending to the embodied gestures that get iterated and reiterated over the course of historical and literary time.

"HISTORY," which tracks Yu Guan Soon's role in the 1919 Korean uprising against Japanese imperial occupation, frames that entire event as catalyzed by gesture. Cha writes: "March 1, 1919. Everyone knows to carry inside themselves, the national flag. Everyone knows equally the punishment that follows this gesture. The march begins, the flags are taken out, made visible, waved, every individual crying out the independence the freedom to the people of this nation. Knowing equally the punishment" (37). Yu was a mere 16 years old at the time, and "the punishment that follow[ed] this gesture" for her included: "Guan Soon is arrested as a leader of the revolution, with punishment deserving for such a rank. She is stabbed in the chest and subjected to questioning […] She is given seven years prison sentence" (37).[16] Yu later died in prison. "History," then, sets up the physical gesture of taking out the flag as nearly inseparable from a gesture towards a fight for freedom from occupation; the political stakes are so high that protest is a matter of life and death. An apparently simple gesture makes an impact, in part because the flags come to constitute not just a visual marker, but a representation of cultural difference and a stand-in for what the protesters "carry inside themselves"; that is, a wish to gain independence from empire's disciplinary controls over their expression, particularly that of language and body. In this sense, the gesture acts as a mode of embodied political resistance that results in the most severe of consequences for "everyone," for those subjects' bodies: imprisonment, torture, death.

The above scene appears early on, both in *Dictee* and in the chronology it represents. This early appearance prefigures that moments of gesture throughout the course of the text are often accompanied by violence, particularly wounds that draw blood—which also comes to represent identity, kindship, nationhood, and ink. We see an echo of the violent treatment towards Yu being "stabbed in the chest" in the third section of the book, "URANIA ASTRONOMY." The opening of that section stages a woman experiencing the unnamed yet unmistakable process of having blood drawn; the narration never mentions the word "blood" directly (in fact, only the French equivalent, "sang," is mentioned once, 65) and ultimately extends far beyond that quotidian event. Notably, the scene begins with another unnamed "she," whose movements blur with those of the narrator as they come into physical contact:

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[16] As we will see, this "questioning" is also present in the police interrogation sections of *Lumpérica* (so marked that the text uses a different font to render them) and in *Dictee*'s "Epic Poetry" border control authority scene, e.g. "they ask you identity" (56).

> She takes my left arm, tells me to make a fist, then open. Make a fist then open again, make the vein appear through the skin blue-green-purple tint to the translucent surface. Pump them open and close she takes the elastic band and ties it tightly around the left arm. She taps on the flesh presses it against her thumb. She removes the elastic to the right arm. Open and close the right hand, fist and palm. She takes the cotton and rubs alcohol lengthwise on the arm several times. The coolness disappears as the liquid begins to evaporate. She takes the needle with its empty body to the skin. (64)

In the rhyme between the repetition of the woman's "take" and the narrator's "make," the subjects seem to approach each other, and the boundaries between the woman drawing blood and the woman having her blood drawn begins to break down. This is also evidenced in the elision created by lack of punctuation and the removal of the "d" in what should be "closed" in the discrete instructions for how the narrator should move and the movements of the phlebotomist: "Pump them open and close she takes the elastic band and ties it tightly around the left arm." "Close," in this case, could also point to the opposite of "far" as the two women come together. Here, too, we see the distancing between the "I" and her own body parts: the language doesn't use the possessive "my" but instead "*the* left arm," "*the* right arm," "*the* right hand," "*the* arm," "*the* skin." This could be a kind of literal translation of French which doesn't use the possessive for body parts, but the work of the passage goes beyond that, laying the groundwork for intersubjective relationality that "spills," "seep[s]" (64), and ultimately exceeds the boundaries of subjects' bodies. In fact, the implied "I" disappears and exceeds itself materially and linguistically after that first mention of "my left arm." The two bodies that begin the passage as discrete entities seem nearly inseparable from each other by the end of it, as are the needle the narrator feels in her arm (which is also described as a "body"), the substance of the blood being drawn, and the resulting inky texture of the lines on the page which oscillate between italics and roman letters, indented and unindented lines:

> *One line down the arm on the table in one long spill, exhale of a spill.*
> It takes her seconds less to break the needle off its body in an attempt to collect the loss directly from the wound. (64-65)

The use of "wound" for an ordinary procedure of having blood drawn suggests this physical interaction enacts temporal and narrative echoes. Those continue: "When possible ever possible to puncture to scratch to imprint. Expel. Ne te cache pas. Révèle toi. Sang. Encre. Of its body's extension of its containment" (65, "Don't hide. Reveal yourself. Blood. Ink.").[17] Seeing "wound" and now "puncture" and imagining needle in skin resonates with the earlier description of "History" of Yu's being stabbed; and yet, rather than her subsequent imprisonment, here we see "body's *extension* of its containment." Rather than assert via comparison that these moments of violence are equal in scope and significance, I want to emphasize Cha's focus on the everyday and habitual gestures and movements that can be read as registering violence and simultaneously full of potential for other acts of reckoning and registering. Indeed, the text seems to perform its own "Révèle toi," revealing itself like the development of a photo whose negative the reader glimpsed in an earlier section—and, given Cha's use of actual archival and family photos printed throughout *Dictee* as a whole, this seems like an apt analogy. This reflexive potential is emphasized in the repetition of "possible": "when possible ever possible," in its doubling, seems

[17] All translations of French from *Dictee* my own unless otherwise noted.

to open up space; not the contingent "whenever possible" but an emphasis on the "ever possible."

This sense of the "ever possible" opens up different modes for intersubjective embodiment: the blood-drawing scene unfolds into a series of bilingual poems preoccupied with performing acts of speech, with French on the left-hand pages and English on the right-hand ones; in other words, another opening between textual bodies, with the porous boundary being the empty spine between the pages. (As I'll discuss later, this technique continues in "ERATO LOVE POETRY.") In this scene, we see a preoccupation with the way that bodies themselves can serve as archives not only of individual histories, but also of filial, national, and chosen forms of kinship and identification. To echo another's physical pain and subsequently convert pieces of one's own body into an act of writing (i.e. from Yu's martyrdom to the narrator's "I") establishes gesture as a nexus of embodied writing, a radical continuation of resistance and solidarity through body and text.

"MELPOMENE TRAGEDY," which follows, restages the above scenes of puncture and blood spilling in a different context, continuing the process of "revealing itself." This process is not teleological but rather, elliptical; the chapter takes place across and between historical moments, with gesture functioning as a temporal alternative to linear chronology. The chapter as a whole presents a sharp critique of U.S. imperialism, particularly the aftermath of World War II and the war which split Korea into North Korea and South Korea. This split is framed in the image that begins the chapter (78) as well as the language of physical violence done to the body of a collective "we": "We are severed in Two by an abstract enemy an invisible enemy under the title of liberators who have conveniently named the severance, Civil War. Cold War. Stalemate" (81). The multiple ways to read "Civil War" and "Cold War"—that is, as not only referencing Korea but also the U.S.'s own nineteenth century Civil War and the wider geopolitical Cold War which was ongoing at the time but that contemporary U.S. readers would first think of as between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.—critique convergent, divergent, and intersecting forms of imperialism. Whoever inhabits the "we," then, affects how "abstract enemy an invisible enemy" is interpreted, and the text's porousness paradoxically allows for readers to enter into the text more concretely.

In making porous the boundaries between external intervention and internal state violence,[18] the scene follows an "I" at a protest in what we later realize are the April 1960 student protests, and yet time laps and lapses, crossing this with other historical uprisings in which gestures and embodied movement figure prominently. The text describes how tear gas and smoke are thrown into the crowd, as well as the consequences for those participating. (I include a sizeable passage here to give a sense of the imagery, rhythm, and language of scene, and I'll refer back to specific phrases in subsequent paragraphs):

> Inside an arm lifts above the head in deliberate gesture and disappears into the thick white from which slowly the legs of another bent at the knee hit the ground the entire body on its left side. The stinging, it slices the air it enters thus I lose direction the sky is a haze running the streets emptied I fell no one saw me I walk. Anywhere. In tears the air stagnant continues to sting I am crying the sky remnant the gas smoke absorbed the sky I

[18] This is also apparent in "Tragedy," which reprints a letter from not-yet-president Syngman Rhee and others urging then-U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt to consider Western interests in Korea (36).
Here, I also plan to bring in Anne Anlin Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race* once I am able to obtain access through the library.

> am crying. The streets covered with chipped bricks and debris. Because. I see the frequent pairs of shoes thrown sometimes a single pair among the rocks they had carried. Because. I cry wail torn shirt lying I step among them. No trace of them. Except for the blood. Because. Step among them the blood that will not erase with the rain on the pavement that was walked upon like the stones where they fell had fallen. Because. Remain dark the stains not wash away. Because. I follow the crying crowd their voices among them their singing their voices unceasing the empty street. (82)

From the above description alone, we don't know what the exact "deliberate gesture" that appears in the first line might be; however, although as readers we are uncertain, we know that the gesture is "deliberate," an adjective that draws our attention to and forces us to linger on the movement. This focus dilates when one realizes that this is the first time the text uses the word "gesture" since the description of the 1919 protest from "History." Much as in that "History" scene, violence is carried out against the bodies of these students as a direct result of their gestures and physical movements—that is, marching through space and resisting the political forces in power. The result, too, is physical: "slowly the legs of another bent at the knee hit the ground the entire body on its left side." Note the anonymity and metonymy here—in part due to the loss of vision because of tear gas, but also a continuation of the "the" with body parts from the intervening chapter, "Astronomy."

Returning to "Astronomy" offers a possibility for interpreting the gesture referred to in "Inside an arm lifts above the head in deliberate gesture." Perhaps the "deliberate gesture" is in fact "make a fist" (64), an unequivocal gesture of resistance in the context of a protest. The interplay between these chapters models how the individual movement of one body has the potential to become a collective political movement. The gesture of making a fist, while apparently silent, creates consequences that leave a mark, physical residue: blood. What could be read as a moment of individual body writing in which blood serves as ink, as we saw above—so often tied to feminisms—reveals itself to be a collective body writing. Instead of an individual's blood being drawn and becoming ink as in "Astronomy," "Tragedy" *extends* the act of body writing into an overtly political act in which blood is spilled not on a "cotton square" (65), nor the blank page which "cotton square" could also stand in for in its empty whiteness. Instead, "Tragedy" opens up yet another resonance of that "square," perhaps a "public square" or plaza, one of pavement, the streets, enveloped in "the thick white" which seems to translate the "cotton square" into an immersive environment that attempts to tamp down, literally and figuratively. (And here we can recall Richard's emphasis on the city streets as a key stage for intervention by the "escena de 'avanzada'," as well as Cha's own performance on Bluxome Street.)

To extend this reading, we can return to what the narrator observes after the protest: "No trace of them. Except for the blood. Because. Step among them the blood that will not erase with the rain on the pavement that was walked upon like the stones where they fell had fallen. Because. Remain dark the stains not wash away." The earlier language of "spill" and "stain" (64-65) from a routine procedure of having blood drawn is transformed into the "blood" and "stain" of the violent suppression of these student protests: "They fall they bleed they die" (83) at the hands of "the police the soldiers" (84). The continuation of these phrases without punctuation seems to beg readers to see the interconnection between human lives: separation because of ideology, rank, and so forth, to be sure, but also shared humanity ("further than their own line of blood," 84). Or perhaps the phrases' parallel structure mirrors the interconnectedness of culpability, the murderous state's inability to disentangle itself from the horrors it commits. In

other words, the nouns "spill" and "stain" become verbs that render modes of movement within the text and between and across its actors and events.

Gestures in *Dictee*, in these three sections, are directly tied to common struggles for Korean freedom particularly by young people and young revolutionaries; in other words, resistant body movements *as* social movement of resistance. We see this emphasized in the multiple senses of the word "movement" in a description that precedes the block quote cited earlier: "I am locked inside the crowd and carried in its movement. The voices ring shout one voice then many voices they are waves they echo I am moving in the direction the only one direction with the voices the only direction. The other movement towards us it increases steadily their direction their only direction our mutual destination towards the other against the other. Move" (81). First, we have the movement of a crowd and the movement of the opposing sides of a protest. The movement of the words on the page, created by the lack of punctuation and run-on sentences mirror the protesters' movement, perhaps even running. The breathless quality that results from this running also mimics a protest chant and takes on its repetition and rhythm. As such, it is nearly impossible, within this passage and within the wider corpus of *Dictee* (as in "exhale of a spill") to disentangle voice and bodily matter and movement. Although we don't hear the chants or read direct speech on the page, the movement of language that describes embodied movement also gives a voice, which can be tied to the "blind voice" of Cha's *Aveugle voix*. It realizes the "Astronomy" line "Pages and pages a little nearer / to movement" (73, slash indicates line break), which could be read as an *ars poetica* building on "words fail me"—performing a gesture of failure still speaks something and incites a kind of embodied movement. This movement on the page and the pages as they turn, then, is a registry or archive of bodies in motion.

In the protest scene, the sentences perform the momentum and stops of the body. There is the rapid undeterred burst of "it slices the air it enters thus I lose direction the sky is a haze running the streets emptied." Then, when the text says "I walk," it performs, through punctuation, the steps: "Anywhere." and the repetition of "Because.", always with periods at the end. This "Because" punctuates longer sentences, and we can imagine the narrator quickening her pace, moving among the debris in the streets and the remains of the protest and stopping periodically along the way. Although she is on her own, it is precisely *through* bodily movement that she is able to locate and connect to the "stains" and eventually "the voices" (again, this connection between voice and ink and movement). In sum, the "deliberate gesture" acts as a catalyst for motion and for connections between an individual's movement and a collective movement.

This is not limited to the narrative realm of the text. Returning to the quote describing the protest, we see the punctuating, one-syllable command, "Move" (81). which seems to apply, in a sense, to the reader and place the onus on them to "move" or, at the very least, be carried by the movement of the text, almost militantly. As we read, we can feel the texts' stops and starts in our bodies and breath, and we register its movements in our own; this has the potential to lead us into contact with wider political movements, even if, temporally, they have ended. We re-embody these movements in our present-moment movements, moving the political and historical stakes beyond the printed archive of the text and into the living historical archive of our bodies. In this sense, we carry the blood flow of the text and its ink in our own, in our pulse as we stop

and start with the movement of the words.[19] External gestures, then, are also felt within, giving "the crowd body to body now" (81) a new and alive significance: body to body, now.

Lumpérica: "sus movimientos cortando el vacío"

Rhythm and pace, as we've seen, bridge interior and exterior, gestures described on the page and gestures performed in the body, particularly in public spaces with potential for collective and intersubjective embodiment. *Lumpérica*, like *Dictee* and the performances of both Eltit and Cha, stages some of its most important gestural moments on the street. As critics have pointed out, the title itself hints at what's to come: linguistic experimentation and a focus on socioeconomic precarity, perhaps even a critique of it. As Ronald Christ (who took on the impressive task of translating *Lumpérica* into English) points out, "The fusion and dispersion in Eltit's language, the membering and dismembering, begins as early as her book's title, which, in the original (*Lumpérica*) fuses the German *lumpen* […] and *perica*, which denotes everything from babe and chick to an undetermined person, a sort of boulevard Jane Doe, a prostitute [sex worker] too" (213). Christ also notes "the overtones of *(Am)erica*" (214); it's clear that the tilde (accent mark), and therefore, stress, added to the "e" of "périca" (matching "América" in Spanish) is what really registers this resonance. Given this, we could read the title as "lumpen America," for example. Note the tension between the regional hyper-locality of "perica" (which has quite different meanings across regional contexts) with the wider sweep of "America." It seems to be an assertion, too, of the presence of Latin America within "the Americas" and a challenge to the Global North falsehood of "America" as only describing the United States. From this perspective, the title might also signal the imperial positioning of the U.S. in backing the Pinochet dictatorship (we should also recall the U.S.'s installation of Syngman Rhee, as we saw in Cha's work): "America," you have backed, materially and politically, torture, disappearances, and murder. Returning to Christ's conception of "membering and dismembering," we can recall the horrors of this historical moment, but also yet another intimate approximation of body and language. The tilde: a letter's limb, one whose importance in creating poetic meter is surely known to the author. The sound shifts: lumperIca to lumPERica. In a book in which we will witness the modification and mutilation of a body, we are already witnessing a modification and mutilation of words, and also, the attention that gets called to their suturing.

Many critics have emphasized the presence of body ("cuerpo") in *Lumpérica*,[20] and Eltit herself has spoken about what we might call the overlap between her body of writing, writing the body, and writing *as* body: "No he terminado de pensar la escritura, su ritmo, su pausa, su fatiga. Seguramente nunca lo haré. De la misma manera que he pensado el cuerpo como una zona ambigua, escurridiza, inasible, pienso la escritura como un cuerpo que, en la locura de su dispersión, se conforma a pedazos y por pedazos. Trazos, desbordes, bordes irregulares y hasta imperfectos" (Eltit "Literatura" 161).[21] Within the framework of Eltit's continuum between

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[19] We could tie this to the heart pumping repetition of "MAH-UHM" or "spirit-heart" (46) in "Epic Poetry," which can be read, too as an extension of "Mom."

[20] See, for example, Sara Castro-Klarén and Raquel Olea's contributions to *Una poética de literatura menor* (ed. Juan Carlos Lértora).

[21] "I have never stopped thinking about writing, its rhythms, its pause, its fatigue. I am sure I never will. Just as I have thought of the body as an ambiguous, elusive, intangible zone, I think of writing as a body that, in the madness of its dispersion, falls to pieces and is made of pieces. Of traces, inundations, irregular and imperfect edges" (Eltit tr. McGlazer 152).

writing and body, the reference to "zona ambigua" suggests that we could read the title of *Zona de dolor* retrospectively as pain in both body and language, mobilizing poststructuralist porousness. These constitutive "pedazos," or pieces, of the textual body do not assemble themselves. Eltit, in an introduction to the English translation of *Lumpérica*,[22] makes a case about this written body's relationship to her own subjectivity: "Nor do I see my work as experimental; rather it is an exploration of proposals for change or innovation within certain linguistic procedures found in traditional literary craft. […] [T]his is no experiment. An experiment may turn out or not; what I make is a work" (7). Thinking about the text in terms of (a) "work" also has implications of labor: the labor of the author; in the realm of the text, the labor of the protagonist L. Iluminada; the labor of the sex workers Eltit reads her work to in *Zona*; and finally, the labor of the reader to work with the text. It's not experimental; the author has done her work, and now it is the reader's turn to do theirs.

Lumpérica is much as about the protagonist, L. Iluminada, as it is about representation in language, literature, and film, particularly in Chile (this is sometimes made explicit) during the dictatorship (this is implicit). Eltit herself has spoken about the public plaza that was the inspiration for her to write *Lumpérica*, describing it as an empty stage: "Esa plaza vacía, iluminada, perfecta, me pareció un escenario, un sitio para la representación. Me imaginé que más tarde, llegarían los actores de la plaza para dar inicio a una obra singular" (Eltit "Literatura" 159).[23] The word "iluminada," here used to describe the plaza, is also the adjective that lends the protagonist her name. Sound and rhythm are just as important in the text as they were in the performance: here, it's the noises L. Iluminada can and can't make, translating sound into sense, but also the sound of the words on the page, which often tend towards poetry; and if that sound is choppy, that itself seems indicative of breath, pain, and pleasure. We might even see L. Iluminada's own name as a stutter of sorts, the tension between abjection and transcendence that the book so often explores. Related to this struggle with speech—we can again return to Cha's "words fail me" and *Dictee*'s opening dramatization of coming to voice in a dictation exercise—L. Iluminada rarely speaks directly, so the descriptions of the movements of her body and its parts are crucial. When L. Iluminada does speak, it's to voice a most basic bodily need: she repeats "Tengo sed" ("I'm thirsty") in one of the earliest scenes in the book (27, 28, 32). Gestures attempt to transmit what words can't, and they demonstrate how imbricated words and bodies can be. This extends to the reader too: in the absence of witnessing the initial performance, we can read its traces, the descriptions of the body on the page.

The text, too, is dismembered and re-membered, both in terms of material composition and in terms of memory; narrative and historical time oscillate between choppy and elliptical and resist linearity. *Lumpérica*, then, forces a discursive reading process in which readers must go back and forth between sections in order to interpret the text more fully. It is comprised of 10 nontraditional chapters written in a variety of different styles. The first one notably begins with a description of (initially unintroduced) filmic "takes" followed by what appear to be a director's commentaries, notes, and errors committed while filming these takes. There are also two interrogation chapters that indicate a police presence, chapters which follow a list format, and

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[22] It should be noted that note that this quote did not appear the earlier Spanish version of this essay that appears in *Una poética de literatura menor* (ed. Lértora). I suspect the explanation was, in part, a way to adapt the work to its new translation audience.

[23] "That illuminated, perfect, empty plaza seemed to me to be a stage, a site for representation. I imagined that later actors would appear in the plaza to begin performing in a singular play" (Eltit tr. McGlazer 150).

chapters that tend towards very fragmented poetry. [24] Throughout these sections, L. Iluminada enacts violence upon her body: she shears her hair, burns her hand, rams her head into a tree, and cuts the flash of her arms. The last section of the book (Chapter 10) actually seems to lay out the action of the book in "ordinary" telling, even ekphrasis: we see a woman who is likely experiencing homelessness in a public plaza at night, as she contemplates the play of lights of a neon sign. She not only reads the letters, but also models multiple readings and interpretive possibilities. She also looks at herself in a mirror, writhes under the light, and puts her body underneath the letters of the sign. This illumination, for someone in a most precarious position, seems to be multivalenced, as she models what it means not only to be looked at but to look. The illumination occurs for both her and the reader, who gains an understanding—however imperfect—of what they've just read. In retrospect, it seems each section is yet another rendering, or even a translation or re-writing, of this same episode. Even prior to this understanding, however, a through-line of the text is a sense of both pain and pleasure, and of ecstatic yet desperate possibility, in L. Iluminada's gestures; in fact, "L. Iluminada" literally means "illuminated L," so we could say that, through her movement, she comes to embody text.[25]

Zaida Capote Cruz, in the prologue to the 2008 Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas edition of *Lumpérica*, highlights embodiment as a potential mode of resistance against domination by the actions of the dictatorship:

> La expropiación a la ciudadanía de sus espacios de acción habituales es una de las más eficaces y frecuentes estrategias de la dominación. Al escamotearle sus escenarios, la ejecución de sus gestos de resistencia parece caer en el vacío, son gestos desajustados, inútiles. El acto de apropiación –del espacio público, de su cuerpo– emprendido por L. Iluminada califica, por eso mismo, en su acumulación desconcertante, en su exceso de sentido nunca explicado, en su aparente futilidad, como acto de valiente resistencia; una resistencia que es pura política corporal: el cuerpo femenino se niega no sólo a ser constreñido a un espacio mínimo, a la soledad, sino también a ser dócil, bello, productivo. (12)[26]

Building on Capote Cruz's claim, while certain figurative "gestos de resistencia" may appear to be useless or inadequate, *physical* gestures that appear to be habitual or minor are not to be taken for granted in the context of (gendered) political oppression: taking up public space for everyday movements is already an act of recovering or reclaiming what's been lost at its most elemental. If bodily autonomy is limited by a dictatorial state (think, for example, of imposing a curfew, especially on those who, like L. Iluminada, are unhoused or work precariously at night), then the

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[24] See Christ (230) for an extended take of these 10 sections and a case for their formal cohesion.

[25] Mary Louise Pratt reads the period as a blank, another mode of connecting grammar to subjectivity: "There is an obvious blank in L. Iluminada's name where the a of the article La should appear. Reminiscent of a neon sign in which one letter has gone out, the absent a perhaps designates what is to be recovered: a marker of gender and also of being—"the-ness"—itself" (Pratt 160).

[26] "The expropriation of the people's spaces of habitual action is one of the most effective and frequent strategies of dominations. In the sweeping away of this set, gestures of resistance appear to fall in the void; they're inadequate, useless. The act of appropriation—of the public space, of her body—undertaken by L. Iluminada qualifies, for this very reason, in its disconcerting accumulation, in its never-explained excess of sense, in its apparent futility, as an act of brave resistance; a resistance which is pure body politics: the female body not only refuses to be confined to a minimal space or to loneliness, but also refuses to be docile, beautiful, productive."

stakes for seemingly run-of-the-mill bodily movements, modification, and even self-inflicted violence (such as choosing to cut one's own hair or burn one's own hand) are high, not just for the literary representation of bodies but for the subjects undergoing the real conditions in which this literary representation takes form. [27]

Take, for example, the fourth chapter of the text, "Para la formulación de una imagen en la literatura," a pivotal place for considering the potential of gesture within the text as a whole. It is divided into six sections whose titles themselves begin to "formulate an image in literature": "4.1: Para la formulación de una imagen en la literatura", "4.2 Para la formulación de una imagen:", "4.3 Sus remanentes:", "4.4 De su proyecto de olvido:", "4.5", "4.6". It is "4.4 De su proyecto de olvido:" which most corresponds to the text recited and performed in *Maipú/Zona de dolor I*. The sequencing and punctuation of these titles get progressively shorter, and "4.5," with an absence of any description following the numbers, seems to perform the previous chapter title's "Proyecto de olvido" (literally "Project of forgetting;" Christ renders this as "Forgetfulness project"). I'd first like to linger on an extended description from "4.3 Sus remanentes." It is important to note the possibilities of this plural possessive "sus." Without a clear referent, it could be rendered as "its," "her," or "your" (if using the formal second person) "remnants," as evidenced by English-language criticism that discusses these sections. This progression of possibilities points to the growing implication of the reader in the text, drawing them ever closer and signaling a crossing between grammatical subject positions and their corresponding subjectivities that will later be dramatized even further.

The text in this section picks up on earlier filmic descriptions from the first chapter's "scenes" and "takes," and it offers a rich array of modes of gesture and related bodily movements with the densest inclusion of words like "gestos faciales" and "gesticulación" (facial gestures and gesticulation, 99); we'll see "gesto" and "ademán" below (both can be rendered as "gesture.") A close look at the continuation of this description reveals that it seems to be, in part, a description of Eltit's own performance in *Zona de dolor I*, beginning first with voice and then moving into the following silent gestures:

> Ella misma podría contonear su cabeza de manera nunca antes pensada, con delicadeza tal podría hacerlo que nadie descubriría su búsqueda de admiración. Lo natural de este ademán convencería a los otros de su absoluta inocencia, de la falta de interés por la complacencia de sus miradas. Este gesto nadie en este país podría igualarlo, o bien este otro; cuando levanta una de sus manos, la mueve simplemente desde una de sus rodillas en que la tiene apoyada, hasta despejar el pelo de su frente.
> Gira despacio los dedos y muestra la palma elevada en el aire que le roza apenas la nariz y los pómulos. Sólo entonces pasa su mano sobre la cabeza desordenando su pelo, elevándolo de brillo.
> Registra la mirada que recorre su mano sobre la testa, el reflejo de los ojos de los otros producto del relumbre de su pelo. Pero lo hace con la vista escurrida, evitando el cruce directo, para que así puedan seguir con tranquilidad sus facciones descubriendo toda su nitidez; esas extrañas huellas que elabora cuando tiene la mirada perdida.
> Pero tampoco lo hace.

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[27] As I'll elaborate on below, self-inflicted violence was a crucial part of CADA member's practices, particularly that of Eltit and Raúl Zurita. See Richard's chapter "Las retóricas del cuerpo" for images and a discussion of Zurita's work.

> No alcanza del todo a levantar a mano y el pelo lo ordena con un movimiento de la cabeza. No muestra la curva de su mano ni exhibe la palma. Sigue con el pelo achatado. Baja los ojos a menudo porque siente el impulso de chocar con otra mirada que podría descubrirla en su amaneramiento –en sus ensayos– porque es la única que mide en segundos cada uno de sus gestos en esta tremenda y arrastrada producción. (99-100)[28]

There is nothing, at first, that appears particularly special about this description of movements. Yet, I argue, there is a kind of narrative attention given to describing the action that seems to call focus to this textual moment. Time slows down in this passage, and the text seems to dilate, setting up a very intimate description of physical gestures and bodily movements, as well as the imaginative impulse for them in toggling between the conditional (e.g. "podría") and the indicative ("levanta," "registra," e.g.). L. Iluminada's movements themselves take on a deliberate quality and texture, with words like "de manera nunca antes pensada, con delicadeza," "Gira despacio los dedos y muestra la palma elevada," and "Sólo entonces pasa su mano." Her hand passes from knee to forehead to hair, grazing nose and cheek/bones as well. A caress, a pause, and as the text tells us, it is L. Iluminada alone that measures the duration "in seconds" ("mide en segundos") of each of her gestures. The movements seem to involve a turning inwards, a self-perception taking priority even amidst awareness of a viewer. This lends the description interiority even though it takes place in a public space. Although by the end of the passage L. Iluminada hovers in stillness, and perhaps a sense of loss or longing, her body seems charged with potential because of the meticulous nature of the gestures described.

We see this potential—temporal, spatial—in what the text itself terms "ensayos," or rehearsals: multiple attempts at bodily movement, even if they seem like fleeting false starts. Maybe it is precisely in the temporal gaps and shifts that we can register a potential political resistance in everyday embodied movement. This resistance may or may not come to pass, but the text has an advantage that real bodies in movement don't: it can record an archive of what has been attempted or rehearsed before (we can think back to the section title's "remnants") and keep that next to new possibilities. The way we are introduced to gestures in this section is a microcosm of the book as a whole: we are presented with a description of a movement, which is then re-rendered and re-labeled following the phrase "Pero tampoco lo hace." This points to a certain kind of iterability of gestures, which mirrors the iterability of the text across mediums: the

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[28] She could sway her head back and forth herself in a way never before imagined, with such subtlety she could do it that no one would discover her looking for admiration. The naturalness of this gesture would convince the others of her absolute innocence, of her indifference to the satisfaction of their gazes. This gesture nobody else in this country could match it, not this other one either: when she raises one of her hands, she simply moves it from one of her knees on which she has rested it, up to clearing the hair from her forehead.
She slowly turns her fingers round and shows raised in the air the palm that scarcely brushes her nose and cheeks. Only then does she pass her hand over her head, disordering her hair, raising it shiny.
She notes the look that scans her hand on her pate, the reflection of others' eyes the product of her hair's gleam. But she does it with eyes averted, avoiding the direct crossing, so that this way they can calmly follow her features discovering all their sharp clarity: those strange traces she elaborates when she has lost the gaze.
But she doesn't do that either.
She does not manage to raise the hand completely and the hair she arranges it with a toss of her head. She does not show the hand's curve nor exhibit the palm. She remains with hair flattened down. She lowers her eyes often because she feels the impulse to collide with another gaze that could reveal her in her affectation—in her attempts—because it is she alone who measures in seconds each one of her gestures in this tremendous and wretched production. (Eltit, tr. Christ, 85-86. Note that "attempts" could also be rendered as "rehearsal" and "essay" given the Spanish "ensayo.")

written draft Eltit reads from in the video, the performance itself, the *Zona de dolor* recording, and finally the book in our hand.

This iterability reaches its apex when we linger on some of the phrases, which describe a hand on the knee, another on the head, and eyes facing down. This, in fact, seems to correspond to Eltit's final pose in *Zona de dolor*. And notably, the video shows a closer-up version and then cuts to a wider frame of this image; Eltit is silent throughout, so our attention is drawn solely to the positioning of her body for the last 50 seconds of the film. The imbrication between text and performance also loops time. For instance, take the transition between 4.3 and 4.4 of the text, read alongside the video: 4.3 includes a description of Eltit's final pose (see image below), while it is 4.4 which corresponds to the film's audio. This seems to be both an application of filmic technology to literature, in which the audio and visual are separated and then joined back together, but also an engagement that teases apart dialogue from descriptions of bodies in motion and stillness. This multimedia iterability, which scrambles linear progression and embodied movement and text by doubling back, returning, and reworking, opens up the possibility that reader or viewer is being trained both to recognize the violence done to bodies and also to imagine ways out through that temporal and spatial ambiguity.

The passage portrays gestures as both identifying and unique, but yet not confined to a single subject position. In describing the way L. Iluminada moves her head, the text emphasizes: "Este gesto nadie en este país podría igualarlo" (99). Gestures here are portrayed as identifying, signaling ontology; that familiar feeling of "I know this is X because that's how she moves her hands." And yet, in asserting that no one is able to match this gesture, the text opens up the possibility for imitation, mimicry, perhaps even mimesis. Gestures bring up the possibility for a way out, even if it is ultimately not pursued or able to be pursued. Perhaps it is precisely that no one *in this country* could match it that offers a sense of possibility: in enacting this singular gesture and through its literary rendering, L. Iluminada seems to have the potential to exist beyond/within a different framework than a national one, which is significant for a country under dictatorship. We should note, too, that some of the material that became part of *Lumpérica* was also considered under the working title *Por la patria*; this later became the title of another work by Eltit.[29] Can L. Iluminada exist outside of the camera's gaze? The passerby's stare? The reader's look? State surveillance? If so, it seems to hinge on a kind of refusal: "*no* muestra la curva de su mano *ni* exhibe la palma" ("she *doesn't* show the curve of her hand *or* display the palm," emphasis mine).[30]

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[29] See the following for an archival rendering of what appears to be the first part Eltit drafted, published, and circulated in writing in 1979. http://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/visor/BND:83045

[30] We can relate this "nadie," "no," "ni" to CADA's "No+" action which began the year after *Lumpérica* published. Link to video from in which this still appears (14:11): https://sites.dlib.nyu.edu/hidvl/xsj3tz1r.



Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, *Zona de dolor,* 1980.

It is telling that this moment appears in the section whose title includes "remnants:" as if, in the process of literary representation, it is embodiment, the movement of the body and its gestures, is precisely what gets left out, sidelined, leftover, marginalized—yet this very suggestion opens up the possibility of recovery. We should note just how many body parts get named and come to gesture even in the span of a just a few paragraphs: "cabeza," "manos," "rodillas," "pelo," "frente," "dedos," "palma," "nariz," "pómulos," "testa," "facciones," "ojos" (99-100).[31] Striking, then, that much of the text as a whole seems in large part dedicated to these remnants, these body parts and pieces. The end of the section labels it, in retrospect, "(componente de una de sus poses)" ("(component of one of her poses"). Such parentheticality, coupled with its placement at the very end of the section, seems to echo the marginality and leftover-ness described within the section as a whole. This parallels the precarity that so much of Eltit's work, particularly *Lumpérica*, is concerned with: those who work past curfew, those who make their living in the underbelly of the city, those enclosed in its domestic spaces.[32] The descriptions of the ways each body part gestures lends body to the text itself. Because of the way the text lingers on these descriptions, the reader is forced to not only imagine or see, but to begin to feel in their body the various *possibilities* for embodied movement the text describes. This process also has the potential to create intersubjective, embodied solidarity, particularly with those marginalized figures like L. Iluminada whose experiences of both ecstatic pleasure and violence constitute the center of the text.

The arc of 4.4 ("proyecto de olvido;" "project of forgetting") models and lays out this intersubjective, embodied solidarity through the twinning of an implied "she" and "I," which we

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[31] "head," "hands," "knees," "hair," "forehead," "fingers," "palm," "nose," "cheeks," "head [another variation]," "features," "eyes."

[32] Richard extends this parentheticality into the reception of the "escena de 'avanzada' " within Chilean art or resistance as a whole: "El llamado 'contenidista' de la cultura opositora a que el arte social hiciera más explicita su adhesión temática a las luchas populares, terminó de encerrar las preocupaciones de la 'avanzada' en el minoritario paréntesis de lo experimental" (22).

could read as simply Eltit and L. Iluminada, but the implications expand beyond that. The moment is reminiscent of the blood-drawing scene in *Dictee*, in which "she" and "I" become closer and closer through gestures as body language (64-65). This section of *Lumpérica* seems to correspond to the text read aloud in Eltit's *Maipú* performance/*Zona de dolor I* recording, with some modifications. The first line begins with a minor part of the body ("Las uñas de sus pies son a mis uñas gemelas irregulares con manchas rosáceas veteadas por líneas blancas", 101),[33] not even just a toe, but a toenail; and the last line concludes with the soul ("Su alma es a la mía gemela", 105; "Her soul is to mine the twin," tr. Christ 90). In the intervening lines, we hear about other "twin" body parts: "[s]us dedos de los pies," "[l]as plantas de sus pies," "[s]us ojos," "[s]us manos," "sus dedos," "sus palmas," "[s]us brazos," "las muñecas," "[s]u cintura" (102-104).[34] Each body part is described not just in its composition and appearance—notably, with words like "líneas" (101, "lines") and "articulación" (102, "joint" but also literally "articulation")—but also in how it moves or senses; this joins body words that could be metaphors for the act of writing with physical gestures and sensations. For example: "Las plantas de sus pies son a mis plantas gemelas en su ocultamiento y en la resistencia, que aminorada por el césped, únicamente allí permite el roce diferido de la tierra" (102).[35] In this line, the link between felt sensation and potential political action becomes apparent through the double meaning of "resistencia." Even "roce" ("rubbing" or "brushing") implies a sort of friction: going against, not with, surroundings, which could include both physical and historical environment. We might recall Walter Benjamin's call to "brush history against the grain" (257).

L. Iluminada's physical movements *become* gestures precisely because the text lingers not just on how they look or how they move, but on how they feel, and on how they affect and are affected by their surroundings. Readers, too, come to be affected, a process the text models in the twinning of "she" and "I," and the crossing of "sus" and "mis," "hers" and "my"; an intersubjective relationality that extends far beyond L. Iluminada and Diamela Eltit. Notably, this gestural intersubjectivity is not just a setting of the scene for further action in this section; it *is* the action. Such occurrences complicate ongoing literary theoretical debates about distinctions between and the various political merits and pitfalls of narration versus description.[36] The reversal in which descriptions of gestural intersubjectivity takes center stage is a kind of textual illumination that recalls Cha's "Reveal yourself" which leads to "body's extension of its containment" (65). As in earlier sections of *Lumpérica*, light and darkness are foregrounded: "Desnudas, entreabren los dedos como los rayos del sol cuando la luz eléctrica no ilumina el oscurecer precoz de la plaza pública. Sus brazos […] adquieren expuestos a la luz distinta periferia que se ratifica en la delicadeza de sus movimientos cortando el vacío" (104).[37] The text quite literally brings these gestures to light, and we can compare "expuestos a la luz" with "dar luz"; to bring to light is a kind of birthing. If so, L. Iluminada births the light through her body in

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[33] "The nails of her toes are to my nails unidentical twins with pinkish stains streaked by white lines," (tr. Christ 87).

[34] "her toes," "the soles of her feet," "her eyes," "her hands," "her fingers," "her palms," "her arms," "the wrists," "her waist."

[35] "The soles of her feet are to my soles twins in their concealment and in the resistance, which lessened by the lawn, only there permits deferred rubbing against the earth" (tr. Christ 88).

[36] See Dora Zhang's *Strange Likeness: Description and the Modernist Novel* for its nuanced destabilization of the narration/description binary.

[37] "Naked [this refers to "hands" in the preceding line, although it could also refer to two women], the fingers half open like the sun's rays when electric light does not illuminate the premature darkness in the public square. Her arms […] exposed to the light acquire a distinct periphery that gets ratified in the delicateness of her movements cutting the emptiness" (tr. Christ 89 with my additions).

the absence of artificial light ("cuando la luz eléctrica *no* ilumina," "when the electric light *doesn't* illuminate") and also births herself, in a sense: her fingers themselves, though metaphor, become "rayos del sol" (rays of sun) through the very gestures of her opening her fingers. The natural and embodied light of these movements might explain the somewhat paradoxical quality of delicate movements making a cut—a potential resignification of what could otherwise be considered a one-note violent act. The performance, too, plays with darkness and light, re-working Renaissance chiaroscuro with a working-class subject who herself takes on three-dimensional agency as a bodily creator, rather than, for example, an aristocratic woman having her body rendered into a two-dimensional portrait by a male painter.

By the end of this section of *Lumpérica*, the narration seems to recognize the control inherent to any act of creation, perhaps too close to state authoritarian control as in the interrogation scenes' and the filmic scenes' implied surveillance;[38] it subsequently attempts to disentangle itself here in a figurative gesture of eschewal:

> Su alma es este mundo y nada más en la plaza encendida.
> Su alma es ser L. Iluminada y ofrecerse como otra.
> Su alma es no llamarse diamela eltit/ sábanas blancas/ cadáver.
> Su alma es a la mía gemela. (105).

At the same time that L. Iluminada is lit and illuminated in the "plaza encendida," "diamela eltit" dies a figurative death, beginning with the lowercasing of her name and ending with a dead body. (As with Cha's bowing in *Aveugle voix* we might read this lowercasing as a gesture of humbling before viewer and reader.) This time, it is prosody that does the twinning: IluminAda, diaMEla. And yet there is one more word, another whose accent falls on the penultimate syllable, that seems to kill Eltit's own name even as it twins it: caDAver.[39] The slashes themselves not only perform a fatal cut, but also do the sheets' work ("sábanas blancas") of covering the surrounding words, like a veil. Tying the sheet imagery to the first line of the section as a whole, which describes the toenails, we could interpret this to be a dead body in a morgue or mass grave: feet sticking out, the rest of the body covered by a sheet. "Project of forgetting" redistributes the bodily gestures of L. Iluminada described earlier to punctuation and language itself: it is now the slashes that gesture to cut, to make separation, to cover with a sheet. These parallel the gesture of "ofrecerse como otra" ("offering herself as another"), an intersubjectivity gendered feminine. In this sense, the object of the section title's "forgetting"—yet never fully forgotten—is a limited but not fully foreclosed form of politically repressed subjecthood. Rather than maintaining patriarchal authoritative control, the narration makes space for forms of gestural embodiment that permeate language and evade full bodily domination by putting one subject in the place of another. Not individual empathy or survival, but rather, modeling resistance via embodied and intersubjective solidarity.

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[38] Robert Neustadt also highlights the interrogation scenes' crossing with filmic representation: "In time the interrogation uncovers a planned rebellion within the film […] However, the mutiny fails when the planned subversion gets cut from the film. The director refuses the protagonist the right to represent herself: the authority figure controls the image of the public plaza" (124 in *Holy Terrors* ed. Taylor; all subsequent quotations attributed to Neustadt are from this same essay).

[39] See Néstor Perlongher's "Cadáveres" (1982) an important poetic rendering of that object which foregrounds queer desire, ecstasy, and violence during the dictatorship in Argentina.

Cuts / Cortes: Re-membering violence through gesture

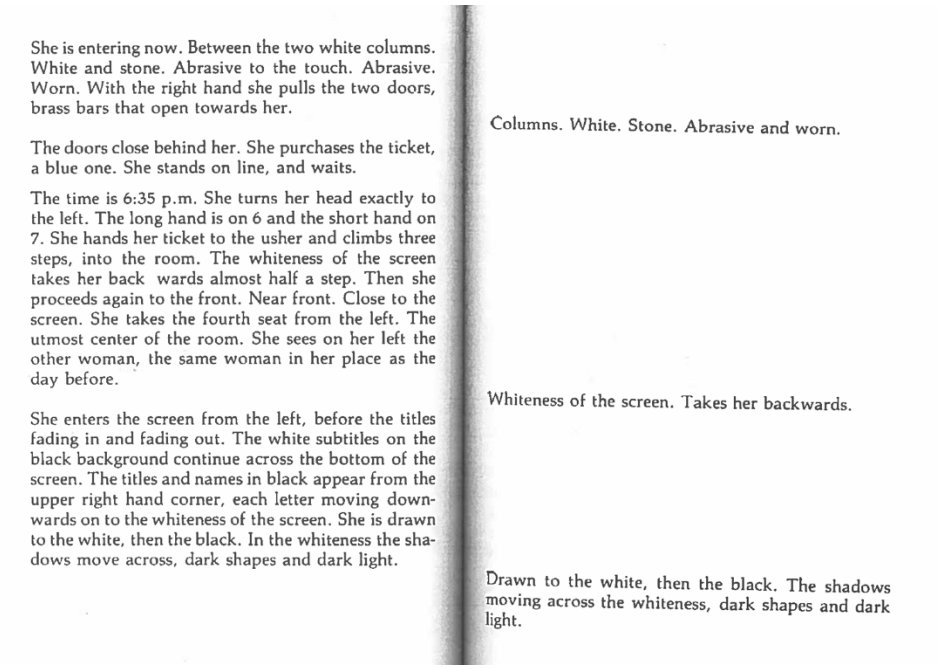
The above reading shows the stakes of women's writing and not only gesturing towards, but actually gesturing resistance. The white sheets, of course, could also represent a blank page, which we also see Eltit reading from in the *Zona de dolor* film, much like Cha's white canvas scroll in *Aveugle voix* and *Dictee*'s references to sheets, veils, and white cotton square; the description and enactment of gestures of artists' bodies in precarious performance make the page lose its two-dimensionality, offering a dynamic space for resistance that is always already off the page. This is one mode of gesturing resistance; the other, language that itself gestures, is what I will consider more closely in this closing section. The slash on the page, for example, shows itself to be gesture embodied in language, a performance that reclaims violence in order to redistribute individual embodied subjecthood into a shared embodied form of intersubjectivity.

In Cha's *Aveugle voix* and Eltit's *Maipú/Zona de dolor*, "the blind sees" and one enters a "zone of pain" not through some sort of miraculous revelation or epiphany, but through embodied work and engagement with the text. Read together, these two performances dramatize the act not just of seeing, but also of witnessing, and not only with the eyes, but rather with the whole body. Cha's blindfolding and Eltit's work with Rosenfeld on the asynchronous audio and visuals force us to consider or reconsider where we as readers and viewers place our attention, and what that attention is capable of doing, or leading to. Both *Lumpérica* and *Dictee* extend their engagement with embodiment across media with similar techniques: in line with the acts of looking in the performance pieces, both texts dramatize the use of filmic language and its impacts on the unnamed women protagonists, and they render it precisely by revising the traditional layout of words on the page, that is, pages read left to right in succession. Reading the texts together, I'll close by analyzing "cuts" that appear in the text explicitly and implicitly, both in terms of a cut on a skin or body and a filmic cut, that is, what is deemed worthy (or not) for inclusion in a film (the Spanish "corte" also supports this double meaning). Both texts, through slashes, page breaks, line breaks, and other punctuation, enact a kind of violence upon the page itself. We have already begun to see the effects of cuts in the editing of the *Zona* film, as well as how the slash, a minor form of punctuation, enacts a cut (a textual registry of Eltit's self-mutilation with a blade in performance) in *Lumpérica*. It is *through* these formal cuts that the text of the works comes to gesture, inviting the reader into a space of relationality.

Other critics have certainly analyzed the stakes of filmic cuts and filmic gaze in each of these texts individually, notably Robert Neustadt, who terms Chapter 8 of *Lumpérica* "an open series of epidermal, narrative, temporal, logical, and visual cortes" (126). However, reading Cha's and Eltit's work together "intercuts" the texts in a way that realizes gestural modes of resistance and repair across the Americas in the face of violence, be it imperial, state, local, or domestic. Both *Dictee*'s "Love Poetry" section and subsections of *Lumpérica*'s chapters 1 and 8 ("Ensayo general"; "General rehearsal/essay," again joining page and performance) share a focus on "cuts." Besides and in fact because of this, they also share a self-conscious preoccupation with women's movements and acts of looking, particularly gestures as seen through the camera lens, as well as the slippage between viewer and viewed, between reader and text, between bodies and bodies of work. *Lumpérica*'s first chapter includes a number of scenes that first describe L. Iluminada and the "lumperío" (a neologism indicating working class masses) in the light of the public plaza, followed by sections labeled "Comentarios a la primera escena," "Indicaciones para la primera escena" (24; "Comments on" and "Directions for the first scene") and "Errores de la primera toma" (26; "Errors from the first take"). *Dictee*'s "Love Poetry," too, describes "the movement of the camera" (100) and its relationship to yet another unnamed "she" with phrases

like "Extreme Close Up shot of her face" (96); the text immediately creates doubt as to whether we are reading about a woman in a movie, a movie about a woman going to see a movie, or, likely, both. "Cut," in both texts, functions less as a noun than as a verb: it is *both* a figurative and physical gesture, one that joins together actual and textual bodies. This both-ness forces readers to grapple and engage with violence beyond simply imagining a past event; in fact, they must *somatically* consider their role or complacency in relation to violence, and recruit their readerly faculties to respond to and perhaps begin to reckon with and remedy its effects. Although violence on the page will never match real violence, these are texts and authors themselves so close to violence and death. It follows that the demands they place upon the reader distance them from the languid imbibing or even capitalist consumption of a satisfying, well-wrought plot.

Most significant about "Love Poetry" at first glance is the layout of the text, which is structured around presence and absence: when there is text on one side of the fold of the book, there is blank space on the corresponding side; the ratio and positioning changes from page to page, but this is the guiding rule (example below). The words on the page mimic the editing of a film, an act of cutting and intercutting in terms of the way text appears.



She is entering now. Between the two white columns. White and stone. Abrasive to the touch. Abrasive. Worn. With the right hand she pulls the two doors, brass bars that open towards her.

The doors close behind her. She purchases the ticket, a blue one. She stands on line, and waits.

The time is 6:35 p.m. She turns her head exactly to the left. The long hand is on 6 and the short hand on 7. She hands her ticket to the usher and climbs three steps, into the room. The whiteness of the screen takes her back wards almost half a step. Then she proceeds again to the front. Near front. Close to the screen. She takes the fourth seat from the left. The utmost center of the room. She sees on her left the other woman, the same woman in her place as the day before.

She enters the screen from the left, before the titles fading in and fading out. The white subtitles on the black background continue across the bottom of the screen. The titles and names in black appear from the upper right hand corner, each letter moving downwards on to the whiteness of the screen. She is drawn to the white, then the black. In the whiteness the shadows move across, dark shapes and dark light.

Columns. White. Stone. Abrasive and worn.

Whiteness of the screen. Takes her backwards.

Drawn to the white, then the black. The shadows moving across the whiteness, dark shapes and dark light.

Dictee, "Love Poetry" (94-95)

This layout opens up multiple modes of reading. One can read from left to right, from right to left, either across facing pages or only focusing on one side of pages (that is, all the left-hand pages, for example); or, as Trinh T. Minh-ha has pointed out in her teaching of the text, the most radical mode of joining the text together: actually closing the book, itself a feminist act of gestural resistance in concert with L. Iluminada's "no muestra,"and an echo of *Dictee*'s "History" section's imperative to "Move." on and off the page. This layout guarantees that readers never lose sight—or perhaps better put, touch—of the book they are holding in their hands, a locus of intersubjective embodiment. The content of the chapter also mirrors the filmic technique of intercutting and forces the reader to consider the camera's position, in a way a stand-in for their own readerly perspective, forcing a kind of staging or blocking:

> The camera is now behind her, she is at the end of the queue. Long shot. Cut to Medium Close Up shot of her from the back. She turns her head sharply to her left. Cut. The clock in Extreme Close Up. Same shot of her head turning back. She leaves the camera, other faces enter, of the others in line, and the camera is stationary for a brief tenth of a second. Close Up shot of her feet from the back on the three steps leading into the theatre, camera following her from the back. She stops. (96)

The camera controls the scene as it is being set and cuts her body into pieces: we see a certain violence that creates a "head," "faces," "feet," "left foot." The body parts stand in metonymically for the whole of "she." We don't know yet who "she" is; all we get are her body parts, and "from the back" at that, with the camera only pausing briefly. The capitalization of the names of the shots ("Medium Close Up," "Extreme Close Up," etc.) almost seems to take precedence over this unnamed "she," who appears to be unworthy of capitalization within the space of the "theatre." The cutting described mirrors the way the text appears on the page, and it forces us, too, to read the cuts and to read between them, ultimately undertaking our own process of intercutting in order to member or perhaps re-member the body of the woman (women) and of the text, their movement and wider social and political movements. We read, through the cuts, the protagonist's *refusal of* capitalization (and here we can remember "diamela eltit") rather than being her being overlooked by it. We read that she turns her head "sharply" and "Cut" follows, bestowing her with a kind of embodied agency. Re-membering: giving body to the passage of time despite the camera's initial limitations to framing and duration.

Eltit's opening chapter, in which L. Iluminada puts her body underneath the letters of a neon sign, shares with Cha's text a scene that demonstrates continuity between patriarchal narrative technologies and embodied gender violence. To start, "El Luminoso" (literally "The Luminous One;" the light of the sign becomes an antagonistic actor in the text) is gendered masculine, and L. Iluminada is gendered feminine. There seems to be a correlation between this light that shines down onto her body and the filmic gaze of the camera. Immediately, we witness the violence in the framing and angles, of the camera and its control of time and duration, particularly in relation to the bodies it depicts. For example, the camera's gaze is not matter-of-fact, but here assaults, in a description in which the main feature of L. Iluminada and the "lumperío" is how they position and move their bodies: "La escena contempla nada más que la construcción de la *pose* en donde el lumperío y L. Iluminada, en un trabajo experimental con sus *cuerpos* frente a la cámara, llegan a construir estéticamente en el lapso de tres minutos, una mirada admirativa sobre ellos. Una mirada mediada por la cámara que los asedia," (emphases mine, 24).[40] This mediatic control over bodies corresponds, too, to the critical tone in which the "Errores" (mistakes) are delivered, as in: "Los cuerpos tensados estaban rígidos, no por necesidad interna, sino por efectos de cámara: como terror. Ella misma no dejó ver su mejor ángulo" (26).[41] Based on this "terror" and L. Iluminada's evasion of the camera, we can link the gendered male gaze of the camera to the patriarchal dictatorship of Pinochet which constantly threatened and

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[40] "The scene shows only the constructing of a *pose* with the lumpen and E. Luminata, their *bodies* facing the camera in an experimental work, managing in the space of three minutes to aesthetically compose an admiring gaze at themselves. A gaze mediated by the camera that besieges them" (tr. Christ 21).

[41] "The tense bodies were rigid, not from inner necessity, but from the effects of the camera: such as terror" (tr. Christ 23).

undertook surveillance.[42] Perhaps this is why the filmic vocabulary and technique in the first chapter of *Lumpérica* are almost immediately correlated with overt physical violence inflicted upon L. Iluminada and the others in the square. At times, it is not immediately clear who is enacting this physical violence and to what ends. Take, for example, the scene in which L. Iluminada, within the filmic takes, smashes her head against a tree in 1.2:

> Estrella su cabeza contra el árbol.
>
> Estrella su cabeza contra el árbol una y otra vez hasta que la sangre rebasa su piel, le baña la sangre su cara, se limpia con las manos, mira sus manos, las lame. Va hacia el centro de la plaza con la frente dañada —sus pensamientos— se muestra en el goce de su propia herida, la indaga con sus uñas y si el dolor existe es obvio que su estado conduce al éxtasis.
>
> Se exhibe esperando la caída del luminoso sobre la herida:
>
> Si yo misma tuve una herida, pero hoy tengo y arrastro mi propia cicatriz. Ya no me acuerdo cuánto ni cómo me dolía, pero por la cicatriz sé que me dolía. (27)[43]

Prior to this scene, L. Iluminada has repeated that she is thirsty, in one of her only direct bits of speech. Given this context and the representational violence that frames the opening of the text, we could view this moment as a gesture of reclamation of pain, given the dictatorship's use of torture. This gesture has to do with L. Iluminada's basic need, thirst: it seems that in some way, she opens her skin in order to drink her own blood. Her body then, provides for itself via a kind of sacrificial violence.

CADA's members often spoke of how they'd prefer to do violence to themselves before the dictatorship would do it to them; Richard highlights the artistic practice of the "cuerpo como zona sacrificial de práctica de dolor (Zurita-Eltit), bordeándose […] con la literatura" (78, "body as sacrificial zone of a practice of pain (Zurita-Eltit), coming up against the literary"). Thinking back to *Dictee*'s overlay of blood and ink, the blood could be L. Iluminada's way not just of taking up her own body, but of doing so to write a counternarrative to what's being recorded by the gaze of the camera and the watch of El Luminoso. In the last line of the quote ("Ya no me acuerdo cuánto ni cómo me dolía, pero por la cicatriz sé que me dolía"), the body acts a visible, tangible, textured archive of what the mind of the first-person speaker has forgotten. Notably, too, L. Iluminada's first performance begins with a forced forgetting: "L. Iluminada tampoco permanece ausente del espectáculo. Ha vaciado su mente de toda memoria" (23).[44] It is telling, then, that we don't quite know who the first-person "yo misma" in the quote above is; the open subject position invites us to imagine a wider collective and the temporal process by which open

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[42] Eltit herself notes, speaking of censorship, spies, and surveillance: "en Chile, así lo dijo Pinochet, no se movía una hoja sin que él lo supiera" (Eltit "Literatura"159) / "in Chile, as Pinochet said, not even a leaf/sheet of paper moved without his knowing it" (tr. McGlazer 150).

[43] "She smashes her head against the tree.
She smashes her head against the tree again and again until the blood overflows the skin, it bathes her fact that blood, she cleans her face with her hands, looks at her hands, licks them. She moves toward the center of the square with her forehead wounded—her thoughts—she parades her pleasure in her open wound, she probes it with her fingernails and if there is pain it is obvious that her state leads to ecstasy.
She exhibits herself waiting for the fall of the sign upon her wound.
Yes, I had a wound myself, but today I have and drag my own scar. I no longer remember how much or what way I suffered, but from the scar I know I did suffer" (tr. Christ 24).

[44] "Neither does E. Luminata stay out of the show. She has emptied her mind of all memory" (tr. Christ 20).

wounds turn into scars. The cuts on the body and in the text enact gestures that loop time: we learn simultaneously about both cuts and scars, and grammar has to warp to make space for that nonlinear passage of time: we would expect to read the subjunctive "tuviera" rather than "tuve" after the "if" clause. (This could also be read as a class-based refusal of normative grammar, recalling *Dictee*'s critique.) To build on Richard's claim that the text "resomatiza […] el lenguaje" ("re-somaticizes language," 86): as the body of grammar is re-membered, we try to remember, yet for a subject other than ourselves.

This is not the only scene in which L. Iluminada does violence to herself: in the next filmic scene (44-45), she burns her hand in a fire, again acting out of thirst, and in Chapter 8 ("Ensayo general"), she makes cuts on her skin with a knife ("marcas sobre la piel," 182). Just as the needle breaks the skin in *Dictee*'s blood-drawing scene, L. Iluminada breaks her own skin with a blade. The text itself doesn't just register the cuts, it *performs* them: language itself gestures. It not only describes each cut, but lays it out on the page making use of lines of text and punctuation that mimic cuts on the level of the sentence: "Anal'iza la trama=dura de a piel: la mano prende y la fobia *d* es/garra" (171).[45] After a series of descriptions of cuts that move from this cut-up experimental language to more narrative description of L. Iluminada's skin under the blade, the text tells us, again parenthetically: "(La eficacia de esta superficie rota es la indagación gestual reiterada.)" (182, "The efficacy of this broken surface is gestural investigation reiterated"). It is precisely through the iterability of embodied gestural investigation that the textual cut is produced. The "superficie rota" could thus describe the ongoing broken surface between page and public performance, performer and viewer, protagonist and reader, brought about by gesture.

What kinds of effects might this gestural cut have on readers? The final lines of the chapter present a final moment of staging: "Los dedos de su mano derecha sostienen la pequeña y afilada hoja. Sin mirarse la acerca hasta su cuero. Se va a iniciar el Ensayo General" (Eltit 185).[46] L. Iluminada makes herself animal, dead skin, leather, an object to be cut. Time is elliptical: the line that concludes the section "Ensayo General" asserts that it is about to start. In other words, we are asked to imagine and enact anew this scene of self-mutilation. The work of the reader is to piece together the fragments, to take on the work of intercutting or reading between the cuts; we are called upon to "translate" the cuts on the page into cuts on the body. L. Iluminada ends the chapter in a frozen gesture, poised to inflict violence, and readers must carry through the gesture of bringing down the blade. Significance and gesture seem inseparable when we consider the double meaning of "hoja" as both a sheet of paper and a knife's blade. It follows, then, that as readers our own fingers also hold an "hoja," so that physically turning the page becomes a form of making a cut. A rehearsal—for who or what? Perhaps: not just for the performer but, rather, to train readers to respond to and partake in violence, to inflict or enact it, to repair or suture it, and to remember its blood even when a scar forms. This process of intersubjective gesture, in which readers first have to actually figure out what the text might be calling upon them to do by reading between the cuts, lends new meaning to the preceding assertion "Se ha abierto un nuevo circuito en la literatura" ("A new circuit has been opened in literature," 44). This "new circuit in literature" refers both to electricity—an illumination beyond both the gaze of El Luminoso and the literal shock of torture—and to an elliptical temporality of gestures that recruit the reader into embodied resistance.

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[45] "She anal-izes the plot = thickens the skin: the hand catches = fire and the phobia *d* is/members" (tr. Christ 151).

[46] "The fingers of her right hand hold up the small sharp blade. Without looking she brings it toward her hide. The Dress Rehearsal is going to begin" (tr. Christ 165).

Just as this scene from *Lumpérica* engages readers in a process of intersubjective gestures, Cha's "Love Poetry" is a text that is "form- ing" (a word that performs itself via the cut of a hyphen from 97 to 99), and it thus encourages readers to participate in gestures of formation. Here the *spine* of the book constitutes a vertebral column, and the phrases on each side, limbs of the textual body. In other words, although the text describes representational cuts made to a woman's body via camerawork, it offers up the possibility of another form of embodiment, co-constituted via the reader's own reading. The chapter highlights a shared struggle between women, much like the "ella" and "yo" ("she" and "I") in *Lumpérica* discussed earlier. "Love Poetry" begins with acts of witnessing and watching, which turn into a becoming. The text describes a woman and a man and the imbalance of power in their relationship, always bringing in the position of the reader/viewer with the use of second-person narration:

> Upon seeing her you know how it was for her. You know how it might have been. You recline, you lapse, you fall, you see before what you have seen before. Repeated, without your even knowing it. It is you standing there. It is you waiting outside in the summer day. It is you waiting and knowing to wait. […] It is you who hears his music for her while she sleeps. It is you sitting behind him looking at the moon the clouds the lake shimmering. You are she, she speaks you, you speak her, she cannot speak. (106) [47]

"It is you" punctuates the passage (much as "because" in "Tragedy," discussed earlier), and the words not only invite identification or empathy, but also make the space for intersubjectivity. It is not just that we as readers can relate by description, but rather, we can relate to the struggle and oppression *in our bodies*, which have been subjected to various forms of violence: patriarchal, colonial, habitual. We feel the weight of the gaze, the discomfort of an unwanted touch, the grab of control. I mourn for Cha, who was killed by a stranger's act of sexual violence in New York just after the publication of *Dictee*. "You are she, she speaks you, you speak her, she cannot speak." A life cut short, words and art cut short, justice never achieved. Minh-ha says, of the above textual moment from "Love Poetry" and of many other moments: "Every gesture, every word involves our past, present, and future. The body never stops accumulating, and years and years have gone by mine without my being able to stop them, stop it" (122-123). These, per the text, seem to create the foundation or base for gestural resistance of a collectively constituted body; we *know* there before we know. To return to Cha:

> In the whiteness no distinction her body invariable no dissonance
> synonymous her body all the time de composes
> eclipses to be come yours. (118)

Language forms and performs itself here: "de composes," "be come." Taken together, these words gesture towards, or make gestures within, the process of creation and destruction. Both are in the process of becoming, printed with a space to be left open or filled in by whomever reads it. The text takes on body, and "her" body becomes "yours" in a continual temporal process, "all the time."

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[47] While some might point out that the man doesn't speak either here, I would assert that his playing of music (a piano, no less) is a power of artistic, creative, and individual expression not afforded to "her."

This temporal process necessarily involves the reader, the "you," who helps recover or reorient based on past reading; they register what's happened over time. Earlier, "Love Poetry" describes the woman performing the everyday and habitual gestures of a domestic space:

> Already there are folds remnant from the previous foldings now leaving a permanent mark. This cloth once in certain mind to prepare a quilt not left unattended to some future time. Its purpose having been expended she opens it, spreads it again as if following a habitual gesture. She looks at it once more with a vague uneasiness as though she was missing a part to this very gesture that she could not remember. (112, 114)

Seeing the "permanent mark" and "uneasiness" in relation to a sheet, we might recall the traces of a loss of virginity or of sexual violence; regardless of the folds themselves having left a mark, we are immediately reminded of the blood stains from earlier sections "Astronomy" and "Tragedy." This "could not remember" is reminiscent of *Lumpérica*'s "Proyecto de olvido" ("Project of forgetting"). What has transpired that each woman needs to forget? How do readers do the work of remembering *via* re-membering? Given the layout of the text, we could say that the spine of the book itself marks a fold; as we open and close the pages of the book, our gestures match hers as she folds the sheets. Through this act of reading, we re-member what others might not be able to, perhaps out of refusal or protection or self-preservation. We are called upon, through the act of reading, to embody resistance by filling in or complementing the "missing […] part to this very gesture that she could not remember," be it during or after the historical conditions of overlapping national and local, public and domestic violence in which a work or performance is set.

To close, I want to linger on the idea of repair. Although this might immediately recall reparative reading, I will here bring Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's intervention into a comparative conversation about violence. It bears mention that Sedgwick's theory is often detached from its context in the wake of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S.; in fact, the "first decade" (*Touching Feeling* 123) she references at the outset of the piece is precisely the one during which Cha and Eltit published their texts. Bringing together Sedgwick's work with Richard's allows us to think about the relationship between violence and repair in these feminist performances and texts across hemispheres. Richard highlights the body's ability in work by Eltit to exceed, circumvent, or disrupt the normative, violent sign systems of the Pinochet dictatorship and its control of both bodies and the narratives they produce, through censorship and self-censorship. In fact, she puts self-mutilation and gestures under the same mode of confronting oppression:

> trazas sensibles que preceden o exceden el código de la verbalidad: el signo cutáneo —las cicatrices en Eltit y la quemadura en Zurita— y la voz […]. Son trazas que desplazan la función comunicativa del signo a texturas no lingüísticas, llevando la palabra hasta su disolución fonética y gramatical. Ellos tres recurren al *gesto*, como una práctica desviante que rompe la linealidad del discurso (85, emphasis Richard's).[48]

[48] "felt traces that precede or exceed the code of verbality: the cutaneous sign—the scars in Eltit and the burn in Zurita—and the voice […]. They are traces that displace the communicative function of the sign to non-linguistic textures, bringing the word to its phonetic and grammatical dissolution. The three of them take up *gesture* as a practice of diversion which breaks the linearity of discourse."

Throughout this chapter, I've considered the ways in which gestures can continue to resonate beyond their initial context, precisely because of the potential of the ways in which they exceed verbality and break the linearity of discourse. I'd stress the temporal aspects that this break implies: gestures' intervention in the time of reading and the effects they have on the reader's own physical and embodied experience.

Reparative reading allows for alternative modes of temporality. Sedgwick writes, as she develops reparative reading as another possible reading practice whose means and ends differ from those of paranoid reading:

> To recognize in paranoia a distinctively rigid relation to temporality, at once anticipatory and retroactive, averse above all to surprise, is also to glimpse the lineaments of other possibilities. […] Because there can be terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones. Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates. Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did. (*Touching Feeling* 146)

Let's be clear: what Sedgwick refers to is not a forgetting, but a re-membering, not only "relieving" but "painful." This is not a process of undoing violence by replacing it with some happy substitute, but rather, opening up possibilities through the space of reading. This is why, neither in *Lumpérica* or in *Dictee*, is it possible to speak of a neat binary of violence versus repair, nor repair as some kind of antidote to absolve or dissolve past violence. No, its traces and remnants and remains are not only rendered on the page as descriptions of gestures and language that gestures, but also resonate in our own bodies as we read. The reader, presented with fragments in text, pieces of body, mutilated body and text, is then called upon to piece these together, never achieving a whole but, perhaps, something else worth putting forth: a memory of embodied resistance, a mode for how it might look in their body, a loose choreography to be re-set anew.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gestural Landscapes:
Gabriela Mistral and Ana Mendieta Re-distributing the Body

Going horizontal

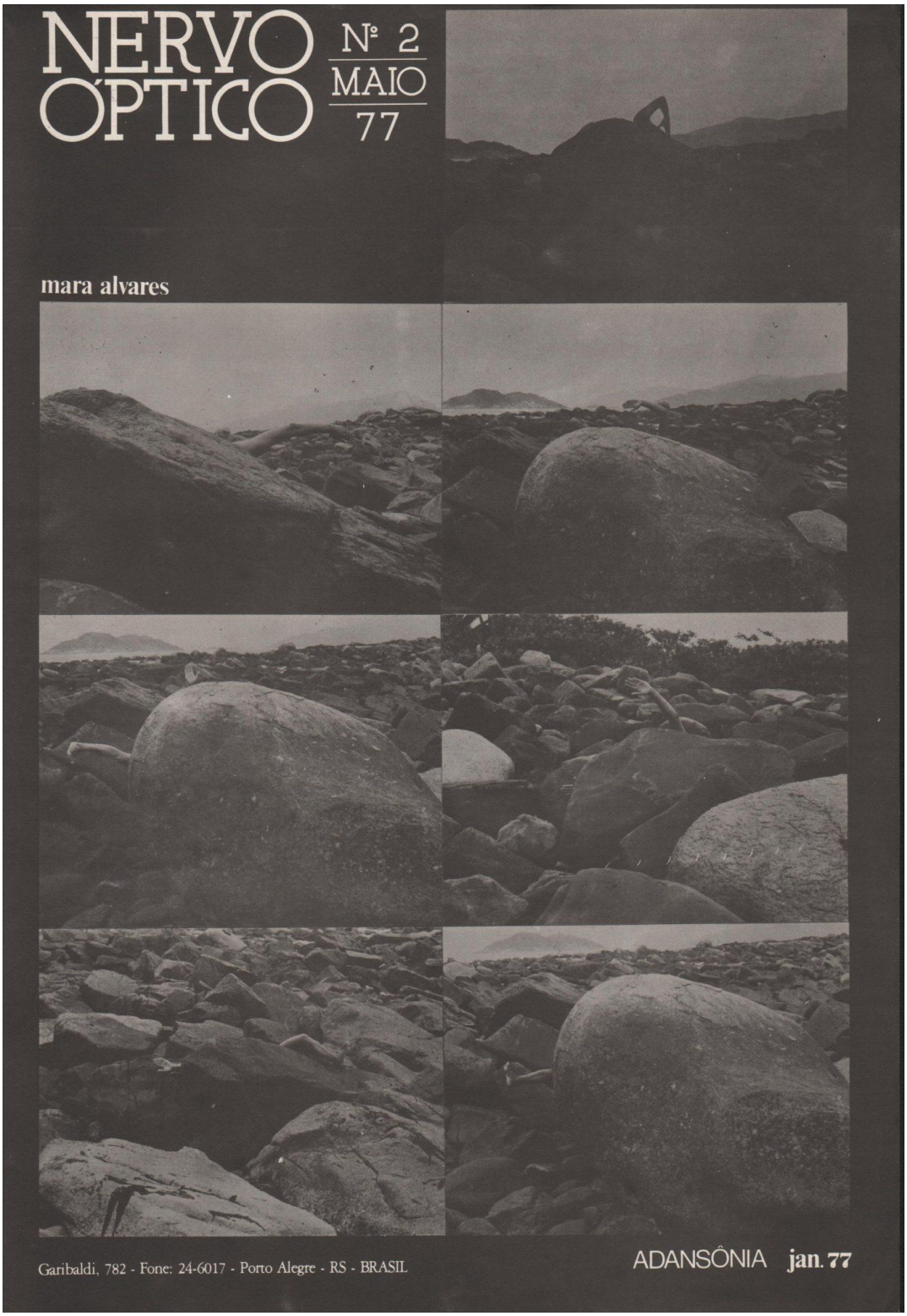
At first glance, it's a landscape: rocks along a misty coastline.[1] Photographic composition calls our attention to the contrast between foreground and background, to horizon lines, to texture, to mass, before we notice: the pointed crook of an elbow, a tented hand, the jut of an arm, flexed foot with toes angled towards the viewer, flexed foot with prominent curve of instep. Even less apparent: some centimeters of finger pads peeking out from behind a rock, a knee rising up from stone, a wrapped calf that culminates in skyward toes.

What's not present: torso, genitals, head—no hair, no facial expressions. Nor individual identifying features, like birthmarks or scars. Skin and limbs start to sketch out some aspects of positionality, but don't reveal much about the body, which anyway is held at a distance, a remove. Mostly hidden, always horizontal.

The body's (or perhaps bodies') placement in relation to the rocks and the coastline makes it so no one element of the photograph takes precedence over another. The resonance between human and ecological bodies is both strange and natural. In the process of considering the physical movements that would allow a human body to arrive in such placement and positions that mark moments along a continual movement pathway, we realize that the elements of the landscape, too, have undertaken their own movements: the inward pull and outward rush of tides, saltwater eroding stony formations, rocks tumbling as wet sand shifts. Such movement—could we call it a form of gesture?—happens on its own timeline that sometimes overlaps with that of the horizontal human body.

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[1]Thank you to Nicole Trigg for the suggestion for title of this first sub-header.



The photo series, of course, cannot be removed from its own context of consumption. Álvares was a member of the Grupo Nervo Óptico, a Porto Alegre-based avant-garde art group. Galeria Superfície says that Nervo Óptico's "inventive production — mainly using photography

as a support for experimentation — stands out for its criticism of the market logic as conduit for cultural policies" (*Galeria Superfície*). Publications to be distributed, art to be sold, land and bodies to be possessed.[2] The group's aims, and Álvares's photographs, coincide with what Rita Segato has written regarding processes of gendering and racialization via colonial epistemes, namely how violence done to women's bodies parallels violence done to land. Decolonial approaches, she contends, help us understand "an affinity between the expropriating, appropriating, and pillaging of the natural environment and the expropriating, appropriating, and pillaging of the female body" (92)—from colonial incursions in indigenous territories to their extension into present-day Brazil. Segato makes it clear this process goes beyond single subject positions; multiple forms of extractivism that impact historical frameworks, and daily living. Because reading the body is central, so too, are resistant forms of embodiment that recover agency, as in Segato's discussion of generations of Tapuio women who together have (re-)claimed their gender, sexuality, and race by bringing their own criteria to what constitutes a people and by taking action in order to ensure collective survival (95).

Questions of survival—which we could frame in terms of presence and absence—run throughout the works I will consider in this chapter: filmworks of Ana Mendieta's Land Art made between the mid-1970s and early 1980s and Gabriela Mistral's modernist poetry, mainly from the 1950s. "Nervo Óptico": the optic nerve, put simply, is what translates what we see into what we know; it makes us aware of what is present and what is not. Álvares's "Jogo de esconder" utilizes the hiding of the title to re-distribute human body parts in relation to landscape: they appear and disappear. This kind of attention to presence and absence, through sight and through forms of perception and sensing that exceed and add to it, runs throughout this chapter. Gestures in these works draw attention to the whole body's role in sensing, which eschews a top-down, vertical processing. The works I'll focus on here take up gestural processes of hiding, disappearance, dispersal, presence and absence—all in relation to landscape. I contend that rather than do this to warn us against the trap or deceit of representation in art—and the accompanying real/false binary—the works deploy such operations as a mode of recovering horizontal feminist subjectivity that eschews forms of patriarchal and colonial dominance that often attempt to consume or dominate women's bodies.

The current chapter, in a way, represents a limit case for this project. In previous chapters, I have framed relationality in terms of how gestures can traverse human subjects; here I consider their potential to extend beyond the human body to the environment. How are bodies composed in relationship to their environments, and what might re-distributing them look like? *What could happen when human bodies start to relinquish their humanness?*

What I find is that for this to happen, it's the human body itself that undergoes a re-distribution. As I will show, gestures are the sites where that re-distribution takes place. In Alvares's photographs the body is slowed to the point of stasis and fragmented, horizontalized; in Mistral's poem, the body and its senses are re-distributed into multiplicity; in Mendieta's filmworks, these processes are also taken up, scrambling interior and exterior—and sometimes the body disappears entirely. Gestures that surpass the limits of the speaker's and artist's bodies loosen the limits of individual human subjectivity, opening up a horizontality among species and natural entities that can work to undermine colonialist hierarchies that place human/Man at the

[2] Álvares's fellow Nervo Óptico member Vera Chaves Barcellos has a series named "Gestos," staged in what appears to be a gallery or studio that is less focused on the body within landscape than Álvares's series.

top.[3] Mary Louise Pratt writes of the patriarchal and colonial underpinnings of this framework in western traditions: "Nature is the woman-object on which men sow the seeds of history; on which men bestow the nomenclatures of science; which the explorer discovers and the colonizer develops or tames. In the case of the neo-Romantic poetic tradition, nature is that which the poet contemplates and appropriates as a correlate of his inner state. Men's dominance over nature in such writings is often expressed symbolically by the speaker's position on a high point of promontory" (67). Following Pratt, whose critique I will return to later in the chapter, we can extend the work into other genres and call to mind the triumphant stances of white men in paintings or sculptures standing proudly atop a vast landscape that, whether artistically or materially or both, they attempt to claim as their own.

In contrast, the works I'll focus on in this chapter often partner with the land, rather than trying to possess or dominate it, offering alternative modes of relationality that challenge ongoing extractivism and Anthropocene destruction. [4] Both the poem and the filmworks share what I read as a feminist willingness and a minoritarian embodied consciousness/commitment to take on or join with the embodied subjectivities of other women, and other organic and geological matter in a process that is both affective and material. While such approximation can never be a complete transformation, these works dramatize how far the process can go—so far that they start to undo and reconfigure the limits of the human body itself. As we will see, this happens both through a re-distribution of body parts and senses and through a loosening of bipedalness, or standing upright on two feet, that key characteristic that separates capital-M "Man" from lowercase-a "animal," along with the ableist, gendered, and white supremacist assumptions that accompany it. Re-distributing the body, then, opens up the potential to trouble normative binaries, including human/non-human, animate/inanimate, man/woman, abled/disabled.

Of course, certain subjects don't always get to choose when they relinquish their humanness; rather, dehumanization is imposed upon them. Alexander Weheliye, through a lineage that includes Sylvia Wynter and Hortense Spillers, argues that current scholarly turns celebrating supposedly "pre-categorical" or "non-hierarchical" matter in relation to biopolitics and bare life ignore the fact that "the human" and "humanity" are "racializing assemblages": "there exists no portion of the modern human that is not subject to racialization, which determines the hierarchical ordering of the Homo sapiens species into humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" (8). What follows is that these conceptions of "humanity" construct a racialized category of "Man" that leaves out oppressed groups, particularly people of color. In a similar vein, Leticia Sabsay, in conversation with Mel Chen, discusses the work of trans Guaxu artist Duen Sacchi, drawing the claim from his work that "soma already exceeds the human," in other words that "framing the body as subject is already colonial" ("Bodies as Territories"). It is for this reason that I do not take the posthuman route here: it's necessary to continue to acknowledge the violence that's been inflicted upon human bodies of particular positionalities and identities. Mistral's poetry and Mendieta's filmworks seem to be acutely aware of such forms of oppression and the ways it lingers in the body and the land. In my reading, gestures are the locus where this awareness can be felt, and developed. "Gestural landscapes," then, are what I

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[3] See Sylvia Wynter, "On Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," which I also discuss in Chapter 1 with the scene of Campany's Xima reflecting that the indigenous people she encountered "didn't seem human."

[4] Thank you to Bear Graham for helping me learn what embodied partnering—with internal sensations, with external beings and forces—could feel like in an improvisational dance and somatics context.

call the ensemble of human and earth bodies that *offer alternatives* to such dehumanization by reconfiguring strict, normative forms of embodied human subjecthood.

In what follows, I'll consider Gabriela Mistral's 1954 poem "El reparto," with a brief look at "Hallazgo" and "Silueta de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz," and then move to two of Ana Mendieta's short filmworks from the *Silueta* series, *Corazón de Roca con Sangre* and *Silueta Sangrienta*, both from 1975. Although composed decades apart, Mistral's and Mendieta's works share similar approaches to re-distributing the body through gestures, which implies a troubling of two-dimensional artistic and representational forms. I'll consider how Mistral's "vertical descent" parallels Mendieta's *silueta* horizontality as embodied feminist survival strategies. In these works, I will work with the idea of trace and implication to show how gestures continue to exist even when the body is absented. An undoing of individual human subjectivity opens up potential solidarity between artists whose gestures reach beyond their own positionalities; Mendieta's work cites Afro-Cuban rituals, while Mistral engages with indigenous Andean ways of knowing and telling. Re-distributing the body, then, opens up the relational potential for others to take up gestures; this mode of making and being present becomes a way to attend to histories of femicide and colonial violence that affect bodies of women and bodies of land.

In this final chapter, I attempt to loosen the reins of critical methodology oriented around strict subject-object relations by letting description wash into performance, by allowing rigid forms of critique to erode, by encouraging artworks to seep into textual representation of them. I'll include space for readers to feel out their own relationality. I'll spend time and space describing gestures here because duration and process matter. And they create matter: gestures are the locus where the human body and earth body enter into contact, generating ripples, indentations, reliefs, ridges, disturbed surfaces.

"vertical descendimiento!"

Gabriela Mistral: Chilean modernist poet whose work spans the 1910s to the 1950s. Latin America's first Nobel Prize winner, diplomat, educator—including of that later Nobel winner, Pablo Neruda—, and closeted by the state and conservative critics. Particularly during the Pinochet dictatorship (which began in 1973 and lasted through the 1980s), when patriarchal heteronormativity and neoliberal extractivism went hand in hand, Mistral's image was coopted and sterilized posthumously; they turned her into the perpetually single "La madre de Chile" ("The Mother of Chile"). Feminist critics pushed back starting in the 1980s, reclaiming Mistral's feminist and queer work in solidarity with poor and indigenous Andean communities, a critical struggle that continues in the present moment. A landmark moment in this reclaiming was the 1987 conference "Escribir en los bordes: Congreso Internacional de Literatura Femenina Latinoamericana" held in Chile under the dictatorship and organized by Carmen Berenguer, Eugenia Brito, Diamela Eltit (whose work is the focus of Chapter 3), Raquel Olea, Eliana Ortega, and Nelly Richard; the conference proceedings were published in a volume of the same name a few years later (1990) during the transition to democracy. Richard, in her introduction to the book, notes, "el Congreso realizó el gesto prohibido de mover ubicaciones, de desujetar, de hacer circular cuerpos y textos más allá de los opresivos límites fijados por el molde disciplinario de los años de la dictadura" (Berenguer 9). [5] In addition to this mobilization of the word "gesto" that

[5] "The Congress carried out the prohibited gesture of moving locations, of unfastening, of making bodies and texts circulate beyond the oppressive limits set by the disciplinary cast of the years of dictatorship." All translations my own unless otherwise noted.

crosses intention with embodied acts, she also highlights the key role the conference played in the exchange and circulation of feminist criticism in Chile and Latin America.

It is telling that Berenguer's opening remarks for the conference itself, then, take as a starting point words by Mistral: "Pertenezco al grupo de malaventurados que nacieron sin edad media: soy de los que llevan entrañas, rostro y expresión conturbados e irregulares a causa del injerto: me cuento entre los hijos de esa cosa torcida que se llama una experiencia racial, mejor dicho, una violencia racial" (Berenguer 11).[6] To speak of "racial violence" ties Mistral's own racial identity to a precolonial heritage. To open with words denouncing coloniality and racial violence ties a colonial past to a dictatorial present. To speak of "injerto" ("graft") draws attention to Mistral's own emphasis on the relationality between land and bodies. Eltit, whose remarks followed Berenguer's, draws attention to violence done to such bodies, particularly those of indigenous women: "Nuestra historia, trazada sobre una derrota territorial al mundo indígena, ha empujado a esos ancestros fuera del relato, instalando, en cambio, la voz duplicada de la conquista, en el férreo tramado de la historia. Esta antigua voz dominante, incubada artesanalmente en el cuerpo de la mujer indígena, ya violada, ya obsecuente, ya aterrada. Portadora mayoritariamente de la modificación étnica y cultural en nuestro continente, sometió a las otras voces, voces indígenas, al estatuto de la indigencia materna, y, al mestizaje" (Berenguer 15).[7] In this last line, Eltit draws out another type of maternal lineage and ties it to a poetic and popular voice.

To bring Mistral into this feminist context that stands firm against myriad and interlocking forms of colonial and dictatorial violence dislocates her from normative bodies and institutions, be they national or patriarchal or even literary, and it opens up other modes of reading her personal and poetic trajectory. Mistral is often pictured in professional bouffant and a sensible grey tweed suit—I prefer the following photo.[8]



Mistral with Doris Dana

[6] "I belong to that group of unfortunate people born without middle age: I am one of those whose disturbed and irregular insides, face, and expression is due to grafting: I am among the children of this twisted thing that's called a racial experience; better put, a racial violence."

[7] "Our history, traced on top of a territorial defeat of the indigenous world, has pushed those ancestors outside of the story, installing instead the doubled voice of the conquest in the plotted iron of history. This old dominant voice, traditionally incubated in the body of the indigenous woman, now raped, now servile, now terrified. Mainly the carrier of the ethnic and cultural modification on our continent, it subjected the other voices, indigenous voices, to the status of maternal indigeneity, and to mestizaje.

[8] Image source link: https://glreview.org/article/chile-wakes-up-to-the-real-gabriela-mistral/. I learned that this image is also the cover for *Niña errante: Cartas a Doris Dana*, edited by Pedro Pablo Zegers B.

There's something about her hair slicked back, the way her whole torso inclines, slightly but fully, towards Doris Dana, her partner and translator. I think Mistral well understood just how much could be conveyed through the body. Descriptions of small bodily movements and attention to the gestural run throughout Mistral's work, although there is sometimes a gap between what she explicitly titles "gesture"—perhaps also traversing the figurative—and where physical bodily movements actually appear. "Los sonetos de la muerte," Mistral's earliest work, dramatizes "malas manos" (*Universidad de Chile*) reaching into the ground to disrupt an honorable burial. There is a group of poems titled "Gestos" in her 1938 collection, *Tala* (Ursula LeGuin translates this as "Clearcut") in which gestures are not immediately concrete or apparent in each poem.[9] The "Locas mujeres" series in *Lagar* and *Lagar II* specifically emphasizes the relationality of women's bodies in motion, as in the heavy breathing of "La bailarina": "jadeadora de *nuestro* jadeo" (emphasis mine; "gasping out our gasping breaths," tr. Le Guin 237) and later: "Somos nosotros su jadeado pecho" ("We are the gasping of her breast"). In moments like these, the viewer of the dance—and the readers of the onomatopoetic line—are not separate from what they witness, but instead undergo an embodied exchange. Mistral often invokes both the word "gestos" and small movements of the body in other poems that at first glance appear to be focused more directly on landscape, specifically, women moving their bodies through (at times markedly Chilean or Andean) landscapes, as I'll discuss.

Many of Mistral's poems center organic matter, too: fruits, leaves, dust, soil. Francine Masiello differentiates a "herencia mistraliana" in Latin American poetic traditions from the "trasfondo heroico y nacionalista que tanto ocupaba a los escritores del siglo XIX" ("La naturaleza" 59, 58).[10] The difference amounts to a question of scale and the readerly and sensorial demands that result from such a shift: "su legado se registra en la observación poética del detalle pequeño, lo minúsculo de la naturaleza americana que sacude la palabra del poeta. Las hojas, los helechos, las flores silvestres, los árboles y las frutas que componen esta clase de poesía, ofrecen desde luego, una estrategia metonímica para la representación de América" ("La naturaleza" 59).[11] Bodies and their composition and decomposition, along with voice as an embodied act, are taken up in the same plane as these natural materials—bodies are organic too, we are reminded. "El reparto" ("Distribution") from the 1954 collection *Lagar* (*Winepress*), links up with the transformation of organic materials—grapes to wine—suggested by the title of the collection as a whole.[12] Yet what's being transformed in the poem are bodies themselves, starting with that of the speaker. The "Distribution" of the poem's title refers to the speaker's own process of distributing her own body parts as she moves through a natural landscape and encounters other women. In my reading of this poem, the speaker breaks herself down to become what Masiello describes as the "detalle paisajístico" ("landscape/scenic detail," "La naturaleza" 60), opening up the possibility for the body's re-distribution into a wider landscape of movement in voice and in body. It is in fact *through* gestures that the speaker ceases to simply move through the

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[9] Through *Tala*'s "Beber," Sepúlveda Eriz reads Mistral's entire poetic project as "un gesto de darle agua a los que la necesitan con premura, aliviando así a un 'nosotros' que ha experimentado la dominación cultural blanca" (22).

[10] "Mistralian inheritance," "heroic and nationalist background that writers of the nineteenth century concerned themselves with."

[11] "her legacy can be felt in the poetic observation of the small detail, the miniscule of American nature that shakes the word from the poet. The leaves, the ferns, the wildflowers, the trees, and the fruits that comprise this kind of poetry offer, of course, a metonymic strategy for the representation of America."

[12] *Lagar* was Mistral's only book of poetry whose first edition was published in Chile, a phenomenon Sepúlveda Eriz attributes to her winning the Nobel Prize in 1945 (123).

natural landscape and encounter other women, but rather gains the potential to physically transform herself, becoming simultaneously lighter on the one hand, and multiple and collective on the other.

The lines are composed of 8 syllables each, just at the limit of "verso de arte menor." This deliberate return to popular verse, for a poet whose first poems were a trio of sonnets, is notable for its alignment with popular song, that poetic medium of the poor.[13] Such a form feels fitting for a poem about being among a group of women that amasses, uncountable but many. Masiello locates the technique of the small detail within a specific cultural and ethical milieu: "su poesía sobre la cultura de la cordillera andina […] destaca el detalle mínimo" ("La naturaleza" 62).[14] Magda Sepúlveda Eriz reads Mistral through trans-Andean cultural studies, claiming her poetry represents "un nosotros andino" ("an Andean we," 17)—specifically, one that is collective and present: "configura una retórica de signo andino, para hablar de sí misma y de las subjetividades latinoamericanas oprimidas […] Mistral no se erige como apoderado plenipotenciario de subjetividades andinas, ella es millones, ella elige estar con los pobres de la tierra. La escritora crea una discursividad donde ella se incluye en el nosotros de las subjetividades apocadas por la hegemonía" (18).[15] In *Lagar* specifically, "el tema de las mujeres se une el de lo andino […] Mistral simboliza la región de los Andes como un lugar de abundancia que hay que salvar de su destrucción" (129).[16] In other words, Mistral's feminism in the collection is tied to her consciousness of not just the Andean land, but its past and present, its culture, its inhabitants, and its violence. I cite the poem in full here. [17]

"El reparto"

Si me ponen al costado
la ciega de nacimiento,
le diré, bajo, bajito,
con la voz llena de polvo:
-Hermana, toma mis ojos.

¿Ojos? ¿para qué preciso
arriba y llena de lumbres?
En mi Patria he de llevar
todo el cuerpo hecho pupila,

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[13] I am grateful to Francine Masiello for her support with this question, and for her rich invitation into Mistral's work.

[14] "her poetry about the Andean mountain range […] highlights the minor detail."

[15] "configures a rhetoric based in Andean sign, to speak of herself and of oppressed Latin American subjectivities […] Mistral doesn't hold herself up as a plenipotentiary representative of Andean subjectivities; she is millions, she chooses to be with the poor of the land. The writer creates a discursivity where she includes herself in the we of the subjectivities humiliated by hegemony."

[16] "the theme of women joins with that of the Andean […] Mistral symbolizes the region of the Andes as a place of abundance that must be saved from destruction."

[17] Digital versions of many of Mistral's collections are available on the Universidad de Chile website: https://www.gabrielamistral.uchile.cl/poesia/index.html. See Mistral tr. Dana and tr. Le Guin for full English translations of the poem.

espejo devolvedor
ancha pupila sin párpados.

Iré yo a campo traviesa
con los ojos en las manos
y las dos manos dichosas
deletreando lo no visto
nombrando lo adivinado.

Tome otra mis rodillas
si las suyas se quedaron
trabadas y empedernidas
por las nieves o la escarcha.

Otra tómeme los brazos
si es que se los rebanaron.
Y otras tomen mis sentidos.
Con su sed y con su hambre.

Acabe así, consumada
repartida como hogaza
lanzada a sur o a norte
no seré nunca más una.

Será mi aligeramiento
como un apear de ramas
que me abajan y descargan
de mí misma, como de árbol.

¡Ah, respiro, ay dulce pago,
vertical descendimiento!

Through gestures, the speaker undoes herself. The first line imagines a relationality in space: "si me ponen al costado," an embodied approximation that brings us into the horizontal plane of "next to." The speaker lets herself feel the effects of this adjacency, so much so that through composition of the offering that begins the poem, she begins to de-compose herself. As the poem continues, she gives out different body parts—eyes, knees, arms—and even her senses, to women whose body parts no longer function because of forms of hardship, like disability, work, and hunger. It is her body and bodily movements that feed the other women, marked as such by "hermana" ("sister") and "otra" ("other, another"), repeatedly gendered feminine. As we've seen in earlier chapters, such proliferation of body parts is quite common: in works like Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica* (Chapter 3) and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (Chapter 1), such dense grouping of body parts opens up a range of possibilities for gestural interventions, whether to slip dictatorial censorship or to critique normative gender performance.

By presenting women moving through the landscape of "Patria" with a capital "p" (which we could even read as "Fatherland") the poem presents a survival strategy for the modern American nation state, so often founded upon and maintained by violence, where eyes are blind,

arms split, knees stiffen. [18] Although some of the distribution that occurs in the poem could be read as a form of Christian charity, "todo el cuerpo hecho pupila" ("whole body turned pupil") conjures an embodied vigilance, the need to distribute the senses to other body parts. [19] Senses become gestures, and gestures become part of sensing. Imagine, feel: the backs of your knees can see, the hairs on your arm can see, your tastebuds can see. Your movement would be reoriented, you'd lose your bipedalness, you might crawl or spiral three-dimensionally.

But how does she get to this place of complete dispersal? How do you give away your eyes? How do you give away your knees? How do you give away your arms? How do you give away your senses? In the collection as a whole, this is the first poem that appears after the prologue, in a section called "Desvarío" or "delirium:" a departure from logic, which allows for embodied possibilities that defy strictly rational thinking. Raquel Olea reads a "loca razón" ("crazy reason/logic") that runs throughout Mistral's work, starting from the "Locas mujeres," but extending beyond it: "La poeta (loca y mujer) fractura la noción dominante que ha hecho permanecer lo femenino en el silencio y el secreto. Su habla desplaza el efecto de la represión de lo femenino hacia la locura como palabra de diferencia y lucidez, como punto de fuga hacia una multiplicidad y productividad simbólica" (Olea 145).[20] I read such multiplicity throughout "El reparto": multiplicity in the collective, multiplicity of subjectivities, multiplicity of materials, including that material of grammar that ties together word and temporality. The poem begins with the conditional, an "if," and it then alternates through the future and subjunctive forms in phrases like "let another take" and "let me finish." It in fact stages an act of speaking from the very first stanza; the soft voice manages to break, per Olea, silence and secret. The paradox: it is only through poetry—that verbal medium—that a distribution that undoes the speaking subject is possible. Of course, the poem could be read as a metaphor for writing (especially modernist) poetry: the poet must give of themselves, their voice, their embodied sensibilities, in order for readers to consume it. Yet the images of the poem take on more a tone of intersubjective offering than one of capitalist consumption.

It is by opening to new sensorial possibilities that the speaker undoes normative bodily movements. I would like to return to this key stanza: "Y las dos manos dichosas / deletreando lo no visto / nombrando lo adivinado." Here we have some kind of gesture, but not an established one; that is, not a gesture with a one-to-one correspondence. This is a process that calls upon our embodied and somatic imaginations. "[H]ands spelling out what is unseen." I want to invite you, now, to think, to try: what might that look like in your body, in your limbs? Right after this line, the length of the stanzas shifts from 5 or 6 lines, to 4 lines and fewer for the remaining stanzas. It is as if the poem itself makes space for new bodied forms beyond figuration. I think there is something about the *impossibility of putting gestures fully into words* that allows for this kind of dispersal. By calling on our embodied imagination, then, gestural descriptions never remain in the realm of representation alone. They take that which is represented and re-enliven it in our own bodies. Gestures represented on the page then, particularly in poetry, never simply remain there.

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[18] To return to Eltit, it is here worth remembering that *Por la patria*, later used for another work, was a potential title for material that became part of *Lumpérica* (see Chapter 3); just two decades later, Mistral's "Patria" would be a fascist, masculinist, extractivist one under Pinochet.

[19] Sepúlveda Eriz also reads a "sincretismo entre el mundo andino y el mundo católico en el estilo de *Lagar*" (131).

[20] "The poet (crazy and woman) fractures the dominant notion that has kept the feminine in silence and in secret. Her speech displaces the effect of the feminine onto craziness like a word of difference and clarity, as a point of escape/line of flight towards a multiplicity and a symbolic productivity."

In Chapter 1, I considered the role of hands in the work of Woolf and Capmany and how intertexts become queerly embodied. In a key intertextual moment in "El reparto," the poetic work of Sor Juana "feeds" the speaker of Mistral's poem much as Mistral's speaker sustains the other women. Such a process is not cannibalizing, but nourishing: poetic material *is* a form of sustenance. In keeping with the bodily processes that structure the poem, Mistral makes her own hand-centered intertextual relationality to the work of another queer woman poet. The image of "los ojos en las manos" ("eyes in hands") reaches out to the final stanza of the Sor Juana sonnet "Verde embeleso."[21]

> que yo, más cuerda en la fortuna mía,
> tengo en entrambas manos ambos ojos
> y solamente lo que toco veo. (280-281)[22]

Sor Juana's stanza stands as a warning to those who project out their own image of the world, which she renders through the image of seeing through green glasses: "los que, con verdes vidrios por anteojos, / todo lo ven pintado a su deseo."[23] The greenness, rather than aligned with a natural lushness, is in fact an enchantment of the poem's title, a technology that overlays the sense of sight, which in turn cannot be trusted because it is skewed toward desire. In this poem, however, there is no unmediated seeing just through the eyes: Sor Juana joins sight to another sense, touch: "solamente lo que toco veo," literally, "I only see what I touch." Put differently, the common phrase "I'll believe it when I see it" would become something like "I'll see it, and therefore believe it, when I touch it." Mistral, in "El reparto," duplicates the already doubled image of both eyes in both hands, yet she gives the hands their own agency. The distribution is already taking place: whereas Sor Juana's final lines are driven by the speaker's first-person action in each of the lines ("yo"; "tengo"; "toco […] veo"), Mistral's begins with a first-person action ("Iré yo") that gets loosed by the remaining lines in the stanza. Instead, it seems that the hands themselves perform the action of: "deletreando lo no visto / nombrando lo adivinado." Gestures are central to both stanzas, but in Mistral's, the extremities take on their own agency.

It is this gestural agency, localized in the hands, that contributes to what I'm reading here as a re-distribution. It's not just that the body parts themselves get re-distributed; it's that they become detached from a centralized brain and egoic self that directs their action. This is not a top-down, but rather, a horizontal mode of moving through space, and therefore of being in the world with others. Such a process opens up modes beyond the concrete and tangible present tense of Sor Juana's final lines. No longer fully ruled by an "I," the hands in Mistral's stanza move into other temporalities: "deletreando lo no visto / nombrando lo adivinado" could also imply a sense of "not yet" or "foreseen" or even that which is *imperceptible by sight alone*. Sor Juana, in her depiction of those willfully naive green spectacle wearers, uses "*pintado* a su deseo" (literally, "*painted* to their desire," emphasis mine) which we could read literally as flattening the world into a two-dimensional—and therefore potentially deceitful—representation. Emilie Bergmann draws out a tension around technologies of perception that runs through Sor Juana's work: "As Sor

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[21] I am very grateful to Emilie Bergmann for drawing my attention to this key intertext.

[22] "For my part, I'll give fate the greater latitude, / keep eyes in both my hands /and look no farther than I can touch." (Translated by Dave Bonta.)
Eyes in hands also recalls the *hamsa*, an ancient symbol of protection or evil eye. See also Frederick Luciani for readings that relate this image to Baroque emblems.

[23] "those who wear green glasses / and see everything just as their desire paints it" (tr. Bonta).

Juana noted in the *Respuesta*, 'la vista fingía' […] The artistic use of perspective [in Renaissance painting] exposed the unreliability of vision, the sense farthest removed from the materiality of the body and the natural world, and thus regarded as the most intellectual and spiritual" ("Sor Juana" 116).[24] In conversation with Frederick Luciani, Bergmann notes that "the images of eyeglasses and the eye in the hand in 'Verde embeleso de la vida humana' invert the hierarchy of the senses ("Sor Juana" 116-117). In addition to such an inversion of hierarchy, Sor Juana's sonnet recuperates a three dimensionality through bringing in a mobile sense of touch, and Mistral's verse builds upon this mode of engagement.

A sensorial shake-up moves through the body of the poem: right after the poem makes a reference to pruning and lightening, the form itself continues to shift. The last stanza is two lines rather than four, a literal lightening, and the last two lines are syntactically lighter too. From the soft, soft voice at the beginning of the poem—that reported direct speech of, "sister, take my eyes," we move to the speaker's own speech that is the most sound-based and abstracted that we've seen in the poem thus far: the "Ah" and the "ay," with exclamation points. "Respiro": pure breath. The "ah" and "ay" seem to take us up and then down, which parallels the "descent." Just as the speaker's human form is undone by this distribution, so too, in part, is language that is joined to signification. The sounds get dispersed into air, closer to the nonverbal than to words with set meaning. Taking up Olea once more: "La lengua poética despliega en su particular modo de decir la construcción de silencio como elocuencia, que dice alteridad y que altera el decir del régimen" (145).[25] Re-distribution of body, re-distribution of voice, re-distribution of sense-making.

The poem closes with a "vertical descent": a suspension that ultimately goes down rather than maintaining a positionality of above or on top of. The speaker's limbs align with pruned tree branches that come to lie horizontal on the ground. We might imagine it as a compost that feeds the landscape and the women that inhabit it: poetic material shorn in order for collective poetic material to grow. The downward movement that closes this poem mirrors that which opens another: "Hallazgo" ("Discovery") the first in *Poema de Chile*, Mistral's unfinished collection of 77 poems that track the journey of a woman poet, an indigenous child, and a *huemul* (Andean deer) through a Chilean landscape. Ursula K. Le Guin calls it a "dream-journey," highlighting Mistral's distance from Chile at different times in her life (Mistral, Le Guin 327). Some poems are about specific places, such as "Valle de Elqui," Mistral's birthplace, while others take on local flora, fauna, phenomenon, and peoples ("Garzas," "Musgo," "Palmas de Ocoa," "Emigración de pájaros," "Araucanos" [Mapuche]). The poem seems to linger in a kind of temporal ambiguity or liminality, dense with personal and collective memory. The first line of "Hallazgo" begins with a return marked by descent: "Bajé por espacio y aires / y más aires, descendiendo" ("I came down through space and airs / and further airs, descending," Mistral, Le Guin 330). The "Patria" of "El reparto" becomes "Patria y Madre" in what feels like a reparative approach towards a violent colonial and national past, tied to a feminist approach to relationship to land.

Let's return to Pratt's essay, which I cited in the introduction to this chapter and which focuses on *Poema de Chile*. About the poem as a whole, Pratt notes that Mistral "opts entirely out of a long-standing heroic tradition of patriotic poetry that celebrates official history" (Pratt 66).

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[24] See also Bergmann's "Embodying the Visual, Visualizing Sound in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Primero sueño*": "*Primero sueño* exemplifies both the ocularcentrism of early modern epistemology and the doubts and anxieties that arose from this study of optics" (142).

[25] "Poetic language, in its particular mode of saying, unfolds the construction of silence as eloquence, which tells alterity and alters the speech of the regime."

She reads "Hallazgo" in particular as an alternative to the neo-Romantic male promontory poem: "Mistral abandons […] this immobile observer. In a highly original gesture, she substitutes a mobile poetic voice and a narrative configuration […] Mistral's discourse abandons the dominance over nature that is traditionally expressed in the elevated stance of the promontory poem" (67). In my reading, to step down from verticality, to descend, to move among instead of looking down from above, in both this work and "El reparto," is a feminist embodied process that re-distributes the body and its faculties and offers alternatives to patriarchal and colonial dominance. We might, instead, turn to a trans-Andean lens, one rooted in the collective history of its landscape: "El transandino rompe la continuidad de la narrativa moderna, el *continuum* de la historia, haciendo ver la ficción ideológica de las fronteras, del Estado y del imaginario nacional" (Sepúlveda Eriz 16).[26]

In the spirit of moving towards embodied relationality beyond the national, I would like to take up Mistral's "Silueta de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz," written in 1923 and published in *El Mercurio*. The short but striking piece—whose title resonates with the Mendieta works I'll discuss shortly—chronicles Sor Juana's life through description and vignettes that tie a visual representation of Sor Juana to her personal, artistic, philosophical, and spiritual history and contributions. Mistral opens with landscape, bringing nature into the outline of an individual's life: "*Nace entre los volcanes*" (italics in original). This image, necessarily low to the ground, also conjures up an eroticism, too, reminiscent of the curves of a woman's body, and thus connects Sor Juana to a landscape of women past and present. She ties Sor Juana to Nahuatl heritage, citing Nepantla and the feminine volcano Ixtacíhuatl, per Aztec mythology. Throughout the "Silueta," Mistral defies the two-dimensional outline or profile portraiture we might expect from a silhouette, opening up the potential for relationality though three-dimensional embodied imagination. Mistral's own desire—call it longing, call it recognition, call it admiration—seems to spring Sor Juana off the page: "Debió ser un gozo verla caminar" ("It must have been a pleasure to see her walk," *Universidad de Chile*). Mistral's silhouette becomes not just a tracing of a shadow or outline, but rather an intertextual conjuring, imagining a body through its traces. Working with absence not by filling in completely, but in pieces and parts that come to move.

Silueta **subjectivities**

From Mistral's "vertical descent," let's consider another artist whose work moves between the vertical and horizontal planes with a rather different timbre, around three decades later. While Mistral's poem is in part characterized by the speaker's embodied lightening, the works I'll consider by the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta often imply a heaviness, a weight, a burden taken on that cannot go away. As in Mistral's poem, the short filmworks I'll discuss undo the limits of normative and individual human embodied subjectivity through gestural processes. But if Mistral's undoing of the body leads to relationality with other women in a sense of sustenance, Mendieta's often invokes such relationality through a sense of ritual and refusal of patriarchal violence. Both, though, ultimately conjure landscapes that join gestural movement to natural elements. The fleetingness of these gestural landscapes—from Mistral's speaker's breadcrumbs scattered by the wind to other geographies to Mendieta's earthly excavations that may get filled in or washed away—could be read as a makeshift escape, but an attempt at one nonetheless. They are not permanent, but they are also harder to pin down.

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[26] "The trans-Andean breaks the continuity of the modern narrative, the continuum of history, making visible the ideological fiction of borders, of the State, and of the national imaginary."

Unlike Mistral, whose diplomatic and professional career led her to circulate outside of her home country of Chile, Mendieta came to the U.S. from Cuba as a child as part of Operation Peter Pan, organized by a U.S.-based Catholic organization in response to the Cuban Revolution.[27] She eventually lived and worked in New York, during the rise of performance art, feminist art, and their convergence. As many readers may well be aware, it is nearly impossible to discuss Mendieta's life and work without mentioning her premature and violent death: falling from the window of her partner the sculptor Carl Andre's apartment: if not directly by his hands, then certainly by forces of racist gender violence.[28] This context surrounds Mendieta's work, which often feels prescient about such violence and tragedy. The works I discuss below and their corresponding documentation, although not gory or graphic per se, evoke a sense of violence in my own body, and may in yours too. For example, in the downward slide of *Body Tracks* and the downward press of *Untitled (Glass on Body Prints)* series, the body starts to lose its humanness, through abstraction of form and grotesque distortion, respectively.[29]

Mendieta's filmworks, which inhabit the threshold between performance art and its documentation, as we saw with Eltit's *Zona de dolor I* in the previous chapter, are imperfect experiments in undoing human subjectivity through the embodied movements of a human subject. Andrea Giunta writes of Latin American feminist performance art: "Latin American women artists subverted systems of representation wholesale. The body was the battlefield from which they launched new knowledge in which performance was a privileged instrument" (Fajardo-Hill 30). To this I add: within performance, gestures play a key role in subverting representational systems, particularly in considering what belongs in the space of plastic arts. Gestural movement disrupts, interrupts, shifts focus, demands attention and reconsideration. This is not quiet contemplation, but active relational participation due precisely to these gestures' non-codification, which Mendieta's work was attentive to fomenting across mediums.

To write about Mendieta's gestures in her filmworks is to pursue the traces of traces; Howard Oransky's curatorial notes for *Covered in Time and History* seem to sense his descriptions might be readers' closest approximations to the films, themselves displaced from their original performance context. In what follows, I attempt to describe these filmworks in a way that allows us not only to learn the facts of Mendieta's bodily movements and gestures, but also to invite readers in to consider them more somatically.[30] In the *Silueta* series, which are my focus, Mendieta creates a series of body-shaped silhouettes over a number of years at different performance sites in both Iowa and Mexico which were sometimes reused. Such site-specific outdoor work and its documentation are often framed in terms of a feminist intervention into wider land art trends at the time. Chrissie Iles, in her contribution to the *Earth Body* catalog, notes: "In contrast to the conceptual strategies of male artists making what could be termed 'land

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[27] Muñoz refers to this as "her removal from Cuba that relocated (or perhaps dislocated) her to Iowa" (142). See also Viso, 38-40, for connections between these personal, familial, and national histories.

[28] This was redoubled by the art world's contemporaneous forgiveness of Carl Andre, apart from Guerilla Girls's "Where is Ana Mendieta?" billboards. Just 10 years ago, dia:Beacon mounted a retrospective. Only in recent years have we begun to see a reckoning. See, for example, season two of the "Death of an Artist" podcast, hosted by Helen Molesworth.

[29] See images at the following links. *Body Tracks* (1974): https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/untitled-blood-sign-2body-tracks. *Untitled (Glass on Body Prints)* (1972): https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/untitled-glass-body-prints.

[30] I extend my deepest thanks to Ana Mendieta's Estate and Galerie Lelong in New York for allowing me to access the filmworks that I'll be discussing. In particular, I thank Grace Hong for her support and facilitation.

art' films, Mendieta's outdoor films are intimate documents of ritualistic actions and sculptural forms. Instead of topological measurements of space using long-distance camera shots, in Mendieta's films the camera engages directly with the viscerality of organic material" (Viso 206).

This move away from the monumental and towards smaller-scale practice is not separate from another way the *Siluetas* get framed, which is in terms of Mendieta's relationship to Cuba. Through the latter lens, we could read the works as creating fleeting sites and memory places where Mendieta could return in space-time, however provisionally, while exiled from her homeland. In a video interview on her work in natural environments, Mendieta herself says: "creo que tiene mucho que ver con Cuba, en el sentido de que a mí me ha traído la naturaleza porque, como no tenía tierra, como no tenía patria," and her cousin Raquel ties Mendieta's use of materials like water and sand to embodied childhood memories of the island (*Ana mendieta, testimonios*).[31] Once again, "patria"—where does it reside in the body, in the environment?

In addition to these connections between body, landscape, place, and duration, many of Mendieta's works take up Afro-Cuban ritual traditions more explicitly. Mendieta's relationship to such spiritual practices—often marked by cultural familiarity and engaged interest without herself being a practitioner—has been the focus of much critical discussion. Genevieve Hyacinthe makes a compelling case for the material and process-related resonance—both intentional and unintentional—of Mendieta's work not just with Afro-Cuban and related diasporic ritual practices like Abakuá, Lucumí, and Santería, but also with other Black Atlantic traditions, including West African Earthworks and contemporary U.S. Black performance. Through this network of resonance, Hyacinthe recovers Mendieta's insistence on anti-imperial politics, Third World identification, and site-specific public art for immigrant and diasporic communities.[32] Responding in part to Hyacinthe, Montana Ray frames Mendieta as "a translator not of Taino myths or Black cultural practices but of ethnological texts and nationalistic folklore which catalogued and caricatured Black and Indigenous cultures," yet she aligns this with "translation choices which […] are motivated by her feminist and anti-imperial politics" (*ProQuest*).[33] In other words, Mendieta not only learned about such traditions directly, but also through ethnographic and anthropological writings; Hyacinthe brings in Lydia Cabrera's seminal *El monte* as an intertext and in a wider sense discusses what she terms "Mendieta's *el monté* [sic] self-indoctrination into black Atlantic ritual practice" (145). Olga Viso, meanwhile, highlights Mendieta's engagement with Afro-Cuban traditions through study and trips back to Cuba and other artists doing similar work in New York and Miami (63), but also emphasizes that Mendieta "drew on the entire religious pantheon of Cuba and the Caribbean (including the mythologies of the Taíno and Ciboney, Amerindian cultures indigenous to Cuba and the Greater Antilles), and the traditions of African, Asian, Central America, and European primitive cultures" (67).[34] This engagement often appears in her work as a sedimentation of times and spaces.

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[31] "I think this has a lot to do with Cuba, in the sense that nature calls to me, since I didn't have land, didn't have a homeland."

[32] See Hyacinthe on *Ceiba Fetish*, made for a public park in Miami's Little Havana with "hair that she collected from Cuban barbershops in the area so she could be sure she was incorporating Cuban hair" (44), as well as her proposal for a "large outdoor sculpture installation, also called *La Jungla* [after Wilfredo Lam's painting] for MacArthur Park in Los Angeles" (Hyacinthe 34).

[33] Ray does this in a dissertation which is currently under embargo.

[34] See the full section "Afro-Cuban Iconography," from which these quotations are drawn, for Viso's extended historical documentation and consideration of these influences throughout Mendieta's career.

Although there are many ways this sedimentation can appear, I would here like to focus on embodied returns and rehearsals, given this chapter's focus on bodily re-distributions. In particular, I'm interested in the ways that Afro-Cuban practices appear in Mendieta's work specifically as a kind of performance of embodied orisha gestures or bodily poses. Each of these deities is often associated with a place or environment (often, the realms they preside over), a color, certain materials, and specific gestures and rhythms in drumming and dance; for example, Yemayá is danced with full blue skirts moved to recall the waves of the ocean. [35] While I have yet to encounter examples of where Mendieta's movement in her filmworks might cite such dances directly, Hyacinthe draws out connections between Mendieta's artistic practice and ritual practice, as well as embodied resonance with specific deities. For example, she reads Mendieta's 1972 *Untitled (Facial Cosmetic Variations)* as evoking "treatments of the hair and head [washing and receiving spirit] during the Santería initiation process" (140), and she reads *Body Tracks* as a devotional prayer pilgrimage (6). More specifically, Hyacinthe reads one of the *Untitled (Facial Cosmetic Variations)* photographs as an orisha citation: "Mendieta's braid, as well as the unique beard formation she creates through the manipulation of her hair, conjures Eleggúa, who is known for having a long curved horn that protrudes up and flows back from his head, as well as a beard" (142). In addition to this shared embodied iconography,[36] Hyacinthe also sees Mendieta drawing upon the orishas' qualities and relationships: Eleggúa's trickster nature in the aforementioned work; Yemayá's gender shifting and diasporic adaptations and shifts, with the deep sea orisha Olokún, as in the 1977 silhouette *Encantación a Olukuún-Yemayá* (Hyacinthe 168). Ultimately, Hyacinthe ties this material and energetic charge to the Black Atlantic in Mendieta's work to a sense of enduring survival for socioeconomically marginalized communities. Besides these more embodied citations, there is a crossing with nonhuman yet material orisha properties. In this sense, we could also read works in the *Silueta* series through orisha presencing: Ochún, deity of fresh water, runs as creek alongside body excavations. Such a reading already begins to break down a simple binary between human and earth bodies by adding another vector. In the silhouettes, the body may be absent but spirit—in the form of nature's body—is not.

Beyond these concrete citations and resonances of Black Atlantic, including Afro-Cuban practices, José Esteban Muñoz argues for a "sense of Mendieta as performing, radiating, enacting, and being brownness" (142). The context is one based in Mendieta's own experiences of forced migration and a jarring shift of context: "even though she was born to a well-to-do family who were white in Cuba, her life in the United States had made her feel anything but white" (142). Muñoz isn't interested only in Mendieta's "small brown body" (141), though, but rather, in the feelings and affects that her subjectivity experienced, accumulated, and later channeled as it moved through the world. In the *Silueta* series in particular, he reads "traces of life" and "the indentation left by some kind of force" (146), which he connects with a wider vitalism in Mendieta's work that ultimately "build[s] a cosmology that responds cogently to precarious histories of singular and multiple dispossessions that may seem different at first glance, like the histories of violence against women and the imperial subjection of Caribbean people" (146). I do find it strange that in this discussion of "traces of life," Muñoz, so attentive to gesture

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[35] For more on orishas, see Hyacinthe, Cabrera. I wish to acknowledge that I write from a position of amateurism rather than of expertise. On an embodied research note, I am grateful to Ms. Latanya d. Tigner for her classes that included Changó's thunderstorms and fire, and for her invitation to Ms. Eyla Moore to introduce us to Ochún's flowing water. I am also grateful to Juan Mesa for ongoing discussions about Santería dance and music practices, particularly as they relate to orishas.

[36] Hyacinthe also extends to other deities, including the Mayan goddess Ixchel (Hyacinthe 145).

as (queer) ephemera, doesn't spend time with Mendieta's own movement.[37] While I agree with the presence of such a "death-in-life" force (143) and the potentiality of a "sense of brown" that is based in lived experiences that converge and diverge, I don't want to only consider the apparently empty silhouettes, or what might remain of them or of Mendieta inside them. I will also track what we can still witness in the archive of her physical body in motion, a key aspect of her performance work because it focalizes the violence done to bodies and to the earth.

Some of Mendieta's silhouettes were made with rocks and organic materials, while others were created by excavating the ground and filling it with different materials, including blood, fire, sand, and her own body as one more material among others. Mendieta's own body wavers tensely on the threshold between protagonism and disappearance, and for me such engagement leads to a sense of affective or ethical horizontality—recalling Mistral—in addition to her literal horizontality. Viso attributes this to a feminist approach: "By insistently using her own body, or implying it through her silhouette, Mendieta introduced a feminist methodology to the processes of earthworks and brought the monumentalizing directions of land art down to a decidedly more human scale. Her intent was to fuse with the land rather than to aggressively mark nature or simply underscore humanity's insignificance in the face of nature's awesome power" (69). Mendieta and her silhouettes continually return to the same gesture: arms raised overhead, elbows slightly bent and held below the shoulders, each crook of the elbow open to a right angle. When Mendieta herself appears, it's not that she strikes a pose. It's slower: she arrives at it, and she holds it. It's a gesture whose duration is stretched longer than we'd expect. She is often supine or face down, and always horizontal. She places herself beneath, among. When I shared an excerpt of this chapter with the Estate, they wrote with some insight into her approaches: "The reason why Mendieta's hands are up in the air is because she was showing the action of 'going into the earth' " ("Re: Ana Mendieta"). "Going into the earth," however, doesn't mean just one thing; this becomes clear in the series and its use of materials. In certain silhouettes, her body is not even present, but its traces are. In those moments, it's as if the gesture of "going into the earth" has succeeded in its entirety.

Yet what does "going into the earth" look like in the pieces where the body remains in some way? Besides the overarching gestural iteration in the series, each filmwork presents its own additional gestural operations. *Corazón de Roca con Sangre*, made in Iowa in 1975 (and pictured below), is around three minutes long, and made with Super 8, that low-cost—handheld, portable, amateur—technology that made filmmaking more accessible and allowed Mendieta movement within the medium.[38] Raquel Cecilia Mendieta, Ana Mendieta's niece who played a key role in the digitization of her films, notes: "Mendieta shot Super 8 film because the cameras were accessible to her through the University of Iowa and the film stock was affordable; it was not necessarily as an artistic choice but rather another tool available to create and document her works" (Oransky 170). Raquel Cecilia Mendieta highlights the "small format" of this 8mm film; I believe that the small scale contributes to the "de-monumentalizing" of these filmworks, which traffic in subtlety rather than grandiosity. Oransky has drawn attention to how the films' play

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[37] See "Gesture, Ephemera, and Queer Feeling: Approaching Kevin Aviance," in *Cruising Utopia.* Of course, there's *The Sense of Brown*'s posthumous publication, itself a trace of Muñoz's own vitality, which might account for at least some of the gap.

[38] Mendieta's handheld operations add additional embodied layers to those we already see on screen. Throughout many of the filmworks, there are also the gestures the camera makes (when it's not on a fixed tripod), as we saw in Cha's "Love Poetry." Some of these are Mendieta holding the camera, other times it is a friend or colleague. The Super 8's grainy film itself takes on its own kind of movement.

with stillness and duration throw small bodily movements into relief. In describing *Creek* (which is not a *Silueta* but does take up its pose at the end), he states: "It displays an economy of means, but each compositional and gestural detail is important" and later, "pictorial details continue to emerge like notes" (98). Throughout the filmworks especially, this is true of Mendieta's own body but also the bodies of nature: water flowing, branches waving in breeze, mud shifting, rocks rolling.

The action of the filmwork *Corazón de Roca con Sangre* is this: we see Mendieta, nude, kneeling at the slightly muddy bank of a creek.[39] Yet rather than face the water, she is facing a silhouette excavated in the ground. She never looks at the camera, which is positioned slightly above her and to the left. The leaves are dry on the ground and in the silhouette. Is she cold? She is so still for some seconds that you wouldn't even know it was a film if it weren't for her long hair in the breeze, the river running. She picks up a heart-shaped rock very gingerly, as if it is really a beating, living heart. She sets it down inside the silhouette, picks up a small plastic container of blood, really red tempera paint. She pours, pauses, and continues pouring until all the blood has been emptied from the container, saturating the rock heart. As she pours, the camera zooms in on the rock heart and then zooms back out when she's done pouring.

We notice that the blood is already on her fingers, staining them before she even starts pouring. Her painted fingers leave prints on her thigh where she rests them. Then she stands up, still looking at the silhouette. She walks to its feet and from there climbs in. We watch her do it, matter-of-factly. What is it like to put your body onto cold, damp earth? Once inside, her feet are flexed. Their tops never settle into the silhouette. Her heels bear traces of mud. Her hands are closed, in lightly clenched fists. Her body is forced into a different position by the rock heart. Do its angles jut against her chest? Does the paint smudge onto her skin? Her upper back is more elevated, scapulae sinking slightly. Her head drops. Even in stillness, she breathes, and the water runs.

It is through gestures that Mendieta, subject of performance, performing artist, undoes her self. *Corazón de Roca con Sangre* scrambles the contours, edges, and composition of the human body, from organs to skin. As in Mistral's poem, body parts exceed their normative distribution as they are placed into different spaces. Yet rather than giving directly to other women, she gives herself to the earth, which in her bodily movements cross with other bodied forms. If Mistral's speaker puts eyes in her hands and makes the whole body a pupil, Mendieta takes a heart in her hands and puts that vital sense into the earth. Much as in Mistral's poem with its different beings, there's a multiplication here: we can read it as Mendieta turning her own body inside out, but also as her becoming another's body. In this sense, embodied practice in Mendieta's work becomes not a conduit for, but an ontology of, collective feeling and potential solidarity.

Part of writing this chapter has been to ask: how to not make writing about Mendieta's work—or Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's work, as we saw in the previous chapter with "Love Poetry"—only a story that ends with her prescience about a tragic death, made even more tragic because femicide is so common, even more so for women of color and trans women.[40] Besides reminding us of these realities, I think writing about this necessitates bringing in multiple

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[39] For still images from this work, see: https://buffaloakg.org/artworks/201451-coraz%C3%B3n-de-roca-con-sangre-heart-rock-blood.

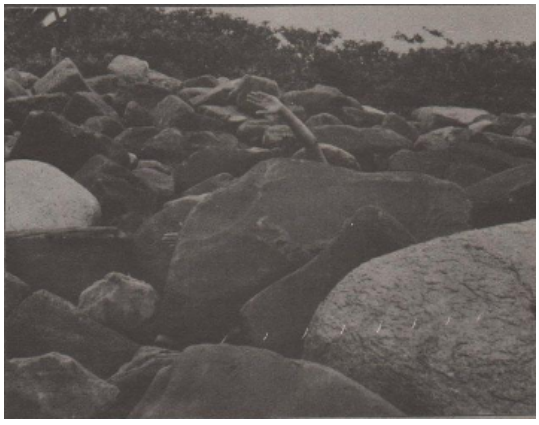
[40] See María Pia López's *Not One Less* (*Ni una menos*), for articulations of this femicidal violence based in embodied experience, for example: "Rejecting the notion of the mind as separate from the body, conceptual and abstract, I write from sensory experience, from the memories of humiliations and harm, the euphoria of a massive gathering, the power of the occupation of a street, the challenge of conflicting organizational practices" (4).

temporalities, *much as the filmwork itself* does. The continuum can't end with her death, or even with looping back around to say "how prescient," which creates a closed circle where femicide prevails. I do not wish to erase it or romanticize it by saying "she lives on in her work!" but I do want to ask: what about our modes of narration—or of living—need to change?

That, for me, has to do with how these filmworks manage to loop time to create a radical-but-totally-not-radical demand for life, for whoever wants it. Muñoz asserts: "through violence, the straining and making precarious of life, a vitalism emerges and lingers after the official ontological closure of life itself" (143). I contend that this has to do with relationality to our own present embodiedness. In other words, not just Mendieta herself, but anyone could climb into the silhouette, even if the contours of their body exceed, don't fill, can't fill, can't lay supine—a toe, a strand of hair, would be enough to overlap a body with another's absence.[41] Any *thing* too, as the filmworks show: water, fire, ash, mud, leaves.[42] The silhouette functions much as Mistral's 8-syllable lines do: a container for experimentation in re-distributing embodied subjectivity, of developing feminist solidarity that extends beyond human bodies to the environment and its forms, too.

Turning and turning

In this chapter, I've shown how Gabriela Mistral and Ana Mendieta re-distribute the body amidst natural environments, how small bodily movements are the locus of that re-distribution, and how such a process allows for relational shifts not just across human subjects but across other natural bodies as well, resulting in what I'm calling gestural landscapes. This limit case shows what can happen when we allow for gestures' effects to extend beyond interactions between normative human subjects. Following Mendieta's own looping, and recalling the temporal loop of Capmany's hand in Chapter 2, let's loop back to Mara Álvares's *Adansônia*, this time a zoomed-in close-up recalling Cha's "zoom in" and camera movements in Chapter 3.



[41] Hyacinthe, in fact, takes off her clothes and climbs in: she takes Mendieta's silhouettes as a call to what she frames as "*serio* embodiment," visiting the sites of the works in order to respond to their Black Atlantic and feminist performatives with her own embodied presence and sense of collective. See for example, 94f.

[42] See Diego Falconí Trávez on ash as the remains of Andean precolonial sexual dissidences' practices. I feel Mendieta would be interested in this sort of transhistorical complex power brought about through material and metaphor.

We often conceive of gestures as localized in the extremities, particularly the hands, as above—and in fact, that kind of gesture has been the focus of most of the preceding chapters. In concluding this limit-case chapter, though, I want to make a case for another kind of gesture that is implied, not shown, in one more filmwork from the *Silueta* series, titled *Silueta sangrienta*.[43] This is something that Mendieta does with her whole body, and that is the turn. In the short filmwork, which is just under two minutes long, we see: Mendieta face up in the silhouette, then a cut to an empty silhouette, then a cut to that same silhouette filled with red liquid, then a cut to Mendieta face down in the silhouette, the blood overflowing and seeping into the ground. Seen as a film, the last cut is shocking. Asking how she could breathe could take your breath away, make you imagine what it would be like to encounter it, or for it to happen to you.

In between these last cuts, though, we might also imagine the turn of her whole body, from face-up to supine; from identified to anonymous; from individual to potentially multiple. Removing the identifying face makes it so that "Ana Mendieta" is no longer the only one there. She is still in her body, but she seems to call in other bodies, other subjects, other beings, too. It is another way of doing Mistral's "no seré nunca más una" ("I will never again be one"). Through a willingness to redistribute the body, moving blood and organs from inside to outside, Mendieta opens up the possibility—through her art and its materials—for a re-orientation in relation to other subjects, be it other women or other living beings, or the water of the creek, the dry or fallen leaves, who could also find their way into that hollow body space. Horizontal rather than upright, "with" or "alongside" or "among" as opposed to "on top of." While lying supine could be seen as a surrender, we can also see here a surrendering of her own selfhood, with the aim of joining with others, or allowing others to join with you. There's also a refusal to be read—here—in the turn. Turning your back: a way of saying no, a refusal to be gazed at, read. A whole-bodied gesture that could be taken up, distributed, shared.

[43] For still images from this work, see: https://museum.colby.edu/exhibition/ana-mendieta-silueta-sangrienta/.

CODA

Returns: "un violador en tu camino"

To conclude, I offer a return to the introduction of this text, this time with a new tag:

Santiago, Chile, 2019
Tunis, Tunisia, 2020
New York City, U.S., 2020
Mexico City, Mexico 2020
many other cities, 2020:

step-touch, step-touch, step-touch, with opposite shoulder swing that keeps the beat;
hands behind the head with elbows out, squats that punctuate;
alternating legs bending back and forth and hips shifting the weight side to side while opposite arms curl in toward the shoulders, often accompanied by an escaping smile;
point directly forward with left arm completely outstretched and taut, lower and repeat;
point again and again, in different directions;
point again with arm above the head and circle it around with bent elbow, finish pointing straight up with straight arm;
right hand joins this action;
shake left fist on the beat;
point forward;
put hand next to mouth as if amplifying sound;
one last round of: point, drop arm, point, drop arm, point…

Since Colectivo LASTESIS's original performance, we've had many reasons to take to the streets, and there will continue to be more and more. In closing, I want to consider the immediacy of the collective performance *and* how we can keep rehearsing. As I mentioned in the introduction, "un violador en tu camino" experienced a massification: it has been adapted and translated by many feminist groups around the globe, each working against femicidal and patriarchal violence particular to their sociopolitical context. While the lyrics of the chant and the sentiment behind it galvanize transnational solidarity, gestures make this solidarity more translatable across contexts, allowing for embodied and somatic engagement across linguistic and cultural communities.

Each chapter in this project has concluded, in some way, with a moment of return that is simultaneously an invitation to rehearsal: Capmany's hand looping back towards Woolf's work, Fefu's feminist feeling, Cha's and Eltit's choreographies of re-membering, Mendieta's full body turn recalling Mistral's horizontality. With this series of gestural scores, which work by opening to improvisation rather than by exacting normative bodily discipline, I hope we can continue to compose on the page, in our bodies, and in the streets—towards collective ensembles, again and again.

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