

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

(Dis)Plazas and (Dis)Placed Danzas: Space, Trauma, and Moving Bodies in Mexico City

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8mh147ts>

Author

Sherman, Stephanie Ann

Publication Date

2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

(Dis)Plazas and (Dis)Placed Danzas:
Space, Trauma, and Moving Bodies in Mexico City

By

Stephanie Ann Sherman

A dissertation in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Performance Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor SanSan Kwan, Chair
Professor Shannon Jackson
Professor Laura Elena Pérez
Professor Juana María Rodríguez
Professor Ivonne del Valle

Fall 2016

© Stephanie Ann Sherman

All Rights Reserved, 2016

Abstract

(Dis)Plazas and (Dis)Placed Danzas: Space, Trauma, and Moving Bodies in Mexico City

by

Stephanie Ann Sherman

Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor SanSan Kwan, Chair

Through an interdisciplinary lens, my dissertation examines how painters (Frida Kahlo in the 1920s-50s), installation/performance artists (Proceso Pentágono in the late 1960s-early 1970s), choreographers (*danza callejera* in the mid 1980-1990s), and activists (PosMeSalto in 2013) respond to crisis in pivotal moments of Mexico City's postrevolutionary history through embodied, social and metaphoric movement. Mapping the city's multiple spatial constraints that structure movement, I show how these artists and activists choreographically and performatively resist, are supported by, and disrupt violent structural limitations to their mobility. Examining how these subjects negotiate the constraints of state power in Mexico City involves troubling stable borders between binaries such as threat and security, public and private, male and female, mobility and immobility. Foregrounding choreography and improvised dance as a metaphor for resistant urban politics in Mexico City, I make an intervention into site-specific theory, space theory, trauma studies, and feminist theory. Locating these discourses within the context of postrevolutionary Mexico City alters the terrain upon which many of these dialogues have rested. Employing multidisciplinary methodologies from dance, critical dance studies, performance studies, visual arts theory, and trauma theory, I bridge important disciplinary gaps by explaining site-specificity as inherently choreographic and performative, and political activism as site-specific choreography. These urban Mexican works resonate with, complicate, and nuance similar radical artistic movements within the Western art canon.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful parents, John and Barbara Sherman, who have always believed in me and loved me unconditionally. To my sister Julie Sherman, my powerful niece Maddie and my pacific nephew Harrison. To my amazing committee who has believed in me at times when I almost gave up and has helped me become a critical thinker: SanSan Kwan, Shannon Jackson, Juana María Rodríguez, Laura Pérez, Ivonne del Valle, and Marisa Belausteguigoitia. También dedico este documento a todos los artistas y activistas que no sólo entrevisté sino que se volvieron mis amigos y mi comunidad: Cecilia Appleton, Carlos Finck, Víctor Muñoz, Arturo Garrido, Alejandra Mendoza, Felipe Ehrenberg, Francisco Vera, Laura Rocha, Miguel Ángel Díaz, Javier Contreras, Tania Álvarez, Pablo Álvarez, Andrea Zolá, Enrique Melgarejo, Jorge Izquierdo y más. To my dearest friends and community who have seen me through this from Mexico City to San Pancho: Itzel Schnaas, Olivia Gutierrez, Andrea Salgado, Valeska Castañeda, Denise Benavides, Bri Headly, Marguerite Muñoz, Diana Gameros, Daniel B. Chávez, Michaela Simpson, Susana Aragón, Piera Piagentini, and Anahita Forati. Finally I dedicate this dissertation to the hope for justice in México, to the parents and students of Ayotzinapa, to the teachers of the CNTE, to the living memory of Tlatelolco 1968, to the thousands of disappeared women in unmarked graves across the country. I dedicate this to la lucha.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
DEDICATION	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
INTRODUCTION	vi
(Dis)Locating Mexico City	viii
Chapter Outline and Methodology	xi
Space, Violence, Movement	xvi
CHAPTER 1: A HAIR OUT OF PARALYZED-PLACE—FRIDA KAHLO’S METAPHORIC CHOREOGRAPHY	1
Introduction	1
Hair	5
<i>Pelona</i> Movement	7
Wound, Cast, Body: Performative Choreography	13
CHAPTER 2: (RE)MOVING AND (RE) PERFORMING STATE VIOLENCE—PROCESO PENTÁGONO’S COUNTER-CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE 1970S	26
Introduction	27
1968/Dirty War Mexico City: Choreographies of Crisis	33
Aesthetic Crisis: The Performative, Choreographic Turn	35
Alternate Architectural Choreography: The Installations and Bellas Artes	38
<i>The Car</i>	42
<i>The Ring</i>	46
<i>The Television</i>	49
The Performances	52
<i>The Run-over Man</i>	52
<i>The Kidnapping</i>	54
Conclusion	56
CHAPTER 3: <i>DANZA CALLEJERA</i> —DIS(PLACE)ING MEXICO CITY’S SEISMIC PLAN	58
Introduction	58
A History of <i>Danza Callejera</i>	65
Dis-Placed Communities	68
Traumatic Sites	75
A Body/Space in Pain	78
Conclusion	80
CHAPTER 4: POSMESALTO! (JUMPING, DUCKING, AND TURNING THE	82

METRO'S STYLE)	
Introduction	82
A Mobile Site	86
Why Dance?	89
Site-Specific Moves	93
Constraining the Flow and Supporting the Jump	94
Conclusion	100
CONCLUSION	102
REFERENCES	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY	110

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1	<i>Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair</i>	1
Fig. 2	<i>The Broken Column</i>	16
Fig. 3	<i>Self-Portrait Inside a Sunflower</i>	18
Fig. 4	Photograph of a Photograph of Frida Kahlo in Corset	20
Fig. 5	Photograph of Corset in Case	21
Fig. 6	<i>Memory (The Heart)</i>	24
Fig. 7	Photograph of Tlatelolco #1	26
Fig. 8	Photograph of Tlatelolco #2	26
Fig. 9	Photograph of <i>The Ring</i>	27
Fig. 10	Photograph of <i>The Kidnapping</i>	35
Fig. 11	Photograph of Sala Internacional #1	39
Fig. 12	Photograph of Sala Internacional #2	39
Fig. 13	Photograph of Bellas Artes Exterior	41
Fig. 14	Photograph of <i>The Car</i>	42
Fig. 15	Photograph of <i>Bound Figure</i>	51
Fig. 16	Photograph of the View from Bellas Artes	53
Fig. 17	Photograph of <i>The Run-over Man</i>	54
Fig. 18	Photograph of “Zacam-Zom”	58
Fig. 19	Photograph of <i>Asaltodiario</i>	69
Fig. 20	Photograph of Contemporary Street Dance Event	73
Fig. 21	Photograph of Children Jumping	82
Fig. 22	Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #1	82

Fig. 23	Photograph from <i>Arestegui Noticias</i> #1	84
Fig. 24	Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #2	85
Fig. 25	Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #3	89
Fig. 26	Photograph from <i>Arestegui Noticias</i> #2	91
Fig. 27	Photograph from Blog PSK	96
Fig. 28	Photograph of Man Jumping	97
Fig. 29	Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #4	98
Fig. 30	Still from “Performance por Ayotzinapa”	102

INTRODUCTION

One evening in September of 2012, I left my dance class near the Monumento a la Revolución (the Monument to the [Mexican] Revolution) in Mexico City to find, unsurprisingly, that striking teachers had shut down the Ecovía trolleys as well as street traffic on the Avenida de los Insurgentes, the mega-city's longest avenue. Without any options other than to walk forty minutes to where I was staying in Colonia Roma, I joined the stream of protesters and other pedestrians. While all sorts of vehicles were stuck in jams with horns blasting, a throng of moving bodies snaked through the streets. My dissertation does not examine the teachers' protest of 2012. Yet my embodied experience of living in Mexico City during that time inspires and informs my understanding of the politics of space, resistance, and mobility in the megalopolis. Two years—in the wake of the brutal state-sponsored disappearance of 43 teachers-in-training from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in 2014—the city would burst with even more protests than its usual daily occupations and marches. Those events in Guerrero revealed deep corruption and complicity between drug cartels, the police, the military, local governments, and national government, and set the country on the verge of crisis and increasing violence. Protests called for Enrique Peña Nieto's resignation, as well as for the appearance of the 43. In response to massive marches, Mexican Congress passed—without popular vote—the “Ley de Movilidad,” or the law of mobility for the City of Mexico. This ordinance strictly curtailed where and when protest can happen. It also legally justified police brutality towards, and detention and torture of protesters. When the law of mobility passed, it quickly became known as the “Ley Anti-Marcha” or the anti-march law. It seemed contradictory that two definitions of movement should be pitted against each other, as if “marching” were antithetical to “mobility.” After all, that evening along Insurgentes, human bodies were indeed moving, even though traffic had been interrupted.

Reading through the stipulations of the law, it became clear that the vague right of “mobility” was reserved, not for protesters, but for vehicles—cars, trains, trolleys and buses. It was business as usual. Movement that kept the economy flowing was allowed for some, but marching that disrupted this flow was not seen as a right but an offense. Thus, the “law of mobility” paradoxically serves to *immobilize* dissent against Peña Nieto's neoliberal government.¹ Adding to the law's irony, Peña Nieto's political party—the PRI or Institutional Revolutionary Party—traces its roots to the Mexican Revolution, when dissidents charged the streets and claimed a new, socialist Mexico. It was ironic that Insurgentes (“insurgents”) Avenue, named in honor of those who fought to end Spanish colonial rule, was not allowed to surge with those protesting the capitalist government's neocolonization.² In “Ley de Movilidad,” mobility, a general term, is actually inscribed into legally binding language, as something specifically attached to machines, and not humans (or, rather, to certain humans—those not troubling the status quo).

¹ In referring to Mexico's neoliberal government, I mean the intensifying privatization of resources, deregulation of business, heightening of social inequities, and economic liberalism following the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States and Mexico in 1994.

² By neocolonization, I mean the globalized capitalist process of reinscribing colonial power structures with the absence of colonial governments.

As a choreographer and a critical dance/performance studies scholar, I ponder why it is so significant for the predominant legislation enacted to shut down citizen opposition to the PRI in Mexico City to employ choreographic language. Why not call it the law of transportation or the law of traffic? On the other hand, following convention, activists still refer to mass protests against Peña Nieto as a *Movimiento* or social movement. In this paper, I define mobility on many levels. I conceive of mobility as the freedom of movement, of many things and on many levels. Institutions move and shift policies, capital flows through economies, people move their bodies in social space and objective space, and groups of bodies surge through cities. On the other hand, as dance scholar Danielle Goldman argues in her analysis of movement in tight spaces within slave narratives (extending the analysis to improvised musical and choreographic practices), pure freedom of movement does not exist. It operates within and in direct response to constraint (Goldman 3). Mobility, then, is a contested term that exists only in relation to constraint just as freedom exists only in relation to oppression.

Thinking of the politics of mobility, it becomes clear that the access to and the definition of movement through the confines of the city's space, is fundamental to both maintaining hegemonic order and to those challenging that order. Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist philosopher states: "Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things . . . Such 'objects' are thus not only things but also relations" (77). Expressing his concerns for both the right to the postmodern city and for the city as a space that subverts the conditions that it produces, Lefebvre claims that space is not only architectural but also social. If we consider Lefebvre's reference to space as relations via pathways and networks that create relations, then it is both the architectural structure of the city as well as the movement of human bodies through those spaces that create the city. Lefebvre's notion of spatial relations resonates with French philosopher Michel de Certeau's *tactics*, in which ordinary street walkers redefine the space of the city through their movement (101). Intent on discovering techniques for resisting hegemony, de Certeau exposes how everyday pedestrians elude system control by disrupting panoptical maps with their movement. Mexico City, then, is not only created by the state and corporate structures that construct roads, plazas, and buildings, laws and ordinances. It is also reshaped and contested on a daily basis by the differential bodies that course through and occupy its spaces, both within and outside of its formal economy. Thus, the larger battle for a country in crisis is largely defined by *who* gets to move through the nation's capitol, and *how* the city's urban planning allows or disallows these movements. That is, who and what has access to mobility through the city appears on an embodied level to relate to who and what has power on a social level.

As a result, my dissertation focuses on various spaces within the city, and on how an urban politics is shaped by different kinds of movement through it. I examine how choreographers, artists and activists use both literal and metaphoric movement to respond to crisis in pivotal moments of postrevolutionary history in Mexico City. Locating unstable borders within the city's social and architectural fabric, I ask what it means for different kinds of marginalized subjects to "dance" within, around, through, and against the shifting spaces that inhibit and permit passage. How can embodied and imagined movement shake up the stillness of traumatic space? How do micro-flinches of resistance relate to macro-bounds of institutionalized change? What do these artists' actions do to seemingly solid yet unstable notions of national and citywide belonging? How is crisis choreographed in these specific historical moments? And how do artists use movement to respond to it?

Looking at how artists and activists resist and move within the constraints of state power in Mexico City involves troubling stable borders between: threat and security, public and private, male and female, mobility and immobility. Using choreography and improvised dance as a metaphor for resistant urban politics in Mexico City, I make an intervention into site-specific theory, space theory, trauma studies, and feminist theory. Locating these discourses within the context of postrevolutionary Mexico City alters the terrain upon which many of these dialogues have rested. While urban theorists like Carlos Monsiváis have alluded to violence and movement in Mexico City, this dissertation makes significant headway by centering the discussion of violence and crisis in the city within the understanding of bodies and movement. My theoretical approach is as interdisciplinary as the performances and artworks that I analyze. In this dissertation, I see space in terms of architecture, ideology, archetype, urban planning, and media. I see movement as metaphoric, embodied, social, and ideological. These spaces and these movements interact and are multi-temporal. By describing space as multi-temporal, I see how varied events, experiences, and meanings in one given architectural site overlap, intersect, and enter into conversation.

(Dis)Locating Mexico City

In order to analyze how artists, activists, and dancers move within Mexico City, it is important to situate readers in the Federal District—a site like no other. Many city-dwellers refer to Mexico's capitol as *el ombligo del mundo*, or the earth's navel. This image places the city at the anatomical core of an imagined world body. It is the supposed center of Mexico, Tenochtitlán, the nexus of the Aztec universe, and a postmodern international megalopolis. If it is a center, it is one that expands as it condenses and condenses as it expands, its intestines thickening with the flow of 20 million human bodies, most poor, some affluent. Some bodies push deeper into the Zócalo at its geographical belly button. Others flee to outlying neighborhoods, while even more pulse in shantytowns at its margins, expanding and blurring its ever-unstable boundaries.

How can a city that is 527 square miles be considered a center? Philosopher and critical geographer Yi Fu Tuan reminds us: "'Center' is not a particular point on the earth's surface; it is a concept in mythic thought" (150). In other words, the center does not exist geographically, but ideologically, and, as Tuan infers in his definitions of space and place, place can shift and become space and vice versa. Center is a cosmological, ideological nexus charged with social importance. Tuan is interested in how spatial experience creates relationships and movement. Thus, the ideological concept of center as a defined place, is also one that shifts, geographically and conceptually. Additionally, the threat associated with cities, and with Mexico City in particular, marks it as a porous, unbounded space as opposed to a place with secure boundaries. Seen this way, space could imply violence at the unbounded borders, and place might symbolize protection at the bound center. The two poles—peripheral violence and central stability—seem to reconcile themselves brutally (but always necessarily in conversation) within the great megalopolis.

Tenochtitlán, situated on top of an island in the lake Texcoco, is the city over which Mexico City's center lies and was founded in 1325 by the Mexica, or Aztecs, as the capital of their empire. Tenochtitlán, the ideological center of the Mexica world, had clear geographical boundaries to contain and protect it. Islands, after all, are contained spaces separated by water.

After the Spanish conquest, a new city was built on top of Tenochtitlán, and the lake was filled in until land that was previously separated oozed into land that it now touched. While the new center remained essentially in the same geographical location (shifted a bit so that the Cathedral and main square are not exactly on top of the ruins of the main temple, though quite close), the ideological and mystical definition of center turned itself upside down. Mexico was now a peripheral tentacle far from Spain's torso, and those who previously comprised the center of the Aztec world were now destined to the utmost margins of this new power center as slaves. One worldview loomed over the other, reflected in the urban planning of the immense Zócalo, or central plaza framed by the presidential palace, the cathedral, and other government buildings. What was mapped at this juncture via the construction of this plaza was a center that engendered church and state power at its most phenomenological. Center became constructed ideologically and architecturally as power. These continuous shifts in power and in the concept of center have been brutal and violent, marking that brutality and violence on the very meaning of center and on the architecture that constructs a somatic experience of this power.

To think about the geographical implications of the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán is to observe how colonization is spatialized in order to marginalize the power of some and centralize the power of others. In this process, the ruling powers aim at clearly defining the imagined center as much as its supposedly opposed periphery. All of a sudden, the new center is a concept of a center that exists too far away to be experienced somatically. God, too, is now from a far-off periphery. If center, as Tuan notes, is mythic and not physical, then center, with the Spanish conquest, was pushed to a new margin (Mexico), and the margin was forced to the center (Spain). The colonial Zócalo, thus, is an awkward, incomplete mimesis of an untouchable center in Spain. Throughout subsequent waves of colonization and neocolonization by outside forces, the Zócalo has remained an unstable symbol of centrality, one that embodies the centrality of somewhere else in its own marginality, and is still a center in a region considered to be a margin. Seeing the Zócalo in this context allows us to understand the contemporary law of mobility as a reaction to historical processes through which the powers-that-be, threatened by the potential of the marginalized masses, cut off access to central space.

This push and pull of margin to center and vice versa, first established with the Spanish conquest, continued with the Mexican Revolution—a major social upheaval and reorganization of government led by *campesinos* or farm workers—that would come to radically change the structure of the Mexican government and society, and, with that, the political and aesthetic structure of its capitol. From 1910-1920, legendary fighters such as Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa came from Mexico's rural periphery to the city to declare the illegitimacy of Porfirio Díaz's 35-year dictatorship. The ensuing postrevolutionary institutional transformation involved governmentally sponsored schools and hospitals, and wider access to education and the arts than before. In fact, Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos, launched one of the greatest national identity building projects in history through state support of Muralism and the arts. It is within the immediate postrevolutionary crisis of national representation that I locate Chapter 1 and Frida Kahlo's negotiation of her own identity in relation and (specifically) in opposition to gender archetypes.

Chapters 2 and 3 proceed into postmodern crisis: the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco, and the geological/economic disaster following the 1985 earthquake, respectively. The massacre resulted from a time of social unrest and an increasing critique of Gustavo Díaz Ordáz's PRI

government. His administration had responded oppressively to both growing labor and farm unions, and to student protests preceding Tlatelolco. On October 2, 1968, military snipers and secret police aided in the assassination of hundreds of peacefully protesting students. This state-sponsored violation of human rights was largely unpublicized, and ushered in the further oppression and secret torture regime of the Dirty War—which lasted from the late 1960s until the mid 1980s. On the heels of this, Mexico would face another crisis: the 8.1 earthquake that destroyed much of the city on September 19, 1985. Thousands of lives were lost, and Miguel de la Madrid’s government did very little to aid the thousands of survivors left without homes, food, or medical attention.

The final crisis that this work examines in Chapter 4 is minor in comparison to the crises in previous chapters—and to what would immediately follow it in Ayotzinapa—, but sets the groundwork for the violent velocity with which Mexico was heading with increasing corruption, injustice, and state oppression. In 2012, the Metro raised its fare to the dismay of thousands of working class citizens who relied on the train as their sole form of transportation. The PosMeSalto Metro strikes were one of many contemporary protests that jammed the streets and altered the flow of Mexico City on a daily basis. Significantly, the transportation crisis serves as a larger metaphor for agency, access, and mobility within a city on the contradictory verge of both explosion and paralysis.

Within each chapter I examine how these moments of sociopolitical instability propel formal changes within different art forms and between artistic disciplines. This is important in order to understand how art not only is shaped by, but also challenges larger social structures. The formal breakdown from art object to performance action to social protest blurs the lines between aesthetics and politics, allowing us to rethink not only how politics informs art, but also how art can be politics. Throughout, I recognize the permeability of forms and the nonlinearity of these formal shifts. For example, while I discuss the official “performative turn” in visual arts of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I also view Frida Kahlo’s paintings and costumes of the 1920s-1950s as performance. This formal shape shifting culminates in a final chapter where the PosMeSalto protest uses aesthetic and choreographic techniques in an attempt to make institutional change.

These formal twists and turns in art enter into dialogue with the forces of a particularly Mexican modernity. Proceso Pentágono’s street interventions, *danza callejera*’s site specific dance, and the PosMeSalto protest all respond to conditions produced by modern urban city planning. Frida Kahlo’s accident happened on a modern bus. And her unconventional ideas were inspired by possibilities, such as the *chica moderna*, that opened up for women in postrevolutionary modern Mexico. As Néstor García Canclini (an Argentine urban hybridity theorist based in Mexico) argues, Latin America has never fully modernized per U.S. and European economic definitions. Furthermore, Mexico is at once modern, pre-modern, and postmodern (41). Even the modernist forms of art such as murals that were encouraged by the postrevolutionary government involved a particular mixture of pre-Columbian themes with idealized depictions of a modernized future. Thus, given the particularities of Mexican “modernism,” the shift in Mexican art from modernism to postmodernism would be blurry. For example, the *danza callejera* choreographers of the mid 1980s utilized postmodern practices, such as creating site-specific work outside of the concert hall, and engaged directly with their

audiences. At the same time, they preserved certain modern dance tendencies, such as using archetypal characters to represent social issues.

The works of art and protest that I examine in my dissertation all occur at different moments of crisis in the decades following the Mexican Revolution, but they cannot be fully separated from the crisis of colonization. In the city, violent histories overlap spatially. Due to political, demographic, globalized, and social changes, the borders that mark Mexico City shift and change, forming new choreographies that hedge in or resist marginalizing hegemonic forces. The patterns with which these borders are formed bear traces of previous borders, even if the dances within them change. In fact, if we think of borders as spatial constraints that prohibit and shape movement, then the various “choreographies” within this dissertation are all border-choreographies: dances within, against, and across the ever shifting margins of power in a megalopolis always on the verge of crisis.

Chapter Outline and Methodology

This dissertation is born from my respect for and commitment to the artistic communities that I research, both as a scholar, and as a fellow artist. As a professional contemporary dancer and choreographer, I have always been obsessed with space. As a dancer, I am drawn to the movement possibilities produced by architectural or choreographic limitations: to dancing in odd or uncomfortable places like closets and bathtubs, or wide expanses like city streets and museum galleries. I have always moved in inappropriate ways in public spaces: leaping and spinning in train stations and down university hallways. Thus, I am keenly aware of how differential embodied movement, both my own and that of others, troubles the constructions of the spaces in which it happens. As a choreographer, I specifically juxtapose incongruent movements and spaces. Shaping space to create movement, or negotiating movement through space, is my business.

Thus, part of my methodology involves my moving through Mexico City. While this dissertation is not an auto-ethnography, many of the ideas herein come from my ruminations while dancing, while riding in a packed Metro car, or while navigating a congested pedestrian walkway near the Zócalo. As Susan Foster suggests, my writing, thinking body is also a moving body (3). My tools of critical observation come not only from discourse with critical theorists, but also from many experiences of moving my own body and others through space. I was drawn to Mexico City particularly for its incongruities: for its fast trains that take people long distances, for its traffic jams, and for an opulence contrasted with abjection. I was intrigued by how the choreographers, activists, and visual artists whom I interviewed conceived of site as trauma in their work. I wanted to know why and how they moved through those pained spaces. I recognize that my perspective is one of a foreigner, a guest in the artistic communities that I worked with over the past five years that I have been performing my research in Mexico City. Thus, in this dissertation I do not aim to speak for experiences that are not my own. I am a white, Jewish upper-middle-class U.S. citizen with a very different access to and experience of the city than many of my collaborators. It is important to acknowledge, especially when writing about *mestiza* subjectivity as I do in Chapter 1, how Eurocentric academic legacies in the United States have traditionally spoken *for* marginalized bodies of color.

My general methodology for this dissertation is as diverse as both its subject matter and my background as a choreographer and scholar. Using choreography as a critical framework, I read protest, painting, choreography, and performance/installation art to locate a negotiation of violence and resistance in Mexico City. When writing about live performance in the past, my objects are elusive. So, with the exception of Chapter 1, I rely on archival images, photographs, and interviews. Additionally, I draw from my embodied experience in many of the sites in which the artists' movement took place. Each chapter involves a close reading of an image that links various critical discourses, from site-specific theory and trauma theory to dance theory. My interactions and interviews with the artists and activists have fed my research. At times, I organized dinner reunions with choreographers in order to perform community interviews. At other times, I accompanied them to the sites where they performed. While photographs and the occasional video are the most tangible objects I have to analyze, I am interested in the holistic performance experience. Thus, while my own embodied experience of the sites combined with photographs and interviews provide me with snippets of that experience, I cannot methodologically approach my subject without drawing from as many sources as possible.

Chapter 1 opens with the crisis of postrevolutionary gender and racial identity. Here, I inspect how discourses on national and citywide belonging are sedimented into the symbols of the modern mestizo male and the traditional indigenous woman. Through a close reading of Frida Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, I contend that the micro-movements of Kahlo's shorn hair in the painting represent mini-movements of resistance to the spatial constraints created by rigid postrevolutionary archetypes. While I define resistance as a moving-against constantly shifting constraints, I also find resistance as the movement that occurs within stillness. Positing Kahlo, a woman with limited social and bodily mobility, as a radical choreographer, I locate movement in metaphor and through metaphoric space. However, I also find resistance in her casts, wounds, and embodied movements through postrevolution Mexico City.

I consider how her choreography both pushes up against and is mobilized by the very social and physical constraints that threaten to paralyze her. In this case, I see violence in terms of both productive and restrictive social forces: from the modern city and official discourses on femininity and masculinity, to the multiple surgeries performed on Kahlo's body. In this chapter, choreography is not only detached from dance and larger embodied movement, but is defined predominantly in terms of metaphoric micro-movements. Inspired by feminist Maria Lugones' notion of "micro-movements of resistance," I locate the radical potential of moving within and against stifling limits within which great leaps taking up large spaces are not possible. While I do theorize the movement of Kahlo's body, the majority of my argument centers on the metaphoric movement of her paintings, heeding feminist art historian Margaret Lindauer's caution not to reduce Kahlo to her gender and biography and, thus, ignore her paintings.

My methodological approach to this chapter brings the close reading of Kahlo's paintings into conversation with "official" narratives of Kahlo, and intersects critical historical discourses on aesthetics, gender, and *mestizaje* in postrevolutionary Mexico City. Drawing from scholarship by Susan Foster, Erin Manning, and Danielle Goldman, I take a critical dance studies approach to the visual arts, exploring how an understanding of embodied movement through spatial constraints can help to articulate a resistant politics of micro-movements within the realm of representation. In conversation with Muralism, the national aesthetic project that emerged from a

huge societal shift, I counter the macro-movements of male painters across the public cityscape to the tiny private movements of Kahlo's personal paintings.

Still within (but pushing against) the limits of a visual arts discourse, I focus in Chapter 2 on the next great aesthetic crisis to break from the modern, social realist Muralism movement in Mexico City: the performative shift, which arose alongside the 1968 student movement, the massacre at Tlatelolco, and the ensuing Dirty War of the early 1970s. As in the previous chapter, I examine here how artists find resistant movement against the constraints of national discourse. While these discourses choreograph the artists' social and architectural space, the artists also choreograph different, resistant spatial limitations. However, the artists whose work I analyze shape space not only figuratively but literally, through embodied performance and site-specific installation. Through this choreographic reading, I ask how the specific spatialized state violence of the city contributed to the shift from art object to embodied experience. First, I establish the spatial choreography of state violence in Dirty War-era Mexico City, positing how the spatiality produced by urban planning, transportation, and the media facilitated extreme brutality and censorship—one both limiting and, in some ways, expanding its citizens' movements. Looking closely at art collective Proceso Pentágono's *A nivel informativo*,³ I ask how their overtly violent site-specific and embodied projects respond to spaces such as Tlatelolco and disrupt the sacredness of the state-sponsored Palace of Fine Arts (el Palacio de Bellas Artes).

By bringing Bellas Artes into the street, and the street into Bellas Artes, they invert safe and unsafe spaces, troubling the boundaries between sanctioned and unsanctioned state force. Furthermore, they “appear” what official media narratives “disappear”—the constant presence of kidnapping, torture, and censorship of those who dared dissent. Writing about performance is always a difficult endeavor given its ethereal nature, and even more difficult when dealing with a time period in which there was no video documentation. Furthermore, the installations (a boxing ring, exploded car parts, and an entrapped plaster figure) have not been preserved. Thus, my methodology involves putting archival photographs and newspaper articles in conversation with in-depth interviews I conducted with Victor Muñoz and Carlos Finck, two of the three artists who collaborated in *A nivel informativo*. Looking at images with Muñoz and Finck, they walked me through their memories of the embodied experience of this piece, understanding that there would (necessarily) be slippages not only in memory but also in my understanding of the event. Thus, I theorize *A nivel informativo* not as a whole, but a series of remnants that together weave the ghost of an event that itself invoked the ghostly specters of the disappeared.

Chapter 3 analyzes the relationship of trauma to site following the massive 1985 earthquake that rocked the city's architectural and social fabric, exposing major political fault lines in the lack of state aid to neighborhoods in crisis. Here, I look at how the site-specific dance of *danza callejera* events had the potential to provide ideological movement to communities stagnated by pain. Moving the focus from site-specificity in the visual arts and the performative turn, in this chapter I explore how the *danza callejera* performances nuance discourses of site-specificity both in terms of dance and visual arts. Like Proceso Pentágono's *Al nivel informativo* in the early 70s, these dance performances of the mid- to late-80s call attention to the political structures and traumas that construct these architectural spaces. Furthermore, I inspect how here

³ This title is purposefully in lower case throughout.

the notion of “site” becomes constructed as community, and how dance mobilizes these spaces paralyzed by destruction and government neglect. I look at “displacement” as both forced and resistant movement in terms of the cityscape and constructions of national belonging.

Like with the previous chapter, my methodological approach is a combination of archival and ethnographic research. While video footage of the later *Encuentros de Danza Callejera* from the early 1990s exists, my prime focus is on the performances made in the close aftermath of the 1985 earthquake. Putting images from photographer Jorge Izquierdo’s extensive archive in conversation with interviews by Cecilia Appleton, Miguel Ángel Diaz, and other *danza callejera* choreographers, I approximate a picture of the specific sites in which the dancers moved, the communities that occupied those sites, and *how* the movement shifted those sites, albeit temporarily. The interview process was an exercise in community and memory building, as I gathered choreographers together who were seeing each other for the first time in many years to look at images and reflect on experiences. This did not always provide the in-depth descriptions of dances or sites for which I had hoped. Instead, choreographers went off on tangents and shared related stories. However, given this chapter’s focus on community and movement, the group interviews produced a different kind of memory—one that did not reside only in the miniscule details of what happened but in the shared power of an experience that moved each participant deeply and mutually, in ways emotional, political, physical, and aesthetic.

Chapter 4, like Chapter 3 deals with embodied movement through the city’s public architectural spaces. In this case, however, I link dance, as a metaphor, to the movement of activists and protesting citizens. Returning to Maria Lugones’ micro-movements of resistance explored in Chapter 1, I see in this chapter how the embodied micro-movements of pedestrians in the 2013 PosMeSalto campaign function as both powerful resistances to neoliberal capital, and within its flow. This “unsuccessful” protest called to stop a massive raise in the Metro fare. Lugones, a decolonial feminist philosopher who inserts subjectivity into de Certeau’s *tactics*, locates resistance both in sweeping, communal protest and in tiny individual acts of oppressed subjects (5). I also find agency in both the collective and individual protesters’ movements. Both micro-movements (tiny seemingly insignificant individual gestures) and macro-movements (larger gestures like leaps or massive collective movements that result in institutional change) inform each other and contribute to social movement.

Using photographs of professional dancers Enrique Melgarejo and Andrea Zolá leaping virtuosically over the Coyoacán Metro Station’s turnstiles, photographer and organizer Pablo Álvarez created an internet sensation and a metaphor for a movement that used site-specific dance to call attention to the Metro as a site for institutional critique. Here, I look at how the protesters’ embodied experiences of jumping over and ducking under the turnstiles could both subvert and provide momentum to the hegemonic flow of power. Like in Chapters 2 and 3, I intersect dance theory with site-specific theory. I also employ border-theory to articulate a spatial resistance to the flow of state power, still within the choreographic constraints and path of that power.

My methodological approach to this chapter is again both ethnographic and archival. I use both widely circulated internet images of the protesters and videos alongside a close reading of the Metro spaces, and interviews with Melgarejo, Zolá, and Álvarez. This chapter departs from the notion of movement developed within artistic disciplines and gestures toward the

choreography of social protest. In it I offer further support for why the current law of mobility would come crashing down on Ayotzinapa protesters in 2015 as an expression of repressive state choreographies since Tlatelolco.

Throughout the four chapters, I examine how the city's various spaces—social, architectural, and ideological, and public and private—interweave and overlap, and how different kinds of movement in those spaces uproot the contradictions and connections between histories of colonization, neocolonization, and resistance. Prominent performance studies scholar and head of the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics Diana Taylor goes to great lengths to express the violent, performative nature of Mexico City as a social and architectural site. Her work is generally concerned with performance as violence and as a site of resistance to state violence in Latin/o America. As Taylor writes, “Mexico City . . . functions as the mental and material space providing a framework for individual and collective memory. The buildings and architectural layout remind even the most distracted passerby that this space is a violently practiced place. Mexico City today is a palimpsest of histories and temporalities” (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 82). The idea of the city as a palimpsest—a manuscript in which old writing has been erased for new writing to go on top, but with traces of the original remaining—portrays Mexico city as place where current inscriptions, or buildings, emerge from and within the remains of older ones. Newer experiences of violence cannot be separated from the ones before them that took place in the same location. As embodied in Tlatelolco, multiple bloody histories coexist and inform each other: the Spanish conquest, the Revolution, the Dirty War, the 1985 earthquake, and the current state violence crisis against students and protesters.

As Taylor implies, Mexico City's different sites are heterotopic in the Foucauldian sense in that they are, in Foucault's words, “counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (Foucault 1998, 26-28). Foucault's heterotopia describes architectural locations that function like Taylor's palimpsests: Not only do different experiences exist and overlap in these places, but also these experiences contradict and resist each other. Foucault locates heterotopias in spaces within, yet outside, society, “crisis sites” where rituals “outside of society” occur—such as military schools or sites for menstruating women. (26) However, many sites within society are also outside of it. For example, the Zócalo is a site for military parades and for student uprisings against the military. These clashing histories undermine and clash with each other, revealing the deep tension of the heterotopia: The heterotopia is neither a location of full resistance to hegemonic control, nor is it a fully conquered, dominated zone. Herein lies the always-shifting subversive potential of the sites that I examine.

In the paintings, installations, dances, and protests that I look at, these acts of spatial violence enter into dialogue specifically through movement (embodied, social, and metaphoric). As I discuss in Chapter 3, dance scholar Anurima Banerji posits another kind of mobile spatiality in her definition of the paratopia, which, unlike the architectural locations in which it occurs, is a site that exists through embodied movement (350). She addresses the choreography of an Indian dance, Chandralekha, and the temporary social space created during performance. The paratopia operates not within the stone confines of streets and walls, but within the choreographic structure of the human body. Banerji's paratopia is a perfect counterpoint to Foucault's heterotopia, as it accounts for the body as a space in the moment of performance. Thus, most of the cases I

examine involve paratopic bodies moving through and unearthing heterotopic space. Consequently, my analyses of movement in city spaces put the heterotopias of streets, plazas, museums, and Metro stations in dialogue with the paratopic space of moving bodies. That is, in most cases that I discuss, moving bodies disrupt and call attention to spaces' hidden or unobserved histories of violence, the paratopic spaces of embodied movement unsettling and revealing the heterotopic spaces of the city's architecture.

Space, Violence, Movement

Since my dissertation revolves around "space," it is important to define what I mean by it in terms of enabling or constricting movement. As I commented earlier, spaces can overlap and contest each other, and they can be as diverse as architecture and imagination. As mentioned, Yi Fu Tuan differentiates between space and place, arguing that the former is open and mobile, whereas the latter is the closed pause between places (6). Space is unbounded movement, and place is containment, pause. Place, like site or location, implies rootedness, whereas space embodies limitlessness. Within place lies the assumption of boundaries: walls or limits that define its location. However, as Tuan would agree, space and place can shift at any given moment. They are not monolithic. In fact, since space and place slip in and out of each other in flux, they help us to understand the changing nature of political and physical constraint and mobility. In the cases that I analyze, the actions performed by artists or activists often reveal that a single location is more mobile than previously thought. Conversely, these actions make "place" out of a non-area previously thought of as mere "space." The performances push at the limits of place and open up space, contesting fixed spatial power definitions.

These acts of redefining space and place are choreographic. That is, by defining and redefining space, I hope to create, dissolve, recreate, and re-blur boundaries. If we think of choreography as the shaping of space that restrains and permits movement, then choreography involves delineating borders. However, as most dancers who engage in structured improvisation (and even those who perform set choreography) know, these borders shift and move over the course of the dance. Given the particular relationship of border to center in the Federal District—the U.S./Mexico border, Mexico as a "marginal" country, the narco-violence from the periphery influencing the center—this focus on movement unsettles not only clear notions of space but also undoes set definitions and dynamics that define and marginalize the borders. By focusing on movement within Mexico City's marginal sites I hope to create place in zones constructed to be mere passageways, and space in edifices created as unmoving hegemonic structures. For example, by making dance in the streets where earthquake refugees were forced to live, the *danza callejera* choreographers signaled to the visibility of the survivors who had been invisibilized by lack of governmental aid.

I refer to multiple, overlapping forms of violence in this dissertation, being careful not to equate, for example, the metaphoric violence of Proceso Pentágono's installations with the tangible, death-bringing brutality of the military massacre of students at Tlatelolco. There is no one kind of violence, and violence can exist in many forms: from subtle micro-aggressions against marginalized subjects and images, and the geographic violence of an earthquake, to state-sponsored genocide. However, these different forms of violence, like the different spaces I examine, interweave and feed each other, sometimes very tangentially and other times directly. Throughout this paper I specifically think of violence in terms of space and mobility. I aim not to

generalize about how violence moves or paralyzes, as all acts of violence are relational and experienced differently between the various parties involved. The constriction of space and mobility for one might mean the expansion of space and movement for the other. For example, when writing about torture, trauma theorist Elaine Scarry theorizes the contraction of the victim's universe in relation to the expansion of the victimizer's space (35). Writing about experience of extreme illness as well as state-sponsored violation, Scarry is preoccupied with how the body reacts to pain, and how pain is both spatialized and politicized. While Scarry sets up a clear violated/violator relationship, violence can also shift between players, and its movement need not always be unidirectional.

Dance scholar Erin Manning locates this relationality and movement of violence in her ruminations on a "politics of touch" inspired by the metaphor of two bodies improvising a tango dance outside of the reach of state violence. The violence in this dance is productive. It is violence as potential, which never fully annihilates. In reference to Adam's biblical gesture of reaching towards the apple, Manning implies that the act of touching in itself "is a violent decision because it implies a fall, a loss of ground, an unevenness between what can be imagined and what is beyond the scope of my experience" (49). Violence, then, refers to the lack of stability, the fall produced by two forces making contact. Violence signifies a movement that brings change. In this dissertation, I look at different kinds of violence from the quotidian violence of Frida Kahlo's tram accident, and the geological violence of the 1985 earthquake, to the extravagant state violence of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre. In dance theorist Randy Martin's terms of movement and politics, this violent lack of balance could be thought of as crisis (1). Using postmodern dance performance as a metaphor, Martin understands the moving, process-based workings of institutional politics—as forces always in flux, not resolvable finite historical accomplishments. Crisis seen as movement is productive in that it provokes change and can undermine seemingly stable, rigid social structures. Seen in this way, the four historical moments that I analyze—postrevolution; post-Tlatelolco, post-1985 earthquake, and pre-Ayotzinapa, are moments when multiple conflicting forces come into contact in Mexico City to decenter it by provoking *movement*, albeit often violent movement. Decentering involves losing stability, brutally, but productively.

Mexican urban theorist Carlos Monsiváis examines, through the lens of Mexico City's "rituals of chaos," a city that is post-apocalyptic, constantly on the verge of crisis but never fully blowing up or ceasing to exist (*Los Rituales del Caos 2*). A prominent critical voice of urban Mexican postmodernity, Monsiváis was a left-leaning intellectual, activist, and journalist who staunchly critiqued the PRI. His work, like de Certeau's looks for subversion within oppressive urban structures, but in a Mexican context. According to his rituals of chaos, the city exists in an eternal state of violence, and with that, movement. But the movement of violence, and the various forces that might stagnate movement, do not necessarily move in the same direction, following the flow of state power. It is this particular touch, or interaction between the movement of state power and moving bodies in Mexico City that interests me. Manning suggests "that the violence that erupts through the many ruptures and transformations involved in the sensing, touching body can be conceived of as different from and more productive than the violence the state imposes on the 'stable' bodies of its citizens" (52). She refers specifically to the negotiation of power between two bodies dancing tango with each other outside of state control, impeding full regimentation of their bodies. While Manning refers to a different set of movers in a different space, I take from her quote an important idea: When bodies move with

other bodies in ways and in spaces that they are not supposed to move in, those movements unhinge the supposedly rigid structures around them. Thus, the instability of the bodies of Mexico City's citizens—from Frida Kahlo's representations of gender and *mestizaje* to the site-specific dancers of *danza callejera*—reveals the myth of a stable city and an immutable state. Since the citizens' bodies that I analyze move both within and outside of state control, their embodied resistance reveals the myth of the state's full ability to shape their movements.

Here, the instability of violence, associated with threat, becomes the binary against which the nation-state constructs false notions of “security,” or lack of movement. Thus, moving, sensing bodies enact a kind of productive violence that diverts the supposedly monolithic flow, and with that the myth of stability, of state power. As Manning contends, “If we think of a violence that moves in more than one direction—a violence quite different from that sustained within the hierarchical system of sovereignty and security ordained by the nation-state—violence need not necessarily be considered a threat to difference” (56). In this dissertation, I am interested in movements that push in many directions, much like Manning's improvised tangos, movements that are relational and dialogic, in which the mobile bodies of citizens diverge (in a Certeauian sense) from the state-grids in which they are supposed to move, diverting their full annihilation by state violence.

Through a choreographic lens, I view both state violence and resistance to that violence in terms of movement. As Monsiváis might say, the throngs of people rushing to the Metro or the streams of cars in the street echo a kind of frenzied, yet somehow organized, dance being driven by a larger force. And yet, as Monsiváis might also suggest (and de Certeau would agree) that mini performances interrupt this constant flow of hegemonic power. Thinking in terms of Manning's “politics of touch,” both the meta-movements of the city, and the micro-movements of its individual citizens dance a form of contact improvisation, in which the movement of one pushes up against and alters the movement of the other in a constant negotiation. Thus, resistance in the context of Mexico City does not involve the pure pressing up against immobile constraints, nor does it ever result in fully breaking the forces that it contests. Instead, both hegemony and resistance remain in flux, the city never fully succumbing to annihilation and its citizens never fully liberated. As I will discuss in more depth in reference to dance scholar Danielle Goldman's argument, full freedom is never achievable, nor is freedom separable from constraint.

Consequently, choreographing Mexico City is a constant improvisation, a negotiation of political, corporeal bodies in space. If choreography involves shaping space, then the federal and municipal governments certainly lay out a map of roads, paths, and plazas: places to course through and others to pause in or meander around. At the same time, as I have suggested, street vendors set up shop where they should not, and protesters turn mobile spaces like streets into congested forums. Thus, the city is a zone where the role of choreographer shifts between differing actors, always unstable, with the threat of productive and destructive violence.

In terms of some of the various historical traumas that this dissertation inspects, the question remains: Where does healing fit within these legacies of brutality and movement? If the violent contact dance, as Manning implies, is always in movement, we might think of Mexico City as an open wound that—with each new rip and tear at its seams, each quake, each act of state brutality—continues bleeding. This might very well be the case, given that the city was founded through an act of colonial violation that resounds in the social fabric and in the broken

Aztec stones upon which its cathedrals are raised. However, as Manning might argue, this “politics of touch” between citizens and space, is never complete. The wounded city never ceases to dance because it is alive. The wound is both a constant threat of death/immobility and a reminder of life, a rip, a tear, and a *movement*. Thus, in the following chapters, I ask how those wounded by the state move through its wounding, reshaping the contours of imposed violence towards a violence that might not always lead to radical institutional reform, but nonetheless produces movement where there should be paralysis, or even temporarily stops the flow of capital, diverting the wound from becoming fully lethal.

CHAPTER 1:

A HAIR OUT OF PARALYZED-PLACE— FRIDA KAHLO'S METAPHORIC CHOREOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, The Museum of Modern Arts, New York.

Introduction

In *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940) (see fig. 1), a shorn Frida Kahlo sits atop a yellow chair in a man's suit that dwarfs her tiny head. Her stature is rigid; her gaze is as probing as it always is. Her right hand clasps scissors while her left hand holds a wad of black hair. Sinewy clumps of strands swirl around the flat, barren landscape, under, over, around, and near the chair. They defy perspective, pointing up at strange angles and seeming to levitate. The heavy folds of Kahlo's suit and the bare background exemplify a trend in her work: the unbearable stillness of a female subject in a tight place. Indeed, Kahlo's self-portraits are almost always meditations on stillness, rarely implying action or *movement*: Typically, Kahlo depicts her body as paralyzed, suffocated by a claustrophobic background. Traumatic events, after all, severely limited her mobility and confined her to beds, medical corsets, and wheelchairs. Consequently, her work rarely used the impressionistic brushstroke-blurs, diffuse lines,

uncontrolled curves, or precarious posture that conjure movement in painting. This portrait is no exception. However, upon close inspection, her hairs sweep S's and wiggle like worms across the ground, corresponding with and amplifying that serial movement of the musical notes above. Their black shapes mimic the lyrics of the musical score. While seemingly frozen, the painting pulses with small, serpentine dances.

In this chapter, I explore the signature still and stilled objects of Kahlo's oeuvre, the painted hair, casts, wounds, and find in them resistant micro-movements. Her work is both emblematic of and resistant to impossible, hegemonic postrevolutionary social constructs that never fully succeed in freezing or fragmenting her identity. During this time, Mexico City's social fabric experienced massive changes and identity became radically destabilized. In reaction, the postrevolutionary government's history writing project attempted to solidify and stabilize national archetypes. As I mentioned in the introduction, the Mexican Revolution was a major farmworker-led social upheaval from 1910-1920. This was a time of massive war and violence that affected the entire nation. It ended in the foundation of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), and a massive restructuring of the government. I will refer to the "postrevolution" (and postrevolutionary) as the period from around 1920-1940 in which Kahlo lived. During the postrevolutionary period, the new government established a vast public education system as well as hospitals and employment for the working classes. It was a period of change as Mexico City rapidly industrialized and modernized, bringing with it cars, trains, and other methods of transport. As a result, as I will later address, Kahlo experienced a debilitating tram accident crossing the city.

Furthermore, postrevolutionary Mexico involved a significant, radical, national identity redefinition project. Prior to the revolution, Porfirio Diaz's regime and its precedents had valued Mexico's European heritage and had devalued its indigenous roots. During the postrevolutionary era, supported by Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos, artists were encouraged to reimagine and represent a different version of Mexican history as well as a different version of its present and future. Postrevolutionary murals valued Mexico's mestizo, or mixed, heritage, and drew from pre-Columbian art as well as contemporary indigenous culture to represent a nation proud of its autochthonous heritage. As we will see through my discussion of Kahlo's work, however, these representations had their limits when representing women and indigenous people. Often, women were depicted as indigenous earth mothers such as in multiple Rivera murals. Other murals such as Orozco's *Malinche* depicted the archetypal female "traitor" figure of Malintzín, Cortés' indigenous lover. Beyond the depictions of symbolic virgins, mothers, and whores, there were few paintings of individual, specific women. While the national identity project solidified the image of a macho-driven nation surging towards a modern, industrial future with roots in its indigenous past, this resulted from a profound identity crisis. After one of the greatest revolutions of the 20th century, previous social hierarchies were being vehemently rejected while new ones were being created. Rejecting European values and United States capitalism and yet embracing modernity and industrialization, Mexico found itself at a crossroads. If anything, as Corrine Andersen argues, postrevolutionary identity, despite its strong iconic symbols across murals and in literature, was anything but stable (120, 124, 128).

The Revolution and the postrevolutionary modern period certainly opened doors for women in terms of greater access to education and working class employment. Artists such as Kahlo and Tina Modotti got opportunities to create that they would not have received prior to

the Revolution, and important figures like Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral would play a large role in Mexico's educational reform. However, the overall national project was deeply patriarchal. The great Muralists and state leaders were males. While history now celebrated Mexico's indigenous past, it maintained the invisibilization of female voices and focused on narratives of important men and victimized or treacherous women (for example la Malinche). Mexico City was a violent space for women who defied traditional roles (Ford 65-68).

Kahlo was limited in her movements both physically and socially. First, she suffered from polio as a child, the tram accident as a teen, and its aftermath of surgeries over the course of her life. She was often so infirm that she needed to stay in bed for months on end in corrective plaster casts to contain her fractured spine. In her time period, few middle class women worked outside of the home, and were confined to the domestic sphere. Thus, Kahlo's confinement to the private space was something that she not only resisted by her active participation in the bohemian art world, but would also use within her artwork: Her seemingly unimportant, private portraits that did not depict great historical events would ultimately prove how the personal is political.

In this dissertation I read movement as an embodied and metaphoric force of energy, power, or agency that destabilizes as it connects. It cannot be separated from its mover's identity. I define resistance as a complex movement that pushes against and is simultaneously compelled by the shifting grains of structural oppression. It is a thrust away from the borders that both threaten to suffocate it to lifelessness and squeeze it into being. Resistance, here, is not just about differential bodies troubling "oppressive" space by *being* in it, but by *moving* around, through, and in that space. It is about how bodies move through bodies and how space moves within bodies. It is also about troubling the stability of the locations in which the bodies move and the fixity of their oppression. By pushing against, resistance reveals the shakiness of its context. Resistance can never be fully oppositional or binary; it is both stalled and propelled by the constraints that it moves within and against.

Choreography, then, can contain as it resists and resist as it contains. In *Choreographing Empathy*, dance scholar Susan Foster defines choreography as "a referent for a structuring of movement," which dictates mobility by shaping space. She continues:

[Choreography] varies considerably in terms of how specific and detailed its plan of activity is. Sometimes designating minute aspects of movement, or alternatively, sketching out the broad contours of action within which variation might occur, choreography constitutes a plan or score according to which movement unfolds. Buildings choreograph space and people's movement through them; cameras choreograph cinematic action. (2)

Consequently, choreography is not pure, unbounded movement, but rather the constraints that produce movement. The systems, forces, or individuals that choreograph thus exert control, or power, over space. Postrevolutionary ideological discourses on race and gender, in a sense, choreographed the possibilities within which Kahlo and the male Muralists moved, structuring the spaces to which she had access. As Foster suggests, the shaping of movement happens at both macro and micro levels, within larger socio-structural choreographies; individuals may thus shape their own movement and space. Kahlo's movement may push up against prevailing

strictures, but, in doing so, it also designs the new spatial constraints in which she moves. By carving her own spatial limits, she claims agency within and against larger choreographies of national identity. She moves not only within someone else's structure, but also contradicts the larger structures that threaten to suffocate her. This resistance within and against a larger map is reminiscent of de Certeau's spatial tactics. He writes, "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across. . . . It is only ambivalently that the limit circumscribes in this space It does the opposite of what it says. It hands place over to the foreigner that it gives the impression of throwing out Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits. . ." (129). The confines of Mexico City's map produce Kahlo's movement, yet her movement changes the map of her confines and moves her boundaries. However, Kahlo does this not only within the official map of the city with her "story," but through a metaphoric map of postrevolutionary identity tropes, and via the intersection of her painting, her physical micro-movements and her "performance" of identity.

Foster points out the potential difference between improvised, tactical movement and choreography, acknowledging that "sometimes choreography is constructed as being in opposition to improvised or spontaneous elements in the dance performance, at other times, it is interpreted as a score or set of principles that guide spontaneous invention" (*Choreographing Empathy* 3). As spatial constraints constantly vacillate both within the larger architectural and ideological choreographies, the line between tactical improvised movement and choreography shifts. By extension, as Kahlo improvises movement within the strictures of her social space, the oeuvre of her paintings serve, less as a rigid plan, and more as a score for different representational possibilities.

Drawing from dance scholar Danielle Goldman, who sees "freedom" as a mobile negotiation of "tight places," I view constraints as the spatial forces as both obstacles to freedom of movement and as entities that fluctuate and move (3). From such a perspective, Kahlo, a woman with limited bodily movement working in the relatively static medium of painting, emerges as a radical choreographer. Her radicality does not imply full rejection of the space that she moves in, nor fully eschews hegemonic ideas. What is radical about her work is its force of movement within such tightly limited space and her ability to boldly reshape space. Given the socio-structural constraints of being a queer female artist in her time period and the physical limitations of her severe disability, Kahlo's choreography might have been reduced to virtual paralysis. Her resistance is therefore precisely where it seems nonexistent, in the almost imperceptible "Coatlicue hairs" (as Gloria Anzaldúa calls them) of Kahlo's locks (69). Furthermore, by destabilizing rigid representations of her body, Kahlo calls attention to the latent instability of postrevolutionary national identity. My project is not to define movement as sweeping jumps, but rather as miniature potent pulses. Resistance is as small as a clenched jaw, and that is a powerful force.

This resistance happens within Kahlo's multiple situations. It manifests through metaphoric representation, physical pain, and national crisis. Not only did her work express emotional strife, but also her body experienced excruciating suffering. Part of the postrevolutionary artistic milieu, Kahlo engaged in visual discourse on the violent identity crisis of *mestizaje*. Thus, I locate this choreography within personal (and not only archetypal) narratives of extreme pain and trauma. I define trauma as embodied and metaphoric mega-constraints that produce intense suffering. Trauma can be as small as daily micro-aggressions or

as large as Kahlo's near-death bus accident. Multiple traumas may intersect, from the national, to the embodied level. Thus I connect Kahlo's physical trauma to larger structural violations that manifest themselves in her body. While I later dedicate extensive attention to Kahlo's choreography of and through physical and emotional pain, I articulate how her personal experiences articulate a larger politics. That is, Kahlo's physical pain does not exist in a private vacuum but is instead a product of larger social and architectural traumas of modern postrevolutionary Mexico City. Her physical suffering stems from her famous accident, which happened crossing the city in a modern trolley. Additionally, modern Western medical treatments, available in her urban context, both alleviated and aggravated her agony. Postrevolutionary modern Mexico City was not only a backdrop to her trauma, but an agent in provoking her pain.

Influenced by dance scholar Erin Manning's *politics of touch*, in which moving bodies enact a differential, productive violence in opposition to hierarchical state violence (52), I argue that political violence cannot be separated from movement in Kahlo's choreographies. Violence is a kind of movement. It is an energy force that rips and destabilizes, and creates change, on a minimal or massive level. It can both destroy and give life, like the tiny tears of muscles that propel bodily expansion. As I mentioned and will further discuss, the space of national crisis that Kahlo moves in and shapes her movements is not static. The forces that limit her also squeeze and release her, as she simultaneously shapes space. Of course there exist varying gradations of these violent movements. On the one hand, we can think of *extravagant violence* as violence at the meta-level of state violence, wars, and massacres. On the other hand, we have the *quotidian violence* that everyday subjects experience via micro-aggressions, limited access to space, and mundane acts of cruelty. While Kahlo's experiences of violence may have been primarily quotidian, they intersect and come into conversation with larger, theatrical acts of state violence. Her spatial forming and subsequent movement is not without violent force either; the brusque movements and their subsequent pain become productive. Birth, death, movement, and pain become intertwined and inseparable. Violent forces such as the tram accident and the large restructuring of Mexican postrevolutionary national identity impelled Kahlo, and she herself moved violently.

Importantly, Kahlo's *performs* this choreography. Her metaphoric and embodied movement, like the constraints of postrevolutionary Mexican archetypes and architecture, is inherently theatrical. By painting on her casts and dressing in her Tehuana dresses, Kahlo performs and un-performs her postrevolutionary identity (Hedrick 167). Her art and her movement do not stop at her paintings. Thus, she re-choreographs and moves between disciplines, blurring boundaries. For this reason, I must employ a multidisciplinary methodology that intersects dance studies, performance studies, and visual studies. Kahlo's resistant movements become a force through which traditional formal definitions of performance art, visual art, and even dance, dissolve.

Hair

In *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, Kahlo shakes up various locations and pushes against diverse constrictions at once. Adapting Foucault's *heterotopia* to the metaphoric space of painting, I see each site as multilayered, conflicting, and possessing multiple meanings. Accordingly, the painting's barren landscape houses more than itself. It contains the spaces of

Kahlo's body, along with the suit, the landscape of 1940s Mexico City, and the patriarchal postrevolutionary representational discourses on national citizenship. Kahlo painted in a time of national identity crisis in the 1920s-1950s. Dance theorist Randy Martin defines crisis through choreographic metaphors seeing it "in motion, already passing from one (im)balance to another" (1). With upheaval during and following the Mexican Revolution, the context in which Kahlo moved was itself imbalanced and mobile, to say the least.

Kahlo choreographically moves within and against different binary tropes of femininity and masculinity inscribed in postrevolutionary representational politics. As the country experienced flux, official art constructed new stable notions of Mexicanness that both embraced and institutionalized change. The new populist government employed Muralism to represent the radically transformed nation by sedimenting fixed notions of *mestizaje*, *indigenismo*, and gender. In murals, women often embodied Mexico. They appeared as archaic symbols—Siqueiros' self-sacrificing yet sexy *Liberty*, Orozcos' national whore *la Chata* or his *Malinche*, or Rivera's multiple indigenous earth mother figures; yet they seldom were portrayed as complex, active protagonists or real individual women (Coffey 166). *Liberty* shows an angry, normatively beautiful red-headed figure breaking chains of oppression with her prominent, large breasts; *la Chata* depicts a voluptuous greenish nude woman with a sinister smile who opens her legs to symbols of bourgeois corruption; and Rivera's earth mothers often stoically carry flowers or tend to children. Female artists like Kahlo and Tina Modotti were the exceptions and did not receive the Muralists' fame or fortune. Suffrage, while called for by Cárdenas in 1937, did not go into effect in a federal election until 1958 (Olcott et al. 2).

Despite these official social constraints, neither postrevolutionary Mexico nor women's roles were as solid as imagined, as Kahlo's gender-bending metaphoric choreography reveals. In fact, the massive social upheavals that occurred during and following the Revolution unhinged traditional gender roles. Despite efforts to the contrary, women were not exempt from experiencing the crisis of revolution and change (Olcott *Revolutionary Women* 6). Prior to the revolution, two polarized female ideals prevailed: The self-sacrificing *madre abnegada* of the Virgin Mary, and the Malinche, the indigenous mother of mestizos who sells out to Cortés via her treacherous sexuality. (Olcott et al. 17). Addressing access to citizenship, Jocelyn Olcott highlights new archetypes produced by the imbalance of revolutionary politics and precarious modernization:

the *soldadera* (camp follower) . . . the *soldada* (armed combatant), *la chica moderna* (modern girl) and *la mujer nueva* (new woman) Women activists faced accusations not only of feminizing the masculine but also of masculinizing the feminine. Questioning the demands of [self-sacrifice] . . . earned one the label of *marimacho*, a tomboy of dubious sexuality . . . as distinct from a 'genuine' woman. Always used in the masculine form to highlight the gender subversion, the . . . feminist *marimacho* stood as an unmistakable counterpoint to the *madre abnegada*. (Olcott et al. 17)

The ability of women to move inside these different archetypes and fit within Mexican society depended largely on social class. Here, the gender-queer *marimacho* (which I will refer to as *marimacha* as an inversion of term's negative connotation and a gender play that feminizes "macho") that Kahlo embodies in this painting threateningly subverts hegemonic Mexican

femininity symbolized by *la madre abnegada*. While the *soldadera*, *soldada*, *chica moderna*, *mujer nueva*, and *marimacha* invited new forms of imagining identity, they were contained to binary tropes of masculinity and femininity, and never depicted as the protagonists of history. And while the lived postrevolutionary modern experience opened up new ways for women like and unlike Kahlo to reimagine their identities, official art discourses on gender remained relatively reductive (Coffey 9-11). Normative postrevolutionary space stayed hostile to female mobility. For a woman, donning the modern man's symbolic attire does not mobilize her within, but outside of official discourse. The mestiza is a threat. At the same time, the indigenous woman only exists in postrevolutionary discourse as a dress, an empty symbolic shell of subservient femininity that ignores the lived realities of indigenous women. While Muralists often painted specific male mestizo figures from the Mexican Revolution, they rarely represented individual indigenous men, and almost never painted specific indigenous women. The greatest threat, in fact, to the postrevolutionary imaginary were the real, living indigenous women whose image came to symbolize nation yet whose voices were silenced. Of course it is crucial to note that no body could fully embody these archetypes, and that other permissible forms of performing gender existed, especially in the bohemian middle class avant-garde as evidenced by Gabriela Mistral or Kahlo's gender-bending.

Muralism consequently negotiated a male-gendered dance with sweeping, phallic leaps across the city's walls as great men scaled massive scaffolds to paint. Amply financed by the government to create "revolutionary" art, their grand projects were restricted by official narratives, yet resulted in expansive gestures of power, privilege, and complicity. That is, the postrevolutionary government choreographed the large spaces within which the Muralists could move. While the government constrained the murals' subject matter, the Muralists and their work occupied vast expanses of social and architectural space. On the one hand, these huge masculine movements claiming immense territories in fact hark to the brushing currents of colonization's unbounded spatial limitations. Women in Kahlo's position, on the other hand, should have been confined to the minute space of the private, and the tiny gestures associated with upper-middle class femininity. As we shall see, though, Kahlo did not approach the domestic private sphere of her recovery within traditionally scripted behavior. Not only did she redesign that space with her artistic production and bohemian lifestyle, but she also ambulated boldly outside of the private sphere in Mexico City's artistic and political communities. Her spatial limitations due to gender and illness ultimately produce her paintings' rebellious potential. As this portrait proves, she unhinges binary gender representation, all the while dancing *against* the socio-spatial proscriptions that dictate her immobility. This is not to imply that Kahlo was wholly stifled by her societal constraints. Her middle class privilege, after all, garnered her access to certain social mobility. This privilege, however, still was born from constraint and was not completely mobile: Born to a German immigrant photographer father and a Oaxacan mestiza mother, she grew up in a middle class family that experienced financial difficulty. Her attendance at the prestigious, coed postrevolutionary public school *la Preparatoria Nacional* as well as her marriage to Rivera certainly opened many doors for her. While she became part of a bohemian art elite through Rivera, this was not the same as pertaining to the country's elite class.

***Pelona* Movement**

First, a modern male suit encases Kahlo's body. The suit's largeness suggests she that

could be donning her zaftig recent ex-husband Diego Rivera's clothing, although his clothes would likely have engulfed even more her tiny frame. Unlike photographs of Kahlo cross-dressing in the early 1920s, she does not, as Gabriela Cano describes, engage in a "playful, . . . irreverent gesture, perhaps following international fashion à la garçon" nor, with her earrings and pumps does she portray herself as a transgender man (Olcott et al. 37). Following art historian Margaret Lindauer, I look beyond the suit as a symbol of Rivera, her husband. Instead, I see her potentially entering into the metaphoric zone of Rivera, the patriarchal model of postrevolutionary power. This suit that her supposedly still body inhabits implies access to passage through the modern city, male travel within the flow of state power. In other words, since middle class men wore suits and participated in the modern economy, their suits signified class mobility. While women were indeed entering the workplace more than before the Revolution, they did not get to access the power bestowed by the positions that men in suits could obtain. However, her middle class female body is not authorized to pass easily within this space. By wearing the suit, Kahlo thwarts the symbolic hegemonic male strides expected of it, and also provokes counter-currents: In order to move with male power, she must move against it. For her desire to cross gender dichotomies and not be cramped to the paralysis of stereotypical femininity, inherently resists norms.

Representing herself in male clothes re-choreographs the potential for female movement within male space, and even for female movement within male movement. In other words, her metaphoric movement in the suit is a deeply queer gesture, if queer is to be understood as a questioning of normative definitions of gender and sexuality. She blurs the definition between masculinity and femininity: As a female-identified subject moving metaphorically within the male suit, she then is moving within male space. At the same time, since the suit implies male movement, her female body moves within the framework of this male movement.

Shunning her trademark Tehuana dress of the Zapotec indigenous women, she responds complexly and precariously to postrevolutionary discourses on femininity, class, and *indigenismo* (indigenism) as visually laid-out in Muralist depictions of the national narrative. This dress was typical of the matriarchal Zapotec women from Oaxaca. During Kahlo's time dresses like these were not worn by middle class *mestizas*, but within indigenous communities. The postrevolutionary project brought representations of female indigenous dress as sources of national pride into murals as symbols of Mexico's proud indigenous roots. Like the suit, as Tace Hedrick would argue, the Tehuana dress served as "her biggest role in life—her depiction of her own self and her art in Indian drag" (165). A middle class *mestiza*, Kahlo could not claim as her own the lived experience of marginalized indigenous people any more than she could that of a man, making these portrayals in the dress misrepresentative of her class experience. In fact, her indigenous drag enacted a kind of representational violence upon indigenous people in an act of speaking for an experience that she could not speak for, silencing their voices just like the postrevolutionary state. Biographers such as Hayden Herrera claim that she wore the dress to please Rivera. By extension, given Rivera's reverence of *indigenismo*, Kahlo's indigenous costume engendered revolutionary Muralist representational ideals. Within these tropes found in the great murals, modern middle-class and working-class mestizo manhood is celebrated alongside peasant-class indigenous "traditional" womanhood (Coffey 9-11, 46). In many murals, the model revolutionary mestizo moves forward into "progress" while the model mestiza stays stuck in the past along with the indigenous. However, Kahlo rarely depicts herself as fully passive in indigenous garb, suggesting the renowned (and, by Kahlo, potentially

romanticized and stereotyped) strength of the matriarchal women from whom she appropriated her look. Thus, Kahlo does not shed complete powerlessness with the dress so as to become wholly empowered by the suit—both the suit *and* the dress empower her, but in different ways. Nor does she fully reject revolutionary ideals by putting on pants. She stays liminally but resolutely within the realm of two official Muralist representational archetypes (the modern mestizo and the “traditional” indigenous woman). That is, while partially donning two stereotypical identifications, she does not fully fit into either, creating a third space outside of the binary, one that references the binary.

The scissors near her pelvis by her unladylike spread legs imply either a phallus or castration, as Helga Prignitz-Poda suggests (Prignitz-Poda and Kahlo 150). This ambiguity questions dualistic definitions that masculinize and phallicize power and feminize and castrate lack of power. How can Kahlo castrate herself if hair is feminine? Do the “masculine” scissors imbue her with agency over her “feminine” hair or does her hair mock the scissors? Regardless, the choice to self-castrate assigns her agency. She enacts violence upon herself instead of being acted upon, disallowing the supposed passivity of the colonized subject. Here, the portrait’s gender-crossing dance pulses. While martyring herself, she refuses the hegemonic female role of *madre abnegada* that Olcott refers to. That is, while cutting her body like a saint, she depicts herself as the supposedly dangerous, unholy butch, the *marimacha*. Imbuing her gender non-conforming form, via mutilation, with the sacred powers associated with rigid femininity, she elevates the threatening archetype of the *marimacha* to saintly status. After all, her references to religious iconography in other paintings and her common appropriation of the votive *retablo* form sanctify the secular, and question the rigid gender binaries upon which Mexican Catholicism rests. Her dance shifts agency from one trope to another, unsettling its attachment to rigid, impossible, gendered standards.

As her hair surrounds the suit, it dislodges constrictive dualistic power, spreading like a resilient plant that resists domestication. Prignitz-Poda choreographically describes the brutal events preceding the painting’s stillness: “In . . . [a] frenzy, Frida has strewn her . . . hair all over the floor. Now the tufts . . . are coiling around the legs of the chair and winding across the floor, as if having a life of their own . . . [She] has cut off . . . her femininity, her desires” (Prignitz-Poda and Kahlo 150). Implying an equation of the hair’s femininity with (assumedly heterosexual) desire, Prignitz-Poda does not account for why it moves *after* Kahlo severs it, and why it moves at all. If Kahlo fully rejects its femininity and desire, why does it dance like a colony of caterpillars? This twirling hair mocks a simple reading of a woman dominating her passive femininity by asserting masculinity.

Hair, after all is not a stable symbol. At first glance, like Western hegemonic femininity, it is passive, moved only by outer forces. Dead outside of the skin, it does not bleed when cut like other body parts. However, it moves minutely at the follicle, connecting outer space and skin. Phenomenologically, it links the body and the world, and expressively, it marks the world onto the body. Hair stands at the intersection of Merleau-Ponty’s body schema and Franz Fanon’s *racial epidermal schema*. For Merleau-Ponty, the body schema describes how a (universalized) body experiences continuity between inner and outer space (275). Since hair connects skin to the world, it is a portal of this experience. However, Fanon’s *racial epidermal schema* critiques the body schema, showing how those with dark skin color are prohibited from the universal body schema’s fluid access to space (112). Hair not only connects inner bodily

space to outer space, but it visually marks political subjectivity. No longer attached to Kahlo's body, the strands should lie limp or disperse in a pattern suggesting that something else moved them. Instead, they form improbable knots and braid themselves around the chair legs. Some hairs almost levitate. The disorganized swirls imply that they dance of their own volition. Contrary to suggesting that Kahlo's masculinity, symbolized by the suit and shorn hair, liberates her from her passive, defunct femininity, the moving locks imbue her femininity with life and power. The writhing hair, unsuccessfully subjugated by now-immobile scissors, thwarts a simple narrative that equates masculinity with agency and femininity with subjugation. Thus, the hair doesn't grant Kahlo power by traveling from one gender to another. Instead, it enables her by moving out, around, and through gender until she dissolves the categories of male and female.

As I will discuss further, *pelonas* were modern women in the 1920s that wore their hair short. (Though I must note that Kahlo painted this portrait in 1940). How does Kahlo's *pelona*, shorn choreography move within revolutionary discourses on modern mestiza femininity? The scissors and unruly hair suggest not a fluid flight from one identity to another, but an awkward struggle. In fact, the pressure of ill-fitting imposed gender categories on her body produces this movement. Through the symbolism of her mobile hair, her constrained subjectivity refuses to be fully paralyzed. As the invented macho song (with musical bars suggesting imprisonment) above the painting states, "Mira que si te quise fué por el pelo, Ahora que estás pelona ya no te quiero" (Prignitz-Poda and Kahlo 151). If Diego had loved her it had been for her hair (and her idealized postrevolutionary female indigenous archetype). Now that she is shorn, he won't love her. Interestingly, the song is unhinged from the structure of measure. It floats, as if freed from the spatial constraints that hinder it. The music's mobility might poke fun at the misogynistic lyrics. The presence of music invites Kahlo to dance within its open structure. Prignitz-Poda explains that the Mexican term *pelona* means not only "shaved head," but also "death" (151). She concludes that this reference to death signifies Kahlo's loss of security after divorce from Rivera. However, what should be deceased here lives. Now cut, her hair's "female strength and power" is not lost but twists with renewed energy. As I will explain below, death flirts with independence, as modern female independence flirted with violence in Mexico City.

Kahlo was not an anomaly for her social context. *Pelonas* also refer to the "modern women" who were attacked in Mexico City over the summer of 1924 for sporting popular flapper-bobs. This happened primarily at schools, where the new presence of female students inspired insecurity in male students used to an all-male, patriarchal institution. Eileen Mary Ford comments, "Traditionally, indigenous or *mestiza* women had styled their hair in long braids and shedding these braids in favor of a shorter cosmopolitan bob proved controversial. Angry mobs of male students dragged . . . women into a school shower and shaved their heads" (224). Being *pelona*, thus implies the gendered risk of claiming female subject movement within modern Mexico City. *Pelona* movement resists, brushes against, and elides death in self-imposed mini hair-cutting snips. It moves differentially in an unwelcoming place, yet is simultaneously impelled by the currents of modernization. For *pelonas* like Kahlo, chopping tresses indicated a type of revolutionary (with a lower case r) shedding of the indigenous dress, not in necessary rejection of *indigenismo*, but in opposition to the binary stereotypes of postrevolution identity as portrayed in Muralist works of art. Of course there is a huge difference between how different women were depicted in murals and how they actually dressed. The Tehuana-esque politics of dress were not widespread, though several artists wore such clothing. However, the flapper look

accompanied nascent 20th century notions of female athleticism that Kahlo's disabled body could not engender. Thus, unlike other *pelonas*, she pushes the look from the short flapper dress to the suit potentially as an attempt to hide her damaged leg, further bending the gender symbolism. Since her legs were uneven due to childhood polio, and she later developed gangrene in one foot, she had a limp. Her foot was amputated in 1954. The suit not only allowed her to cross genders but also hid her non-normative, disabled legs from sight. In fact, here Kahlo wears not a bob but a slicked-back male cut.

It is important to remember that while I put Kahlo's painting in conversation with the other *pelonas*, Kahlo possessed class privilege that allowed her protection from the kind of physical violence experienced by the predominantly working-class women. In other words, the members of the avant-garde elite with which she socialized have celebrated or at least tolerated her edgy look; while male classmates of the working class *pelonas* subjected them to public, physical shaming. Pertaining to a bohemian elite enabled her to cross gender binaries as a political and aesthetic choice that did not risk her life and limb. In this sense, her social status was crucial to facilitating her gender resistant movement.

I return to my initial question: Why do Kahlo's microscopic resistant choreographies matter? Here, I use Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa's "Coatlicue state" as a paradigm, a metaphor to understand Kahlo's hair's differential micro-movement within discourses on *marimachas*, *pelonas*, Malinches, and *madres abnegadas*. This metaphoric state instigates powerful resistance at the violent border site of the mestiza body and, for Anzaldúa, the site of the U.S./Mexico border. The Coatlicue state's resistance is a movement produced by and against the minute confines of physical and subjective borders: It is the productive and destructive movement within, through, and against tight binaries that attempt to separate rather than unify identity. While *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* does not refer to Anzaldúa's specific borderlands, it does border-cross within an oppressively tight mestiza context. In the Coatlicue state, Anzaldúa applies pre-Columbian mythology to question violent gendered colonial narratives by recuperating female deities. Coatlicue, the serpent goddess, represents both life and death: that which devours and that which gives birth. For Anzaldúa, "*Coatlicue* . . . represents duality, . . . a synthesis of duality, and a third perspective—something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality" (68). The Coatlicue state engenders the mestiza body's refusal to submit to full colonization via miniscule, but powerful migration. Describing this pre-border-crossing moment, Anzaldúa writes: "Frozen in stasis, she perceives a slight movement—a thousand slithering serpent hairs, *Coatlicue*. It is activity (not immobility) at its most dynamic stage, but it is an underground movement requiring all her energy" (69). The deep identity/border-crossing power of the Coatlicue state comes from a stirring born out of the intense strictures of nearly paralyzed mestiza subjectivity. Anzaldúa's prelude to rebellious crossing invoking a snake goddess allows me to read the serpentine hairs crawling around Kahlo's feet not as a direct reference to Coatlicue, but a common energy of restlessness found in the Coatlicue state. Interpreted thusly, the writhing strands represent Kahlo's power to, despite the violent boundaries that crossed her, cross those borders, between male and female, European and indigenous, and life and death. To push this further, Kahlo crossed these binaries not only despite them, but also due to the pressure of their constraints. What threatened her to death (the trolley accident, her surgeries, her abusive relationship with Rivera) simultaneously propelled her life force.

Only in the twitching of a thousand hairs can we sense a larger slither. In other words, when seemingly insignificant movements multiply, they become significant. Defining social movement as movements that culminate in institutional reform can erase the importance and visibility of micro-choreographies. Those who do not have access to institutional power often perform these small movements. Rather than fading into insignificance as official narratives might reveal, the resistant movements of many subaltern subjects accumulate power and force like a thousand snake hairs. In this way, Kahlo's work epitomizes decolonial feminist philosopher María Lugones' motions of micro-rebellion. Lugones sees resistance as bodily displacement through social space. The physical and psychological reduction to immobility through trauma might paralyze Kahlo. However, as Lugones maintains, even in the most claustrophobic brutal spaces, the subaltern body performs micro-stirrings resisting subjugation. Lugones locates "activity in the movements of the hand of someone rendered frozen by acts of extreme violation" (5). The minute flinching of the violated subject has great force, much as the tiny pulses of Kahlo's hair provoke larger currents. In Kahlo's case, her posthumous fame has enabled her work to travel and inspire queer and female painters, poets, and theorists, from Mexico City feminists and United States Chicanas, to artists across the world. Her tiny movements of resistance accumulate as they influence other artists to defy objectification and paint deeply political personal work.

Kahlo's cross-dressing figure denies fragmentation by patriarchal representational norms. These norms not only divided gender, but also rigidly defined the parameters of *mestizaje*. By *mestizaje*, I refer to the concept of racial and cultural mixing between the Spanish and Indigenous peoples (as well as Africans) that resulted as a product of colonization in Mexico, which would become a key part of the postrevolutionary national identity building project. As art historian Corrine Andersen argues, on the one hand, the state and the Muralists' postrevolutionary discourses on *mestizaje* pinned indigenous culture and colonization in the past, freezing Mexican history in a false resolution. Andersen continues to demonstrate that Kahlo, on the other hand, depicts the past as an open wound through her lived, whole experience as a mestiza, despite the neat categories delineated by the national identity-building project. Reading Kahlo's painting *Las Dos Fridas* in conversation with national Revolutionary visual narratives, Andersen states, "Kahlo destabilizes the postrevolutionary fantasy of the *mestizo* as the harmoniously balanced genetic and cultural combination of the Meso-American . . . and the Spanish conquerors" (124). Hailing Minister of Education José Vasconcelos' eugenic notion of a superior third race, or *la Raza Cósmica*, most Muralist paintings represented a simplified, glorified depiction of proud *mestizaje* of a nation, inspired by its indigenous past yet headed towards an industrial future. Like her peers, Kahlo engages in anti-imperialist pro-revolution visual discourses on *mestizaje*, yet as Andersen points out, she mobilizes *mestizaje* to expose its unresolved violence within the site of her own border-crossing body. The protagonists of the postrevolutionary national project's *Raza Cósmica* were rigidly gendered as well as racialized. As Anne Rubenstein shows in an article on *las pelonas*, "opposition to the vogue for . . . short hair . . . could be cast in terms of defending national or racial purity That is, a woman who cut her hair could be seen as trying to resign from *la raza cósmica*" (62). Seen as an importation of Western ideology, the flapper symbolically threatened postrevolutionary notions of racial purity with its capitalist whiteness, especially when darker-skinned women claimed the look. However, as Rubenstein observes, the *pelona* style claimed and crossed two polarized identities. The young women "were embodying the glamorous look of local society women and international celebrities, but at the same time they were associating themselves with the

revolution and its gendered educational projects” (71). The short hair at once harked to new opportunities for women via nationalized education, and to capitalism. Thus, like the *pelonas*, Kahlo refuses to depict her mestiza body within official narratives on mestiza identity. Also like the *pelonas*, she simultaneously credits postrevolutionary Mexico for the new possibilities that enable her gender crossing. That is, given her access to high quality public education at the Preparatoria Nacional, and the *pelonas*’ access to education and jobs, they were able to consider new forms of identification. Kahlo pushes against the immobilizing forces that attempt to relegate both femininity and indigenosity to the past.

As we see, Kahlo choreographically crosses borders between seemingly stable categories, pushing up against the forces that threaten to suffocate her and slice her to pieces. For Chicana feminist Chela Sandoval, this embedded mobility is the transgressive power of *oppositional consciousness*, where fissured subjectivity, seen as the crux of postmodernism’s decentered subject (and present in her critique of Jameson), is the underlying condition of the violated, colonized, subaltern. Oppositional consciousness charges through a “kinetic cartography” (Davis and Sandoval 53) of the border zone, dancing the jerky, fragmented choreography evidenced in the severed, disorganized curls of Kahlo’s tresses. These differential currents of Kahlo’s hair result as “techniques for moving energy” (Sandoval 81). Subsequently, her almost imperceptibly pulsing locks reveal her intactness despite the constraints of the extremely restrictive border zones that attempted to split her and prohibit her passage.

Here, Kahlo’s miniscule oppositional choreography fitfully pushes against the national currents of Mexico’s modern postrevolutionary movement’s artistic project. At the same time, this postrevolutionary crisis enables Kahlo to question her own revolutionary citizenship. Her intense stillness in fact hinders the broad, masculine flow of the modern city, paradoxically destabilizing and interrupting stereotypical models of revolutionary action through the stillness of her pulsing presence. The symbolic *pelona* movement of Kahlo’s portrait does not take safety in the rigid binaries of fixed cultural and gendered identity, but embodies subject fluidity across hazardous terrain. The energy of her metaphoric dance becomes so rebellious precisely because of its subterranean smallness; its strength is in its near obliteration, its resilience amid impossibly huge constraints. That is, in *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* and her other work, Kahlo does not express the overt bodily movement of the modern metropolis. Instead, within and surrounding what looks like a tightly contained female body, one that precisely should not be moving, movement can be found. The tension created by this movement would not exist if she were not constrained. In the face of death, she lives. In the face of paralysis, she moves.

Furthermore, the force of Kahlo’s minute movement pushes the edges of cultural studies’ resistance theory. Her movements are, in a Certeauian sense, subversive, resistant, and also enabled by the map she moves in. The difference lies in both her specific site, and her specific movements. Neither is postrevolutionary Mexico City a universal city, nor is Kahlo a universal “walker” (Certeau 93) nor storyteller. Significantly, Kahlo’s micro-movements allow us to rethink resistance in terms of magnitude of force against constraint instead of length of distance. Her subjectivity as a queer, female, disabled mestiza also limits and produces her ability to move and the difficulty with which she moves across this map. Her middle-class privilege and her marriage to Rivera, however, did allow her access to the city map in other ways. Her queer mestiza subjectivity within a heteronormative map of neat nationalistic definitions of *mestizaje*, which sets her as “outsider,” in fact, enables rather than thwarts her

resistance.

Wound, Cast, Body: Performative Choreography

Up until now, I have examined only metaphoric movement in Kahlo's work. Heeding Lindauer's caution not to solely equate Kahlo's body and biography with her work and vice versa (151-152), I root Kahlo in her socio-historical context. That is, Kahlo's work is more than just a reflection of her relationship with Diego Rivera: The paintings themselves are political expressions in terms of how she represents gender, sexuality, ability, race, and nationality. I am interested in how Kahlo's body negotiates choreographies of trauma and modernity. How does Kahlo's physical experience of trauma intersect with the architectural and social trauma of modernization in a postrevolutionary city? In what way is Kahlo's physical pain political, and how can we read movement emanating not only from her paintings but also from her non-normatively moving body? Extending Foster's concept of choreography as a spatial shaping that limits as it produces movement, how did Mexico City's violence via the urban structures that produced Kahlo's bus accident—and the subsequent acts of modern western medical violence via the ongoing surgeries enacted upon Kahlo's body—limit and produce her resistant mobility? Kahlo lived in a time where disability was seen as infirmity and she was not societally expected to have a career let alone leave the house. Additionally, while gender roles were opening up, middle class women were still expected not to have careers but to marry and remain in the domestic sphere. Here, I ask how Kahlo's embodied act of painting could be seen as choreography, especially given spatialized notions that relegated middle-class disability and femininity to the private realm.

As I stated in the introduction, Frida Kahlo's movement is not only metaphoric but also performative. By dressing her disabled body in painted casts and Tehuana dresses, Kahlo theatricalized a non-normative identity. That is, very few middle-class women of her time period wore traditional indigenous clothes, nor was it the custom for invalids to receive guests in painted casts. She performs her identity via her dress by donning these costumes much as a performance artist might highlight parts of their identity that are incongruent with social expectations. Thus, it is no surprise that current Mexican and Chicano performance artists such as Guillermo Gómez Peña, Violeta Luna, and Jesusa Rodríguez have referenced or performed versions of Kahlo. By creating visual art on her own moving body, Kahlo became a performance artist far before the term "performancera" circulated in Mexico. Thus, the metaphoric choreographic argument via her painting expands not only to how her actual body moved but how she performed that body. Seeing her work not only as visual art allows us to push the boundaries of form. Kahlo moved not only between representational archetypes, but also between disciplines, blurring the lines between theater and visual art and between art and life. Her work serves as a predecessor for the visual art to art-action shift of the early 1970s that I will discuss in the next chapter.

Kahlo contracted polio as a child, leaving her with a limp and a shorter leg. Subsequently, as a teenager in 1925, as she was taking the one-hour bus ride from Coyoacán to the center of Mexico City, she suffered a freak accident in which, as the bus toppled, Kahlo was impaled through her vagina and out through her hip with a pole, fracturing her spine. This coincidentally gendered violation was not a natural disaster but a function of the unexpectedly violent movements of the modern city, a complex zone in which greater mobility for citizens

also brought new risks. As I will discuss in later chapters, modern Mexico's city planning—its roads, public transport, and other architectural elements—both connected and severed large sections of its population, ushering in a schizophrenic choreographic map for its subjects to both traverse and endure. Urban planning became a quotidian form of violence that shaped its citizens' lives, even as it enabled their movement.

Consequently, Kahlo's lack of physical mobility, following the bus accident and intensifying until her death, emerged in direct relation to the quotidian risk of her increased mobility through modern Mexico City. Kahlo's ensuing bouts with pain and confinement to beds, medical corsets, and wheelchairs in the private space of her house had everything to do with her attempted movement through public space. Counter to ahistorical readings of her work and life, Kahlo's wound was not solely personal. It was also a product of the shaky urban city planning that moved the postrevolutionary government's modernizing political project. While her accident was partially awful luck, it was also an undeniably urban, modern occurrence. This reveals the instability not only of the new technologies and structures that enabled the modern postrevolutionary city, but the violent velocity of social change. Not only was the Revolution a moment of crisis and tumult, but also the supposedly stabilized postrevolution city surged forward on the precipice of catastrophe. Modernization in practice did not adhere to the official, Muralist narrative of proud mestizo progress. While the Revolution and ensuing postrevolution era lurched Mexicans to radically reimagine society, that massive lurch forward also came at a huge cost.

Ironically, Mexico City had orchestrated, or choreographed, the extremely confined space in which her body performed its limited movements. These extreme limits to physical movement, however, served as the impetus for her paintings' strong metaphoric dances. Furthermore, the many subsequent surgeries doctors performed on Kahlo's body carved and molded it in a different choreography. While attempting to "fix" her body and piece it together, the surgeries also sliced it apart. Of course Kahlo sought salvation in these surgeries, even if they never fully healed her. In her diary, after all, she describes surgeon Juanito Farill as "un verdadero hombre de ciencia y además un ser heroico" (Fuentes 251). At the same time, her paintings resisted such representations of solely heroic medical care, heroicizing and even sanctifying her own image instead. For example, in her painting dedicated to Doctor Farill, she depicts herself painting a portrait of him using a palette made of her own bleeding heart. While she is in a wheelchair and painting from her heart, she is the creator in this painting, and he is the object, the portrait. It is a beautifully ambiguous image since, as she honors the man who shaped her body, she also, as an artist, shapes his image.



Fig. 2. Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column*, Dolores Olmedo Foundation, Mexico City.

In *The Broken Column* (1944) (see fig. 2) Kahlo depicts herself on a harsh, open landscape riddled with cracks, or wounds; her broken torso is harshly exposed. While this space is not urban, it is unquestionably and uncomfortably public, making her breasts and wound appear all the more vulnerable. Her body is stitched together by her corset and poked with metal nails—inorganic, outside elements that allude to industry and modern medical technologies. The European ionic column often seen on public facades is an ancient symbol of Western metropolis. However, this public, urban, phallic element has deeply and violently penetrated Kahlo's private body, from her hidden groin up to her throat, metaphorically raping and splitting her.

Here, she representationally evokes Malinche, or *la chingada*. This term simultaneously translates as “the raped woman” and “the ripped woman,” and is specifically used to describe Cortés's colonization of Mexico through his violation of the indigenous female body. Like Malinche, Kahlo in this painting is colonized through a form of rape, but Kahlo is penetrated with an emblem of European urbanity. Of course, unlike Malinche, she is not indigenous but mestiza, and her rape does not come at the direct hands of the conqueror but via the dispersed forces of historical colonization. Emblematising the circumstances of her accident, the public city space violently surges into, and debilitates the movements of, the most private zones of her female body. Ironically, elements of industry and modern science (the nails and the corset) both stitch together and further confine her body's motility, producing obvious pain in her tears.

Quite resonantly, Kahlo does not depict the pole with which she was impaled in the accident, but instead a column. This column is a literal play on the Spanish *columna*, which means both column and spinal chord. After all, the accident left Kahlo with so many fractured vertebrae that she could not move for months and was dependent upon painful corsets and never-ending surgeries to support and “correct” her spine. While Mexico City’s violent, public, architectural choreography fractures her spine, her body simultaneously shatters her phallic intruder. The ability to read the column as not only something that splits her but something that she splits provides her powerful agency in the act of violation. Even as Kahlo’s body is being ripped, her internal body space resists this ripping by splitting the external column. Additionally, while visibly torn and bleeding, Kahlo’s body remains strangely intact, held together by her head and the corset. Her eyes gaze firmly at the viewer, pained, but unapologetically undead. She refuses full splitting.

The external stimulus that cleaves across the boundaries of Kahlo’s skin was not only the pole but also the surgical knife. The doctors drew violent borders on her body. In this way, the depictions of surgical wounds on her body could also serve as a metaphor to colonization, since colonizers chopped up and divided conquered indigenous land. Her surgically re-membered Frankenstein-like body harks to the inability of postrevolutionary discourse to “fix” the nation from its colonial past. No matter how hard surgeons attempted to piece her body back together—much as politicians attempted to resolve the nation’s historical wound—they recreated damage in attempts to heal her already violated body. Surgery thus choreographs bodies much like colonial narratives choreograph land and power. Of course, the spatial constraints of her painted wound push up against the object that wounds it (in this case, the column, but potentially the scalpel or any other foreign invader into her body), and in turn wounds the intruder. Her bloody, painted flesh fights back.

Through her accident and subsequent maladies, Kahlo is stalled and stalls the movement of the modern city. Performance and disability scholar Petra Kupperts describes Benjamin’s reference to turn-of-the-century turtle-walkers as a metaphor for disability’s radical potential to disrupt the modern city’s flow: “Like the trickster . . . the turtle’s slow pace subverts the city’s rhythm by its presence” (2). Once nearly immobilized, Kahlo could not depict herself as modernity’s romanticized male flaneur who strolled easily through the city. Of course she could, as she did in *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, imagine this possibility with her paintbrush. As I suggested earlier, her now “disabled” presence uses small movements to disturb the flow of postrevolutionary urbanity, imagining a different kind of counter-travel. As Kupperts insinuates, disability is an unstable term, capturing a wide variety of physical and mental conditions. Furthermore, contrary to its assumed paralysis, the idea of disability is mobile. Like Kahlo, most “disabled” people have shifting experiences of pain and mobility that are not constant and are subject to change. Now immobilized by the city itself, Kahlo makes use of her disability to unleash the hyper-ability of her paintbrush.

In terms of pure bodily effort, given the pain that crippled her, Kahlo literally enacted the kind of micro-movement of resistance alluded to by Lugones’ clenched fist or Scott’s tensed muscles, by raising a paintbrush to canvas and moving her arm, wrist, and fingers. After all, painting is manual labor that is not removed from the body from which it emanates. In *Choreographing History*, Susan Foster refers to choreography not only in terms of shaping space, but in the act of writing, shaping words with the body: “A body, whether sitting writing

or standing, thinking or walking, talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing” (1). Not only does culture shape bodies but bodies shape culture through their activities, being written upon but also making meaning. While Foster links choreography to writing, I connect it to Kahlo’s act of painting. After all, as we see through the powerful postrevolutionary representational projects, bodies not only mold and are molded by words, but also form and are formed by images.

Foster continues, “The possibility of a body that is written upon but also writes moves critical studies of the body in new directions” (15). As we witness in *The Broken Column*, while Kahlo’s body was painted upon by (or rather raped by the paintbrush of) modern Mexico City and subsequent medical interventions, in a choreographic manner that shaped her limited space Kahlo shapes, and even fractures, those zones through her painting. By portraying her own body, she, and not the city or her surgeons, sculpts the spatial constraints within which she moves. Furthermore, in the physical act of depicting her almost immobile form, she moves that very real, painful, corseted, sutured body, enacting choreographic resistance to forces that otherwise might paralyze her. Paradoxically, her limited physical movement provokes her metaphoric movement, as we can see below in *Self-Portrait inside a Sunflower* (1954) (see fig. 3), which was painted shortly before her death. At the point that this was painted, Kahlo was riddled with discomfort, pumped with morphine, and immobilized in her bed with an amputated foot.



Fig. 3. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait Inside a Sunflower*, Private Collection, USA.

Thus Kahlo’s final “choreography” in this work shows painterly freedom with little visual constraint. Gone are her precise lines and clear spatial divides. Instead, her figure and space blur into each other in fiery, cosmic splotches. Ironically, as her bodily movements slid towards the paralysis of death, her final painting explodes with lively movement. This lively movement, of course, is also about to engulf her. If we think of her precise lines and clearly delineated space in her other paintings as borders, this painting is borderless, open to passage. This imaginary movement comes specifically *through* Kahlo’s pain. As Kahlo’s friend and art critic Raquel Tiból relays, when she visited Kahlo and viewed this painting

everything was in movement, everything was positive, everything emerged, attractive and emotional. Irritated by the vital energy radiating from an object she created, and that she no longer possessed in her own movements, she took a . . . knife . . . and overcoming the lassitude caused by the nightly injections, with tears in her eyes and a frozen smile on her trembling lips, she began scraping off the paint slowly, too slowly. (Prignitz-Poda and Kahlo 176)

What is, then, the connection between her physical suffering, politics, and creativity? In his article on Kahlo's bodily anguish and expression, Arnold Kraus remarks, "Pain *per se* and its possible consequences—like going blind or acquiring a physical disability . . . may generate a series of ideas that beget poetry, painting, dance, or, of course, precipitate suicide The artist is presented with finiteness" (Kraus 53). While Kraus focuses solely on a psychological reading that removes Kahlo from her larger sociopolitical context, he locates her creativity in her painful body. The finiteness that he mentions could be seen as cultural, spatial, and physical constraints to mobility that choreographs differential movement.

Kraus's claim contradicts trauma scholar Elaine Scarry's theory of pain's unproductivity, particularly her assertion that it "has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" (Scarry 5). While it is true that intense bodily suffering cannot be fully expressed in words, Kahlo's ongoing experience of not only psychological, but debilitating physical trauma while painting complicates this claim. Of course, it is important to distinguish the quotidian violence of Kahlo's suffering from the extravagantly violent torture of political prisoners by military regimes that Scarry discusses. The very specific circumstances in which she began to paint her self-portraits—lying in bed with a propped-up easel and a mirror above her—were directly tied to her invalidism. Kahlo spent so much time in agony that the expression and experience of her pain cannot be as easily separated from her productivity. It appears that she managed to move, not only ideologically but also physically with her paintbrush, through the wounds that limited her space and movement. That is, we can safely assume that Frida Kahlo did not only paint *after* experiencing pain and subsequently reflecting upon it. She painted before, *while*, and after she was in pain. As she moved her paintbrush and her body in the act of painting, she most likely agitated her physical pain.

Moving within and through trauma and provoking pain on top of pain, Kahlo uses violent socio-spatial and physical constraints to produce and destroy her world. Scarry asserts that "[Trauma] destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body [for the tortured], or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe [for the torturer/regime]" (35). Via this spatial reading on torture, she implies that trauma and violence hinder the violated subject's mobility by limiting the space of the subject's world to the space of his or her body. At the same time space and movement expands for the forces/regimes that choreograph the victims' paralysis. Of course being tortured by a torturer is not the same as experiencing tortuous pain as a result of illness and accidents. Scarry's claim is crucial in that it politicizes physical pain as the result of larger social systems of violence and oppression. It recognizes the intense, tangible choreographic strictures upon bodies that make freedom of movement very difficult. While Scarry speaks to the experience of state torture, I can also take from her understanding of the spatialization of intense pain how pain itself results from larger, violent constraints upon the

body. What Scarry's point does not discuss, however, is that those very oppressive spatial constraints as well as the sufferer's access to movement do not remain the same, but move and change, albeit minutely.

Kahlo does not allow the brutal forces of post revolutionary discourse, modernization and extreme physical pain to cut off her mobility as Scarry might argue. By painting and thus representationally shaping the space of her physical wounds, Kahlo is able to metaphorically move through them. In *The Broken Column*, as in other paintings she literalizes the subjective splitting of gender and race through the rip in her body, as a bloody gash that nearly splits her torso in two. The rips in the land, like the split through her body evoke Anzaldúa's borderlands where two sides both tear apart and come together. As Anzaldúa implies, movement, albeit painful, characterizes the border. Literalized in *The Broken Column*, Kahlo's physical pain that results from thrusts of modernity, initiates her differential movement. She traverses through her scar, and by painting it, moves it.

Returning to my reading of Foster's bodily writing as painting, Kahlo not only shapes metaphoric space, but she choreographs the space of her own body. She choreographs a body that has been shaped by the plaster casts that contain it. She does this quite literally by painting on her body, or rather painting on the surface of the modern medical prosthesis that has become part of her body.



Fig. 4. Stephanie Sherman, Photograph of a photograph of Frida Kahlo in Corset, Casa Azul, Mexico City.



Fig. 5. Stephanie Sherman, Photograph of Corset in Case, Casa Azul, Mexico City.

As we see in the preceding images of her casts (see figs. 4 and 5), Kahlo projects an imaginary body via her casts with which she can move metaphorically. Some of these casts contain ornate designs that reorganize the plaster's previous open blankness; others project her institutionalized political ideology in the form of the star and sickle. The star and sickle literally politicizes her private body in institutional terms. A communist, Trotskyite, and, towards the end of her life, a Stalinist activist, Kahlo's politics extended beyond the representational politics implied in her paintings. By painting political ideology on her cast, Kahlo calls attention to her body as a site of politics, a space in which to imagine nation. Of course her broken female body clashes with masculinist heroic narratives of nation. The fetus below the star and sickle constructs this revolutionary potential through her specific female body, her ability to birth a different kind of national imaginary.

This gesture of writing/painting upon her own body with her own hands is a significant political act within gendered traditions that render women mere objects to be painted and painted upon by heteropatriarchal desire. Here, she allows her otherwise convalescent body to be choreographed, written upon, projected upon, painted on. However, her supposedly victimized, feminized, passive body acts: It paints itself on itself. The images that she projects on her body don't solely emerge from her own social imaginary—they also come from her very active arm and hand. Painting the casts, Kahlo choreographs her own body in opposition to, yet in conversation with, the discourses and violent events of patriarchal postrevolutionary modern Mexico City that choreographically confined it. Despite her compromised physical mobility, she becomes the active subject as she objectifies her *own* body. Importantly, she does this metaphorically, but also physically. The tiny space for Kahlo's body created by the cast engenders Scarry's notion of spatialized trauma, where the constraints become so huge that the sufferer's body can hardly move. However, as seen by her painting on them, the very thing that should shut down all possibilities of expression becomes a full site of exuberant creativity.

As I previously mentioned, Kahlo's painted casts, like her men's suits and Tehuana dresses, are profoundly performative. By *wearing* her art, she calls attention to the constructedness of her identity, blurring the boundaries between artist and art object. She did not exhibit her casts in museums, but lived inside them. While she was alive they were displayed as time-based art experiences. By painting an object with the medical utility of holding her spine in the right place, she also *performs*; her disability hyper-visibly calls into question certain narratives surrounding it.

Petra Kupperts might see Kahlo as a disabled performer, since "disabled performers are often aware of the knowledges that have been erected around them: tragic, poor, helpless, heroic, struggling, etc. In the laboratory of the performance situation, these knowledges can be re-examined, and questioned" (3). That is, the embodied performance of disabled artists may contradict stereotypes of disability that relegate their bodies to motionless victimization. Kahlo's performance situation was clearly her life. Painting the sickle and star on her cast, she transforms the narrative of the helpless cripple and embodies a new, heroic story that is centered not upon patriarchal hegemonic models of masculine heroism. These costumes transform her role and call attention to the instability of her "disability." Kupperts argues that disability, contrary to hegemonic narratives that attempt to fossilize and paralyze it, is a shaky, mobile concept. Kahlo, after all, was not always bedridden. Kupperts explores performance strategies quite similar to Kahlo's that "dissolve the stability of categories . . . they explode traditional art's boundaries . . . creating uneasy hybrids of art and the everyday. Time, space, living body and sedimented knowledge, semiotics and phenomenology start to leak into one another, start to overwrite one another, and begin to move" (4). Wearing her painted casts, Kahlo does all of the above: She weaves her body, art, and her everyday experiences of pain until the metaphoric immobility of crippled subjectivity moves, not only in imaginary space, but on the surface of her body.

In doing this, she creates a new art form that is painting, sculpture, dance, activism, and performance art in one: She obviously paints, but she crosses the borders of the medium by painting on her own body. By painting on her body she becomes a performance artist who uses her body as a living medium to question identity. Her work crosses the line between activism and art via its gender-resistant questioning. And, as we have seen, she moves through space and between these forms. Thus, Kahlo's metaphoric movement choreographically opens up space between seemingly separate artistic forms, effectively demolishing the formal constraints that separate these disciplines and allowing for fluid movement between them.

Kahlo's personal pain is political: Her literal and representational wounds, as I have alluded to earlier, are racialized via her mestiza body in conversation with Muralist's depictions of "la Raza C6smica." These wounds are also gendered, given that she was impaled in her vagina, and also because she was socially restrained because she was female. This restraint manifested in her dependency upon Rivera and relative lack of fame during her lifetime as an artist in comparison to Rivera's and the other Muralists' due to her gender. Of course her work, eventual success as a solo artist, and life push against the lack of professional and personal agency assigned to her gender. As we saw earlier in *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, the ambiguity over what the wound is and who is doing the wounding toys with notions of male active violence and female passive victimization. Her upright, phallic scissors mirror her open legs, potentially suggesting a vagina dentata. The space between her legs where we would

assume Diego/patriarchy has wounded her, instead could be read as a site of potential violence, or castration, for phallic power, as if her legs themselves were scissors. After all, the open scissors cut; they do not stab, sever, or penetrate. Her wound shapes gender-questioning movement.

This personal politics extends, as discussed earlier, to the space of the nation, and with that, Mexico as land and conquest. Unlike the metaphoric wound in *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, *The Broken Column*'s wound is literally a bloody chunk, a border running down the center of her body. At the same time, the fissures in the land are equally significant as gendered, racialized sites of historic pain. As both Andersen and Anzaldúa would agree, Kahlo's body, like the land, is a symbol of colonization, with its open, unresolved, bloody wounds exposing the unresolved contradictions of a nation founded upon European violation of indigenous female bodies and indigenous land. Kahlo's embodied wound is a national wound. Her wound is produced by multiple choreographic spatial shapings: by the modern city, her surgery, the colonial legacies of *mestizaje* and the postrevolutionary representational discourses. Again, while speaking to the specific U.S./Mexico border and her own experience as a Chicana, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the colonized space that she inhabits as "*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab can form it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging . . ." (25). Like in Kahlo's *The Broken Column*, this eternally bleeding wound is both on her body and the land as products of violent, uneven meeting, unending encounters between those who have and those who do not have power. Kahlo's mestiza body symbolizes the identity border carved by colonization, the living crime scene where European masculinity rapes indigenous femininity and forms an *hija de la chingada*. This is not to say that Kahlo intended this painting to be about colonization. However, she indeed paints her mestiza body as fragmented and conflicted. This contrasts the Muralists' depictions of proud modern mestizos and colonization as a thing of the past.

Kahlo's wound in *The Broken Column*, however, appears to do what Anzaldúa's wound does: It does not scab, but continues to bleed. Frozen in time through the medium of painting, its freshly ripped flesh never heals. Pain, here, is not only destructive, but also productive. While blood might signify death, it also symbolizes life. Before it scabs, blood is alive and brings breath to the body. Blood oozes. It moves between organs. It renews itself. When the skin is cut, or during menstruation, blood trespasses spatial boundaries, spilling the private contents of the body into the public world, dancing between internal and external pain. The open wound's resistant moving against full scarring keeps the body alive. In this light, Kahlo's pain resists the larger forces of postrevolutionary Mexican modernity and brutal colonial legacies that might otherwise suffocate her to death. Here, blood is border space, and border space is the permanent condition of crossing in painful movement.



Fig. 6. Frida Kahlo, *Memory (The Heart)*, Dolores Olmedo Foundation, Mexico City.

As I mentioned earlier, Andersen explains how the Muralists depicted the brutal conquest of Mexican history leading to *mestizaje* as a healed pain of the past removed from their bodies, brought to its proud culmination in the postrevolutionary nation. Kahlo, on the other hand depicts the past *through* her body as, much like Anzaldúa's border space, an open wound. In *Memory (The Heart)* (1937) (see fig. 6), we see three fragmented Kahlos, holding hands. The middle Kahlo's heart has been ripped out in a clean "o" through which we see the sky. In front of her, by the shoreline, a heart half the size of her body paints a bloody trail by the shoreline that oozes into the water. Kahlo's body stands squarely on a different kind of borderline: the meeting of land and sea. Andersen enters this painting into conversation with historical narratives:

Unlike Vasconcelos's celebration of "la raza cósmica," . . . Kahlo's bizarre self-portrait conveys her experience of gender and cultural identity as fragmented . . . The landscape evokes the Spaniards' arrival on the shores of the Americas. The heart, which stains the soil with blood, symbolizes the ensuing violence and devastating legacy of the conquest. The rod, with its potential to teeter back and forth, implies Mexico's past and current political instability. Its position through Kahlo's chest further suggests her, and all Mexicans' crisis of national identity. (122-123)

Consequently, by depicting her body as a wounded border, Kahlo paints Mexico itself as a vast borderland. Kahlo's spatial choreography, then turns the nation's vast spatiality on its head: Instead of painting herself as Mexico, fully on the land, she paints Mexico as an in-between space, a fine, bloody line, that is neither land nor water. Mexico, along with Kahlo's heart, is an open, pulsing wound that sways with the tide. Furthermore, her spatial planning *moves Mexico*.

That is, as she decentralizes identity, she pushes sedimented ideas of national centrality to the margins.

In conclusion, by decentralizing the hegemonic male narrative of postrevolutionary power, Kahlo instead centers herself, the female mestiza not-to-be-protagonist at the heart of postrevolutionary representational discourses of nation. As she does this, she troubles the formal line between performance art, visual art, dance, and activism, not only by depicting, but also by *performing* her identity mobility on her very own body. Here, she re-locates center upon a marginal body, a border-body, a body that should be paralyzed and yet moves, a wounded body. She spatializes Mexican postrevolutionary nationality around the thin, painful strip of unresolved *mestizaje* where her body bleeds and pushes against the official spaces that attempt to push her to the margins. The space that she designates as center, that she constrains with her own imagination, moves violently. Kahlo's shaping of her own representational violence mocks the larger currents of quotidian and historical violence that shaped her very real, painful body. Kahlo's paintings utilized the confined space of her wounded, gendered, almost immobilized mestiza flesh, both metaphorically and through her body, to metaphorically and performatively allow for alternative movement. Kahlo's differential movements are not separate from, or in full rejection of, the moving oppressive spaces of the national imaginary and the modern city, but rather respond to their architectural and pictorial discourses with a unique perspective. By shaping the space of her body and imagination, Kahlo creates new zones in which previously prohibited movement becomes available to her. Given the intense physical and ideological constrictions on her subjectivity, her micro-movements prove to be immense, like the force of a thousand snake hairs.

CHAPTER 2:
**(RE)MOVING AND (RE)PERFORMING STATE VIOLENCE—
PROCESO PENTÁGONO’S COUNTER-CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE 1970S**



Fig. 7. Stephanie Sherman, Tlatelolco #1, December 2015.



Fig. 8. Stephanie Sherman, Tlatelolco #2, December 2015.



Fig. 9. Victor Muñoz, *The Ring*, Victor Muñoz Archive.

Introduction

In the introduction to her book of testimonies, *La Noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de Historia Oral*, lauded Mexican writer and activist Elena Poniatowska conjures a ghostly march of students returning to the plaza in Tlatelolco, Mexico City, where they had been massacred by the military on October 2, 1968. Prior to this moment, an increasingly oppressive state began responding more and more rigidly to the demands of a burgeoning student-run and union-supported movement of the late 1960s that critiqued the PRI's inability to fulfill the revolutionary promises of an egalitarian state (Williams 124). By the 1960s, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional or the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) bore little trace of the socialist ideals of the Mexican Revolution. Instead, the government established a powerful elite intent on embracing global capitalism and exploiting the working class. Increasing strikes culminated in an inevitable bloodbath and subsequent detentions and torture that night in October. Poniatowska evokes that moment though creating a clear contrast to the actual event: "Here come the kids towards me, they are many, none hold their hands up, none of their pants are fallen by their feet as they [the military and secret police] undress them to frisk them, there are no unexpected punches nor blows with clubs nor humiliations, nor vomit from the torture, nor piled up shoes . . ." (Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco*; my translation). Her eerie dream resonates with the two sites in the images above (see figs. 7-9): Tlatelolco's Plaza de las Tres Culturas and visual art collective Proceso Pentágono's *The Ring* from its 1973 exhibition *A nivel informativo*. The first two images display the exact location that Poniatowska describes—where the students were assassinated; the third image, on the other hand, insinuates the specters of the dead students through the strewn shoes and body bags.

But what is the relationship between the structured architecture of Gustavo Ordaz's administration and installation art and performance art? And how might the choreography or spatial shaping in *A nivel informativo* push against or structure itself within larger choreographies of state control? What is the relationship between the "performative turn" in Mexican visual arts and spectacles of state brutality? In this chapter, I juxtapose the unstable spatiality of Proceso Pentágono's exhibition with the violent, seemingly rigid architectural constraints of Dirty War Mexico City. As we shall see, the Tlatelolco massacre violently engendered these constraints. *A nivel informativo*'s ephemeral installations and artistic actions signal the latent mobility, theatricality, and fallibility of an apparently monolithic, oppressive state. As I will demonstrate later, this contradictory governmental "choreography" of social and architectural space both deterred and produced the performative or non-objective shift in the visual arts. This chapter draws on close readings of archival images of *A nivel informativo* alongside my interviews with artists Victor Muñoz and Carlos Finck, in order to write about an installation that included un-filmed "actions" or performances.

Seen from a bird's eye view in the first two photos, Tlatelolco's *Plaza de las Tres Culturas*⁴ resembles a computer chip, with its tall surrounding buildings forming perfect right angles. High rises enclose two of the plaza's sides; more high rises and a stadium flank another side, and a highway runs along the other edge. Given the expanse of the plaza and its surrounding avenues, it does not appear to be a pedestrian-friendly space similar to the Zócalo, the downtown central square. Like the Zócalo, Tlatelolco is a rebellious heterotopic site that displays buildings from conflicting, brutal time periods: here Aztec ruins from pre-Columbian times face a colonial cathedral from the early 1500s. However, unlike the meandering web of side streets and colonial buildings that flank the Zócalo, starkly modern buildings and no streets surround Tlatelolco. The long avenue on the far right provides the only entry and exit to and from the large compound, making it easy to control access when the avenue is blocked. Looming buildings such as the Edificio Chihuahua provide panopticon-like surveillance views of the plaza. One cannot clearly distinguish whether it is a housing project, a public square, or a prison. If stones and cement could speak, this neat and organized 1964 construction with its particular pre-neoliberal brutality would speak volumes about the postmodern Mexico City of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Tlatelolco's architecture would become a microcosm of the choreography of 1968 and Dirty War state violence against dissenters. Chunks of it would later crumble, and many more lives would be lost during the 1985 earthquake.

Here, on October 2, 1968, armed forces massacred approximately 300 unarmed students and activists (Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* 13-14, Williams 126-128), effectively squashing the student movement of the 1960s, pushing resistance underground, and ushering in the horrors of Mexico's Dirty War. In her interview with Poniatowska, anthropologist Mercedes Olivares de Vázquez recounts:

Imagine what would have happened if the Unidad Tlatelolco had become consolidated as a nucleus of rebellion, like a center of urban guerilla The government was perfectly aware of the affective participation of the people and not just a group of students We fell into the most perfect rat trap by the most

⁴ The Plaza of Three Cultures references Aztec, colonial, and modern cultures.

irresponsible way because since October 2, with the capturing of the students, the terror and the repression, the movement was majorly set back and its bases were completely disconnected. (Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* 92)

The perfect rattrap that Olivares refers to is the architecture of the Tlatelolco compound. Every inch of this large construction enabled the state to control and contain the social movement within it until protesters were all killed. Military snipers took advantage of the Edificio Chihuahua's high windows as they showered the crowd in the plaza below with bullets (Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* 13-14, Williams 126-128). Since the army blocked off all entrances, protesters attempted to flee by hiding in the apartments of the surrounding complexes. Those who tried to move found themselves trapped. The military cut all phone lines and electricity for thousands of apartments from the central source. Secret police entered into the buildings and searched each apartment, arresting and murdering protesters and anyone they suspected of aiding the student movement.

By shaping and severely curtailing the students' social and embodied movement, Mexico City architecture choreographed a dance to the students' death. The violent movement of the military and its victims through this space verged on the grotesquely theatrical: Not only did urban planning structure the scope of movement through Tlatelolco that day, it also enabled a drama of epic proportions to unfold. The movement that ensued involved screams, use of bodily force, shaking, running, slumping, pummeling, and shooting. In one of Poniatowska's testimonials, Gilberto Guevara Niebla gives a chilling description of the spastic physicality that the military's actions inspired that day:

I remember how we saw from the tribune the plaza convulsing, the currents of people who tried to flee and couldn't, the swirls made in the center of the esplanade, the walls and bayonets that I couldn't see . . . They were shooting towards the tribune. It was like the ones below they thought they were shooting at us but they were shooting at the ones with the white gloves.⁵ It was a terrifying disaster! After, once they locked us in, I remember the orifices that they opened in the roof, and the plaster that fell on top of us, the terror and the death that covered the Plaza. (Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* 153)

Guevara describes the brutality of the events with chaotic movement metaphors: bodies swirling and others attempting to run to nowhere, roofs falling in and bullets flying. The combination of Tlatelolco's architecture, military force, and the masses of protesters created a chaotic scramble of bodies followed by deafening, death-inducing stillness. However, instead of neatly organized crowd control, the actions of military and secret police provoked messy and chaotic movement. Even within this death-driving movement from police brutality, the state could not exercise complete control over its citizens' bodies.

While, at first glance, the image of Victor Muñoz's *The Ring* from *A nivel informativo* does not directly invoke Tlatelolco, it resonates with the spatiality of Tlatelolco that enabled the 1968 Massacre. Here, instead of a massive plaza, we see a standard-sized boxing ring; in the

⁵ The secret police.

place of highways and high-rise buildings with only one road out, we see thin wire demarcating the square's limits. However, upon closer inspection, the lines surrounding the ring prove to be not the flexible ropes boxers stretch when they fall against them; instead, the space is laced in rigid barbed wire. While seemingly more open than Tlatelolco, this ring evokes its layout: one can only potentially escape by passing through lethal spikes. Furthermore, the piles of shoes and body bags clearly allude to the violent remains in Tlatelolco the night of the massacre. Moving within or resisting the barbed wire delineations of this space may result in bloodshed. The ring alludes to another kind of uniquely Mexican brand of theatrical wrestling in which the performers enact violence: *lucha libre*. In *lucha libre*, costumed performers stage violence through well-rehearsed moves that look almost like contact improvisation. If Muñoz's post-apocalyptic installation parallels the real terror of Tlatelolco *and* the theatrical choreography of *lucha libre*, then it reveals the simultaneously performative and choreographic means by which the Mexican state exercised control over its citizens.

The Ring was part of the larger installation *A nivel informativo*. This collective piece from 1973, which lasted three months at the Palace of Fine Arts, involved three main installations all of which addressed some level of state violence in Mexico City: José Antonio's *The Television*, Carlos Finck's *The Car*, and Victor Muñoz's *The Ring*. The installations were accompanied by performances, or "actions," which included *The Kidnapping* and *The Run-over Man*. *The Television* by José Antonio involved bound plaster figures tied to chairs watching endless TV static; in *The Car*, Carlos Finck used fragmented automobile parts hanging in midair; *The Kidnapping* by Victor Muñoz enacted an abduction in broad daylight on a street outside the museum; and *The Run-over Man* by Victor Muñoz staged a hit-and-run accident that splattered the streets with red paint. The individual artists considered their works to be a group piece, and each individual installation or performance emerged out of a collaborative group process. In other words, the installations and the performances were not separate from each other, but meant to be read in conversation with each other.

The Proceso Pentágono artistic group formed as a collective to make *A nivel informativo* in 1973—the year of the military coup in Chile, 4 years after Tlatelolco, and 2 years after the Corpus Cristi Massacre in Mexico City of 1971. They work together to this day. At its inception, *A nivel informativo* included three founding members: José Antonio (then 24), Carlos Finck (then 24), and Victor Muñoz (then 26). Soon after, Felipe Ehrenberg joined them for the Paris Biennale of 1977. They were part of a disparate, spontaneous trend towards communal art that often rejected Muralism's notion of individual artist as genius/author, questioned the sacredness of the art-object, and created dialogic work with a critical focus. The *Grupos* or Group's experiments with experience over form were arguably the biggest aesthetic shift since the postrevolutionary Mexican School of Muralism. One of Pentágono's most famous works was their *Pentagon*; created for the 1977 Paris Biennale, *Pentagon* exposed the brutality of military dictatorships across Latin America. Pentágono has continued making socially committed art over the last four decades, including a recent December 2015 retrospective exhibition at the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC). Finck, Muñoz, and occasionally Ehrenberg continue collaborating.

Originally, the *Grupos* were reacting to the long reign of the official Mexican School of painting, promoted by the PRI since the 1920s through the Minister of Education José Vasconcelos' aesthetic nationalizing project. Sociologist James McCaughan describes the

relationship between the institutionalizing of national postrevolutionary identity and painting, which was purposefully crafted and promoted through schools and public arts projects:

The “Mexican School” label has been used to refer to the figurative, social realist style of art associated with early to mid-twentieth century Muralists and painters Their depictions of the Mexican working class and peasantry, of anticolonial and anti-imperialist heroes, and of Mexico’s indigenous cultures became key elements of a nationalist system of representation and signification. The logic of the model was that state-sponsored economic modernization required class collaboration, which was to be facilitated by fostering a shared national identity and unity through the state’s cultural policies. (13)

The particular form and content of paintings and murals in the postrevolutionary era were so intrinsically tied to the PRI’s state agenda that other forms, especially foreign art trends such as expressionism and conceptualism, were strongly looked down upon by the state. Thus, a crisis in the PRI’s power was linked to a crisis in artistic form. The very content and aesthetic techniques used by the Mexican School could not engender young artists’ dissatisfaction with and critique of the state.

By analyzing various spatial constraints on social and physical movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I will link the performative or “non-objective” turn in visual arts in Mexico to an intensely brutal state choreography embodied by its urban planning and its architecture. Further, I will show that Proceso Pentágono’s work reveals how state violence instigated a blurring between site-specificity and performance that would then propel an explosion of traditional forms of artistic representation. This postmodern breakdown of previously separate disciplines correlates with the unraveling of a postrevolutionary modern Mexico that had never been stable in the first place. By postmodern I refer here to the artistic shift in the late 1960s in the United States, Europe, and Mexico in which artists rejected modern structural formalism in favor of more ephemeral artistic forms. This was a complex, diverse phenomenon that emerged from specific artistic, cultural and political contexts. Thus, it is important to note, as Argentine urban hybridity theorist (based in Mexico) Néstor García Canclini might suggest, that Latin America never became fully “modernized” based upon European definitions (41). Thus, the postmodern here refers to the rupture from the artistic form from the Mexican School of Muralist painting and a shift towards more conceptual forms, which emerged, however, from the same context or trajectory as U.S. and European postmodern art.

Consequently, the “dance” between Proceso Pentágono and Dirty War Mexico City’s spatial constraints embodied a tense relationship: While an already mobile social movement produced by the crisis of an institutionalized revolutionary government losing its control intensified, the state attempted to rigidly control and immobilize protest instead of moving with the 1968 social movement’s flow. As McCaughan observes about the relationship between new forms of art and state rigidity in *Art and Social Movements: Cultural Politics in Mexico and Aztlán*: “Ironically, if the urgency of the student movement momentarily breathed new life into Mexico’s moribund social realism, the violent repression of the movement only furthered the generation of ‘68’s search for creative new visual languages consistent with their antiauthoritarian impulses” (108). In other words, the state’s inflexible, violent response to protest and change effectively produced more resistance on the political and creative level.

Paradoxically, the very urban structures that curtailed certain kinds of mobility opened up other kinds of movement at an accelerating velocity.

A nivel informativo shows how the non-objective turn in visual arts during Mexico's Dirty War was not only performative, but also choreographic, and additionally site-specific. It was performative in that the artists used their own bodies and the bodies of the public to enact artistic experience instead of focusing on the art object. It was choreographic in its shaping of space. Much like site-specific work happening at the same time in the U.S., Proceso Pentágono used incongruous, profane objects to question the sacredness of the museum space. However, unlike the artwork of their U.S. counterparts, the objects that Pentágono used directly referred to forms of Mexican state violence. As told from a Western visual arts perspective, site specificity emerged from Minimalism in the 1960s to describe art objects that deflected attention from their own forms and refocused it on the space that framed them. With artists shifting focus to the spaces surrounding objects, museums and galleries could come under scrutiny. In this way, site-specificity often leads to institutional critique. Occurring simultaneously with site-specific work in the United States and Europe, *A nivel informativo* emerged from a uniquely Mexican context.

Arguably, Mexican site-specific art might have commenced as early as the 1920s via the aesthetic revolution of Muralism. If site-specificity refers to location-based art that inspires a critical focus on the social and architectural environment surrounding it (Meyer 26), Muralism began the trend before this notion emerged in the United States and Europe in the 1960s. Never before in modern history had artists claimed large expanses of public spaces, such as walls and facades, to depict historical narratives that celebrated the previously despised indigenous and mestizo culture. On the other hand, the artists were granted permission from the state to do this. In colonial government buildings boasting European architecture, murals depicting the savagery of conquest emerged, defying their surroundings. For example, Diego Rivera's stairway murals in the National Palace proudly display scenes from the Aztec legend of Quetzalcoatl, as well as scenes of Cortés' lieutenants branding indigenous slaves. While Muralists created new historical representations, breaking with older orders, they did so in the name of solidifying, and not questioning the authority of the state. Even (and especially) the Palace of Fine Arts, or Bellas Artes,⁶ originally constructed prior to the revolution under the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship in 1904, would come to house massive murals of populist indigenous struggles that contrast with the building's opulent, elite, European exterior. In this same space, Proceso Pentágono later staged their scenes of brutality. Of course, by 1968, as art historian Mary Coffey remarks, this "revolutionary art [Muralism]—became an official art that helped legitimize an authoritarian state" (1). Consequently, *A nivel informativo*'s performative, choreographic site-specificity in Bellas Artes would draw critical attention to the spatial aspect of the aesthetic crisis of postrevolutionary institutionalization of revolutionary forms and policies. In other words, while in the previous chapter we saw how the postrevolutionary PRI of the modern era built seemingly stable narratives of national identity through Muralism, the late 1960s saw not only a decomposition of stable state narratives, but also a new direction in artistic forms in response to this.

⁶ In this paper, I will use both titles to refer to the space.

I explore the performative choreography of state violence and aesthetic resistance via multiple, overlapping interpretations of space and movement. *A nivel informativo*'s installations engaged various spaces simultaneously. Some of these sites were physical and literal: Tlatelolco, Bellas Artes, the car, or the street. On the other hand, some of these places were ideological, such as the space of the television and the media's official narrative. At the same time, Proceso Pentágono created an alternative kind of social movement through art that summoned the ghosts of larger resistant movements. I discuss how the artists' movement broke up spatial divisions between street and museum, and between state constructions of "safe" and "violent" spaces. Consequently, the artwork reveals how spatial binaries serve to both provoke and cover up state violence.

1968/Dirty War Mexico City: Choreographies of Crisis

1968 saw student upheavals and violence across the world, from Berkeley and Paris to Tlatelolco. Along with this global unrest, the late 1960s and early 1970s in Mexico City were times of new architectural and social constraints that led both to the breakdown of previous boundaries and the establishment of new ones. The unstable state and its citizens improvised a shaky, seismic dance between shifting, intensifying constraints on power and the movement of active resistance. Frida Kahlo's Mexico had been jolted by a populist revolution and had spent the following decades trying to solidify itself via entrenched institutionalization and sweeping modernization. By the 1960s, the PRI held little semblance to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. Instead, the government established a powerful elite intent on embracing global capitalism and exploiting the working class. However, the state evoked symbols of the Revolution in an attempt to maintain control over the masses. "1968," the student movement leading up to and the resistance following Tlatelolco, in fact, signaled a major socio-political shift in which the power entrenched by the postrevolutionary government found itself challenged. As Gareth Williams notes, "Without doubt '1968' is the name for the moment in which the administration of the PRI's police order entered into crisis, just like the ossified Porfirian institutions had prior to the 1910 revolution" (127). Influenced by rock and roll and other global trends challenging traditional norms and inspired by the old ideals of the Mexican Revolution, students began to emphatically critique an increasingly conservative state. Their democratic movement expressed concrete demands, such as the release of political prisoners, cessation of police brutality, and compliance with the Mexican Constitution (Williams 123).

Under president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) and the PRI's seemingly endless rule (from 1929-1994, and from 2012 until the current moment in 2016), the official pre-neoliberal, centrist-right agenda felt threatened by the growing instability produced by rapid modernization and increasing citizen unrest. The *granaderos* or riot police so effectively escalated protest by using violence instead of pacifying tactics that what began as smaller protests amongst different, even opposing entities turned into a massive, organized democratic student movement (Williams 127). Labor, students, and activists mobilized literally and figuratively, moving through social space and the streets and plazas, to push against increasingly oppressive unequal legislation and force. In 1968, as student protests busted at the seams of the streets they occupied, tensely pushing against the city's physical boundaries as well as the boundaries of state power, Ordaz's government responded by tightening and restricting the protesters' social and physical movement with severe, calculated brutality. However, as confirmed by Williams, the government's force was at the same time chaotic and out of control, a product of attempting

to reign in rebellion (127). Williams argues that despite the failure of the student movement following the Tlatelolco massacre, the movement revealed a massive fissure in the seemingly monolithic PRI's sovereign power:

Despite the immediacy and violence of sovereign decisionism, the student movement forced an encounter between heterogeneous worlds. This encounter momentarily challenged the legality of the sovereign and exposed the president's theocracy for what it was: a ruinous social and political order grounded in violent anomie. (128)

The 1968 massacre was not only significant as an example of the state's relentless cruelty; more importantly, the movement that preceded the massacre was a legitimate, democratic, revolutionary challenge to the state's undemocratic hegemony.

Dance scholar Randy Martin observes that political crisis, like dance, is not about freezing but about being "in motion, already passing from one (im)balance to another" (1). Thus, the rapid changes produced both by global resistance movements, accelerating modernity, and intensified capitalism unhinged rather than solidified Mexico City. These massive changes and the administration's attempts to stop them hark to the crisis of modern postrevolutionary Mexico that I discussed in Chapter 1. However, unlike the immediate postrevolutionary government, the Ordaz administration did not attempt either to glorify or to pacify the new social upheavals. Instead of listening to a revolutionary movement that threatened the status quo, the state attempted to thwart the flow of the 1960s youthful rebellion. This decision not to co-opt the movement (as the postrevolutionary government did after the Revolution) did not mean that state itself was stable; on the contrary, the rebellions emerged from a breaking down of order. The government found itself in intense crisis, and, instead of responding to social critique by making necessary changes, rigidly reinforced its constraints. Paradoxically, as the state tightened its grip on the resistant social movement, it opened up the flow of global capital via the city's burgeoning infrastructure.

The modern and postmodern Mexico City that *A nivel informativo* responded to was both disconnected and simultaneously connected over huge distances. Writing about the urban context surrounding *A nivel informativo* in the 1970s, Rubén Gallo describes the profound and devastating changes inflicted on Mexico City through urban planning. From the 1950s on, population exploded and a labyrinth of highways and tunnels ended up segmenting the city's communities:

[Mexico City] rapidly became a megalopolis of traffic jams, insurmountable cement structures, and homicidal vehicles The street . . . was under attack by modernizing forces: public spaces where random people could come together to meet, stage demonstrations, or simply congregate were being demolished to make way for freeways that discourage interaction. . . . Mexico City was . . . a metropolis of highways and disconnected neighborhoods where "the street is dead." (Stimson and Sholette 172-173)

The colonial grid-plan of the plaza, such as the Zócalo with its streets full of moving vendors and life, gave way to a fractured Frankenstein city, one in which the individual body alone could

not move easily over distances without a vehicle. As the streets of Mexico transformed from a space of encounters and marches to stretches of smog-filled traffic, they turned from sites of connection to passages of disconnect. Furthermore, the shift away from the central plaza and colonial grid plan significantly decentralized protest. The plaza, embodied by the Zócalo, signified an official nexus from which state power emanates, but also a space where state power could be contested. The current curtailment of protests against Peña Nieto's government in the Zócalo in 2015 makes apparent how powerful a symbol of resistance the Zócalo is.

The year 1968 ushered in greater access to physical mobility across greater distances due to the construction of the Metro for the Olympic Games. The Metro had been in service for three years—as long as the Dirty War had lasted—in which the PRI tightened its grip on student activism, systematically disappearing over 1,000 citizens and torturing more. The construction surrounding the 1968 Olympic Games was directly linked both to growing citizen mobility in terms of bodies crossing larger distances and to a greater restriction of social mobility in terms of freedom of speech and dissent. The Olympic Stadium, in fact, which was constructed in 1954 but enlarged for the 1968 games, served as a smokescreen for the government's actions. Only ten days before the games and thirteen miles north of the Stadium, the massacres at Tlatelolco occurred. While the horrors of Tlatelolco were met with complete media silence, the theatrics of the Olympic Games as a symbol of triumphant Mexican development took over the airways. This use of spectacle eerily presaged the events of Argentina's military coup in 1978, when the World Cup similarly diverted the country's attention from mass torture and executions.

Aesthetic Crisis: The Performative, Choreographic Turn



Fig. 10. Victor Muñoz, *The Kidnapping*, Victor Muñoz Archive. [Carlos Finck on left, Orlando Menicucci on right]

In this photograph (fig. 10) from Pentágono's performance *El Secuestro*, or *The Kidnapping*, which was also part of *A nivel informativo*, Carlos Finck and Orlando Menicucci engage with a third, indistinguishable figure in a burlap sack. The sack visually resembles the body bags hanging above Muñoz's *The Ring* installation. Menicucci and Finck carry out this action on a crowded street with modern architecture in the background. No one pays much attention to the strange scene except an elderly indigenous woman in the front right corner. In broad daylight, in the street in front of Bellas Artes, Menicucci and Finck have just acted out the capture of a third actor, covering him with a sack, wrapping him in rope, painting him, and parading him through the street into Bellas Artes. The only things that imply a distinction between an actual arrest and visual performance in this photo are the paintbrush and can of paint that Finck holds in his hands. Besides these objects, this scene confuses disciplinary boundaries between performance and object-based art.

Is this a painting? Is this performance art? Is this a kidnapping? Is this "real" life? And if this does happen to be performance art, where is the art object? This image signals the "giro performativo" later referred to as the "performative turn" in visual arts in Mexico City that coincided with the crisis of Tlatelolco and Dirty War state terror. The connection between the performative turn in art and Tlatelolco is significant because it suggests the theatricality or performativity of state terror: the displays of military might, the scripted torture scenes, and the media spectacle of governmental authority. As the PRI prepared for its debut onto the global arena via the 1968 Olympics, it carried out mass spectacles of brutality, for example sending a convoy of ten thousand soldiers, tanks, and parachute regiments to break up a protest at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) (Williams 122). Williams points out the importance of performance in constructing a misleading national identity through the Olympic Games: "Nobody was going to spoil the PRI's official entrance onto the world stage, with its carefully choreographed spectacle of order and tranquility in times of geopolitical and sociocultural upheaval on a global scale" (122). The blurring of boundaries between performance and reality is also reflected in the blurring of lines between state authority, state control, and state sanctioned torture and violence. Particularly, *El Secuestro* refers directly to state violence through the blood red paint, the stuffing of a live human body in a sack, and the title *The Kidnapping*.

As I stated earlier, the radical shift in visual arts cannot be separated from the student movement of 1968. Not only did disciplinary boundaries crack between object-based and performative art, but also traditional forms of working and ways of conceiving art became irrelevant. Postrevolutionary Mexico had institutionalized rebellion so that a certain aesthetic avant-garde could flourish under its auspices. However, the institutionalization of art curtailed state critique, both in terms of subject matter and form. After fifty years of the Mexican School, old forms could not speak to contemporary realities, especially when those realities involved an increasingly oppressive government. Additionally, the ephemerality of performance art and non-objective art contrasts the permanence of modern forms like Muralism. This distinction perhaps bespoke a cultural instability that could not be formally solidified by state projects.

As I noted in the introduction, the performative turn was also a site-specific one. Muralism had set up public spaces as sites for critical art, though this movement quickly became an official expression of the state. Given the national preoccupation with public space as the property of the masses (or rather the government's image of this), site-specificity within public

space would necessarily create a dialogue with state architectural choreographies. Site-specific work such as Proceso Pentágono's installations has the potential to be choreographic by shaping the movement of the audience through spatial constraints. Like dance, site-specific art is mobile, corporeal, and innately choreographic. It involves an improvised organization of bodies in space, around space, and through space. Site-specific works inspire ideological mobility as they encourage physical, corporeal circulation.

Pentágono's site-specificity entered in direct conversation with the emerging, destabilizing notions of public space in the student movement. Not surprisingly, Finck, Muñoz, and Antonio had participated as graphic artists and student organizers in the student movement and had been deeply affected by the violence of 1968 and 1971. Despite their formal arts training at the Esmeralda School (in painting) of the National Institute for Fine Arts (INBA), they felt strongly disillusioned by art forms that could not reflect the brutal realities of their contemporary moment. Muñoz reminisces in an interview with me:

There were daily aggressions all over the city. We realized that we lived in an anti-democratic regime that we disagreed with. So our work had to speak to this You just start working and realize that things can't be the way they are, that you can't continue hoping to pertain to the same spaces of the museum and gallery, that your public is another public, that your language isn't necessarily the language of traditional supports. (V. Muñoz, Interview)⁷

In his statement, Muñoz alludes both to more stringent social constraints as well as to the inability of institutional art to address the lived realities of tightened oppression and censorship. Interestingly, he mentions the need to find language outside of "traditional supports." By critiquing the oppressive Dirty War state through art, he also emphasizes the necessity for new forms in different spaces. For this reason, his group's work would engage in performance art and utilize alternate sites such as the streets and Bellas Artes' cupola. Paradoxically, however, he and his collaborators eventually accepted an offer to exhibit their work from one of the most institutionally entrenched spaces of Mexican art: Bellas Artes. The political climate on the streets encouraged Proceso Pentágono to reject the creation of objects, when *action* was needed to make massive social change. In fact, similar to their contemporary postmodernists in the U.S. who created "happenings," Muñoz and Finck referred to their performative acts as "actions." However, unlike "happenings" or "performance," action implies a specific goal, a decision. Moving away from the object meant shifting towards the body, especially at a time when bodies were at such risk. In the case of installations, viewers become aware of their bodies walking through structured space; in the case of performance, the artists literally use their bodies instead of objects to make art. While Muñoz speaks of working with objects, his group's and the other *Grupos'* work focuses deeply on embodied action.

Maris Bustamante, a member of 1970s No-Grupo and later the founder of 1980s feminist duo, Polvo de Gallina Negra, refers to the performative turn in Mexican art as *artes no-objetuales* or "non-objective arts" in comparison and in opposition to U.S./European site-

⁷ All interviews in this dissertation were conducted were in Spanish and translated into English by the author.

specific and performative visual arts legacies. Following in the legacy of an influential Peruvian art critic who lived in Mexico City, Juan Acha, Bustamante describes non-objective arts in detail. She separates Mexican non-objective aesthetic practices from the European strain of Futurism-inherited Conceptualism:

The paradox, the contradiction, or the magic-uncanny sense that has come to characterize Mexican art . . . [seen] from the point of view of a rationalist, European “order” often appears as a “disorder” or “non-order” . . . [Precisely] in this disorder or . . . “non-order” . . . lies the crux of the Mexican imaginary. I am noting . . . an original logic, revived in the artistic and aesthetic Mexican narratives of the twentieth century that had precedents going back to antiquity. . . . The confrontation of orders corresponds to what some consider the encounter, for others the “mis-encounter” of two worlds, as the conquest, colonization, and neocolonial processes. (225)

For Bustamante, the shift away from the object and towards creating different embodied experiential aesthetics harks directly to Mexico’s specifically brutal colonial and neocolonial encounter. Arguably, as Bustamante suggests, this performative political aesthetic shift did not happen after Tlatelolco, but occupied a place in everyday Mexican culture since pre-Hispanic times. Thus, the “performative shift” was arguably initiated at the violent inception of colonization but took a more “official” form in the visual arts in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In accordance with the artists’ intentions, the process, and not only the product of *A nivel informativo*, was highly performative.

In 1973, INBA organized a season of exhibitions called “la Razón y los Encuentros,” (“Reason and Encounters”), dedicated specifically to young artists. INBA put five art critics in charge of choosing five different expositions. The prominent critic, Raquel Tiból, proposed Antonio, Muñoz, and Finck, even though their work was openly anti-authoritarian. *A nivel informativo* lasted three months from start to finish. Importantly, the three young men considered the entire process the work itself (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview). The piece began not when the installations were finished, but the moment they put a single white table into the room and began brainstorming. Their process was open to a more or less uninformed public for the first few months. Over three months, Pentágono performed various “inaugurations” of the installations, in different states of completion. While actions such as *The Kidnapping* and *The Run-over-Man* took place at some of these inaugurations, as we shall see, the performance extended beyond these structured moments. The performative conception of the overall work blurred boundaries between life and art, and between staged and real violence.

Alternate Architectural Choreography: The Installations and Bellas Artes

At the opening of this chapter, I placed two forms of choreography into conversation: the seemingly rigid state-shaped social and architectural space, and Proceso Pentágono’s installations and performances in and around Bellas Artes. In this interaction, what seemed like unidirectional state violence became metaphorically diverted through the moving, performing bodies in *A nivel informativo*. At the same time, Pentágono’s site-specific performative institutional critique jolted through multiple spaces and exposed the instability of pre-neoliberal postmodern Mexico City. In their site-specific installations, Proceso Pentágono created a

dialogue between the Bellas Artes' architecture and the installations' depictions of state violence. As I previously mentioned, Bellas Artes serves as a potent symbol of the state. Thus, by exhibiting art that critiqued state violence within a state edifice, the installation revealed hidden state violence. Of course, it could also be argued that the building itself already revealed conflicting histories of state violence in the contrast of its *indigenista*⁸ murals to their opulent architectural surroundings.



Fig. 11. Stephanie Sherman, Sala Internacional #1, December 2015. [The “Sala Internacional” is behind this structure.]



Fig. 12. Stephanie Sherman, Sala Internacional #2, December 2015.

⁸ “Indigenism” was a fundamental part of the Mexican School of painting which celebrated and depicted the indigenous and pre-Columbian images.

Pentágono organized its exhibition in the now non-existent Sala Internacional or International Gallery (see figs. 11 and 12). While work is still displayed in this central location, directly above the impressive art deco stairs, the room no longer holds the same name. This is an open balcony and vestibule on the Palace of Fine Arts' first floor.⁹ The gallery could be accessed from two curving, ornate main staircases at either side. Two columns neatly divided the space into three segments, which each artist used for his own installation. The gallery faced murals of official revolutionary narratives painted by Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco. This juxtaposition between the Sala Internacional and the murals created a bizarre contrast between the traditional masterpieces of the "great" Muralists and Proceso Pentágono's detritus of car parts and dirty shoes. Facing the gallery, one could see Jose Antonio's "television figure" on the right, Muñoz's "ring" in the middle, and Finck's "exploded car" on the left. The specific point where one entered shaped the connections that a person might make between the different, yet interconnected violent works. Following the Revolution, the Mexican state became and still remains the primary patron for the arts. Bellas Artes is not only a huge, important museum; it is an official expression of Mexican nationalism. At the same time, it is a very European-styled building in an international cosmopolitan city. To some extent, Bellas Artes reflects the capital city more than the rest of Mexico. The construction of this opulent mishmash of Art Nouveau exterior with Art Deco interiors began before the Revolution under the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship in 1904 and was completed after the Revolution in 1932. Its glowing marble ostentatiously dominates the everyday human who enters it by making him or her feel small. However, its incongruous mix of styles and conflicting historical narratives puts it in eternal contradiction with itself.

Like a massive, spacious, secular church that worships culture, it serves both as a museum and theater for governmentally sanctioned "high art." On the other hand, this high art included Proceso Pentágono's exhibition, quite at odds with official political and artistic values. In fact, this installation reveals that Bellas Artes is not as monolithic as it appears. After all, this government institution chose to sponsor these young artists whose business was to critique the state. Architecturally speaking, the murals, while adhering to the entrenched postrevolutionary national narrative, contest the baroque exterior. Rivera's and Orozco's paintings of indigenous farmworkers in the interior balconies also contradict the sculptures of European white muses on the building's facade. Literally, the building is so heavy that it has been sinking since the early 1900s. One can see this, as the building's foundation is currently a few meters below street level. Thus, while Pentágono's exhibition contrasted the building's monumentality, the installations almost echoed the site's own inner conflict and ephemerality.

⁹ Note: This is conventionally understood in the U.S. to be the second level.



Fig. 13. Stephanie Sherman, *Bellas Artes Exterior*, December 2015.

Consequently, by drawing a critical focus to Bellas Artes as a space, Proceso Pentágono artists led their audience to scrutinize the elite art world, its supporting institutions, and the state itself. Furthermore, Antonio, Muñoz and Finck's engagement with Bellas Artes' architecture connected acts of state terror and spaces such as Tlatelolco to the seemingly tranquil edifice of high culture. By inverting official spatiality and performing violence in *A nivel informativo*, Pentágono made important connections between Bellas Artes, the street, the media, and state oppression. The state's egregious violations of human rights had indeed repressed a huge amount of protest; at the same time, it mobilized an entire generation of artists in resistance.

At first glance, Bellas Artes and Eje Central, or the street in front of it, appear starkly opposed (see fig. 13). Rubén Gallo describes the clashing relationship between these two sites. For Gallo, Bellas Artes is a symbol of dead, elite power, while the streets pulse with poverty, performance, and popular culture:

The street outside Bellas Artes is dirty, full of food, garbage, detritus left behind by the crowds; inside, the marble floors are kept spotless by an army of sweepers and cleaners. Outside there is street culture: impromptu performers . . . — offering their services for a few pesos. Inside there is a ghostly space devoted to opera, ballet, and other spectacles of High Culture. (170)

However, when Finck and Muñoz brought the street into the gallery and vice versa with their work, they turned those spaces and their respective social/ideological connotations inside out. By doing this, they blurred the neat spatial definitions between high art and street culture,

signaling that Bellas Artes was not as pristine as it might be at first glance, and that the street is not as dirty or devoid of culture as it may appear. I asked Finck about this relationship between the street and the museum, given his goal of linking the two through his performance actions. As Finck remembered in his interview with me, for some bizarre reason, the Bellas Artes commission inspired him to work on “urban traffic, since you could no longer walk anywhere with this sense of magnitude. I wanted to make work about street traffic, and how it violates urban people” (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview). It is noteworthy that Bellas Artes as a space made Finck think of traffic of all things. On the one hand, he was clearly juxtaposing seemingly antithetical spaces. On the other hand, Finck was recognizing the obvious: Bellas Artes and the street pertained to the same space—the street came up to the doors and vice versa. It was impossible to ignore the traffic surrounding Bellas Artes, and it was equally impossible not to notice Bellas Artes from the street. By choosing to sponsor Proceso Pentágono’s critical work at a time of heightened state violence, a part of the state—Bellas Artes—was choosing to do something outside of its assigned role: It was willingly turning itself inside out to the street.

The Car



Fig. 14. Victor Muñoz, *The Car*, Victor Muñoz Archive.

Within the overall project of inverting spatialized urban violence in *A nivel informativo* as a whole, Finck’s installation *The Car* spoke less of direct state torture and more of a diffused violence produced by urban planning. The artwork presents a symbol of a dismembered city through an exploded car, cutting up the clean spatiality of Bellas Artes’ Sala Internacional. The vehicle appears constructed of differently colored, unfitting components; its parts are far detached from each other, drawing significant attention to the negative space between them. In

fact, one might not initially notice that the installation is a car. Instead, in this photograph (see fig. 14), we see five men, a painting, a mirror reflecting the men, white curtains, the marble gallery walls, and the balcony's grand columns just behind the curtains. One cannot view this automobile without also viewing the gallery. Through the fragmented frame created by the dirty car, the shiny, serene Palace appears implicated in an act of everyday violence. In this zone of proud national high culture, the broken vehicle suggests poverty. The car seems to explode in a violent jolt, shaking the still graceful space surrounding it. Since Bellas Artes is a state entity, the state is shown to be in relation to the everyday violence of modern urban planning on the streets outside. That is, just as Bellas Artes was constructed by the state in its location to have a particular effect upon the population, so too were the roads surrounding it. While the state might have constructed a seemingly serene edifice to high culture, it also sponsored the planning of the streets surrounding it. Thus, "beauty" and monuments of national pride cannot be separated from the bloody disorder surrounding them.

As seen in the case of Tlatelolco that I discussed in the introduction, urban planning at times conveniently and directly intersected with state torture. However, the violence produced by the burgeoning city traffic that Finck's work addressed did not directly result in disappearance, detention, and immediate state brutality. Nonetheless, Finck's work did not appear in isolation from, but rather in direct conversation with Antonio's and Muñoz's pieces on Dirty War violence. This juxtaposes different state apparatuses to reveal connections between diverse ways in which national projects violated and mobilized citizens. Collecting car parts from across various marginal neighborhoods, Finck constructed a Frankenstein automobile in eternal disintegration, a symbol of a city both dismembered and explosive. The car, like the train that impaled Kahlo, is an enduring symbol of modernity, which once again links it to trauma. This symbolic work paints Mexico City as a kind of brutally fragmented postmodern subject that hardly functions, yet somehow keeps moving. While Finck creates a collage object, the piece is arguably non-objective and thus performative. He did not create an "art object," but rather carved an incongruous space out of found objects through which museum goers may pass. Visual arts theorist Miwon Kwon explains the critical nature of site-specific work through Richard Serra's famously unaesthetic *Tilted Arc* which divided a seamless government plaza in New York City: "[The] site is imagined as a social and political construct as well as a physical one . . . *Tilted Arc* . . . literalized the social divisions, exclusions, and fragmentation that manicured and aesthetically tamed public spaces generally disguise" (74).

Similar to Serra's arc, Finck's car redirects the audiences' attention from the object itself to a critique of the space surrounding it. This encompassing space expands from the gallery to the street and beyond, to the city and the state. This critical extension to the state is credited to city planning projects that determine and divide where different people live and work and the kind of access they have to transportation. City planning is never a neutral endeavor, as evidenced by the current gentrification of the la Roma neighborhood, where working-class residents are being evicted in favor of wealthy hipsters, or in the very case of Spanish colonization of indigenous land. Finck weaves a choreographic picture of a previously whole "body" (the car, or a larger, national, social body) exploded by the accelerating velocity of a megalopolis and a nation out of control. The car does not move through the gallery, though its parts move. Instead, museum goers and air move through it. Thus the car ceases to fulfill its purpose of going with the flow of urban capital. Similar to the *Tilted Arc*, the exploded car reveals the social fissures and violence hidden beneath Bellas Artes' polished marble walls. This

form of state violence via traffic is not the same as the state-sponsored torture, but instead an apparatus of disciplinary power.

Michel Foucault defines the difference between sovereign and disciplinary power as a contrast between visible, concentrated state power of recognizable leaders and the subtle, invisible power exercised through diffused structures:

Whereas sovereign power is expressed through the symbols of the dazzling force of the individual who holds it, disciplinary power is a discreet, distributed power; it is a power which functions through networks and the visibility of which is only found in the obedience and submission of those on whom it is silently exercised. (22)

While the torture, massacre, and imprisonment of students by military, paramilitary, secret police, police, and guards was a clear expression of sovereign violence, quotidian street violence was more a manifestation of disciplinary power. Roads, highways, streets, public transport systems, and other architectural infrastructure become the networks through which the invisible state disciplines its citizens' bodies.

Finck conceived of the vehicle's movement in opposition to its intended movement. He writes in *a nivel informativo's* catalogue that he wanted the inner workings of the car to be seen, and for it to move, without advancing in space:

Once the characteristics of the car are complete, I will start to move it, and I will move the tires, so that as they turn they will make the car displace; one of them, the front left, will move forward, following the whole; the other front wheel, the right one, will turn towards the central part of the space; from the two that remain in the back, one will be sunk in a huge pothole, and the other will move in reverse. (5)

Finck's explosive ghost-wheels resist their prescribed path through the city, on the streets, in line with the throbbing pulse of the modern, capitalist city. This car is not going about business as usual. It does not course within a set path, but spins and sways for movement's sake. To imagine a car with three wheels spinning in different directions, with one wheel stuck in a pothole, and the rest of its parts suspended in thin air is to imagine a chaotic movement that diverts the clear flow of state power in terms of urban planning for a streamlined neoliberal metropolis. This car ceases to be a *vehicle* of an outer force of movement dictated by larger structures, and instead moves, albeit in a dysfunctional manner, of its own accord.

Finck's exploded car reoriented its audience to conceive of Bellas Artes as a symbol of national violence and instability. At the same time, the making of the piece literally *performed* in Bellas Artes differently by staging a literal shooting within the space. As I mentioned earlier, Proceso Pentágono artists conceived of the whole creation process as part of the work. As a result, events leading to the creation of the installation, with or without the audience, were just as central to the work's meaning as the objects themselves. These occurrences served as sometimes mundane and other times theatrical performances. Finck felt compelled to make urban violence more legible in this installation. Consequently, he needed to evoke not only a

crash, but also a shootout. For this, he would bribe a state employee to shoot at the car in the pristine premises of Bellas Artes:

I say to one of the Palace guards, “I want us to attack that car, so that the piece looks aggressive. Let’s do it.” All we had to do was shoot it. And he said, “But where? You know that my superiors count my bullets. I can justify three bullets but no more.” So three was it, and I told him we could do it where he thought would be a good place to shoot a car door, and he had the idea to do it in the absolute highest part of the Palace—in the cupola! And lo and behold in the cupola there was space. So we go with the door, up, up until you couldn’t go any higher, and he points his pistol and boom! And the shots were heard all over the palace! People asked what was going on . . . and of course I thought it was hysterically funny. (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview)

After the shooting, Finck painted red around the bullet holes just to make sure they were visibly legible. I believe that this improvised mischievous moment, heard by anyone who was in the Palace early that morning but witnessed only by Finck and the guard, signified far more than the final bullet-ridden car door that made its way into the gallery.

First, this action literally involved an artist bribing and coercing a probably underpaid state employee, the guard. (Guards generally are paid little for their work in Mexico). This “performance” comments upon the state’s predisposition to corruption. Given his position as an invited artist to Bellas Artes, Finck, like the guard, is also a state employee. Finck puts the guard into a paradoxical role: The very person paid to “protect” this edifice of high culture becomes the perpetrator of violence within it. Violence within the state institution thus does not come from the outside, but from within its very structure. Even the heroic murals of Orozco, Siquieros, and Rivera are full of bloody scenes from the conquest and the 1910 Revolution. He who should be keeping any hints of street violence *out* of the Palace (the guard) instead committed an act of “street” violence *within* it. Additionally, the shooting took place in its golden-domed apex, just underneath the sculptures of the eagle and serpent and their guardian angels that look out over the building’s crown. Just beneath the symbols of a glowing proud nation, someone who should be protecting the peace was battering a beat-up old car door. Yet, this performance not is not an everyday act of street violence: It is part of an art piece.

Significantly, this performative act evokes 1968 student movement poster art parodying the eagle and serpent and other revolutionary symbols. As McCaughan notes, “[In] the 1960s, for many of the capital city’s largely middle-class, university-educated but politically disenfranchised young artists, most national symbols signified the hegemony of Mexico’s authoritarian, single-party state, which of course, emerged from the revolution and claimed to embody its promises” (24). Symbols such as the eagle and serpent embodied the crisis of ’68: What had once engendered a revolution had been utilized to sediment institutional power and ultimately to symbolize repression. Thus, by shooting at a car door beneath the eagle and serpent on the apex of Bellas Artes, Finck literalized the violence that the symbol had come to incarnate.

The bizarre occupation of the cupola serves as a surreal metaphor for a government intent on hiding torture and disappearance outside of the public space of national discourse.

However, this case of staged violence within the state, like real torture, could not be completely buried, hidden, or ignored. Since Bellas Artes is a very acoustic space, scared employees heard and commented upon the shots. However, in a nation built on fear and silence, the employees, like the general public, did not run to the cupola to see what happened. Belonging to a society taught to ignore the violence in plain sight, massacres like Tlatelolco and Corpus Cristi, the museum employees heard and commented on the shots, but no one pursued an investigation into the shooting. Through Finck and the guard's "performance," the current of violence appeared to move not away from, but directly into the Palace from the streets. In other words, they performed a violent act within the museum, and not outside on the streets. Here, the violence did not come from the threat of the streets, but rather emanated from the very highest point of a state symbol.

Theorizing a "politics of touch" through an image of two improvising dancers in a tango embrace, dance scholar Erin Manning posits a powerful metaphor for embodied movement evading state control. She suggests, "The violence that erupts through the many ruptures and transformations involved in the sensing, touching body can be conceived of as different from and more productive than the violence the state imposes on the 'stable' bodies of its citizens" (52). While Manning specifically discussed dance, what I take away from this quote is the notion that symbolic acts of violence can potentially elude the final, unidirectional brutality of state violence. While the guard and Finck did not dance, their violence-in-potential contradicted the real death-producing violence of the military and secret police, since its violence did not produce brutal effects on any real bodies. I mean that Finck and the bribed-guard redirected, albeit momentarily and improvisationally, the flow of state power. In this case, no government official or policy perpetrated violence. Instead, a government-paid artist who had required zero censorship and who was openly critical of the state orchestrated this violent act. In a politics of touch, this theatrical violence avoids the unidirectional violence of government brutality on its citizens' bodies: While shooting a car door alludes to violating a human body, in the context of an art-event in which no lives were threatened, it does not re-enact but rather mocks state violence. Here, the guard becomes a pawn to differing power holders (the state and the art world), the direction of his bullets dictated by money.

The Ring

The Car revealed and also "performed" a particular kind of diffused state violence based in the growing urban infrastructure of roads and cars that drove the capitalist economy. By perform I mean that the installation did not only represent but also, in its making process, enacted violence. The performative aspect resided both in the embodied performance of the shooting and in the installation's site specific experience. On the other hand, Muñoz's *The Ring*, located in the center of the gallery to the right of the car, referred to two violent national spectacles: Tlatelolco and *lucha libre*. As I mentioned in the introduction, *The Ring* (see fig. 9) was a boxing ring surrounded with barbed wire, under body-bag sacks, and covered with detritus and shoes. As we shall see, it further engaged hidden, un-spectacular spaces of sanctioned torture. Like Finck's car, Muñoz's installation alluded to state violence within the walls of a state institution (even if Bellas Artes itself was not a site of torture). Unlike the shooting incident in the cupola, where two moving bodies performed, no human bodies "performed" in the ring. However, the piece itself performed the appearance of the disappeared through the large hanging sacks and the detritus on the floor. This installation aimed to visibilize

those brutalized by and erased from the national narrative within Bellas Artes, an edifice that appeared to embody an official national narrative. At the same time, by inviting Pentágono to exhibit, Bellas Artes subverted the PRI's official agenda and included a critique of its brutality squarely within the national narrative.

The ring saturates Bellas Artes with something Bellas Artes supposedly did not stand for: state critique. In a poem in *A nivel informativo*'s catalogue, Muñoz juxtaposes two lines of his own poetry with each other: "We are going to invent that we are a rich country with no problems and we will organize the Olympics living happily in the Mexican-style. We are going to try to dream the nightmare of Tlatelolco backwards" (7). His poem evokes two of the prime architectural spaces that shaped national discourse on Dirty War violence: Tlatelolco and the Olympic Stadium. The Olympic Stadium's spectacle of national progress had diverted the public from Tlatelolco's spectacle of military oppression and brutality. Through his evocation of the Olympic Stadium and Tlatelolco, Muñoz articulates a pointed critique of the state's brutal spatiality.

No actual "fighters" are present in Muñoz's ring (see fig. 9). Human hair, old worn shoes, glasses, and other remnants are scattered on the ring's floor, evoking the piles of bloody shoes alluded to in Poniatowska's testimonials. Burlap sacks of various sizes hang above and slump into the ring. The sacks here echo the kidnapping piece. Muñoz reminisces, "After Tlatelolco we were going through something similar to what is going on now with Ayotzinapa. There were many dead . . . It was the Dirty War, and young people were organizing. But at the same time the security forces of the state exercised massive oppression. That was what this piece . . . was—a metaphoric ring" (V. Muñoz, Interview). His metaphoric ring encircled various social and architectural spaces: Tlatelolco, *lucha libre*, Mexico City, national discourse, and Bellas Artes. By blurring the lines between these spaces, like Finck's car, Muñoz's installation creates movement between them, questioning the neat, cordoned separation between state violence, national spectacle, and art. That is, his piece confuses seemingly stable boundaries between the actions and the specific places where they usually occur. Here, *lucha libre* doesn't happen in an official arena, but in a museum; torture happens not in a hidden cell, but in a public *lucha libre* ring; and a spectacle of national violence takes place within a museum of "Beautiful Arts" (Bellas Artes). In this way, Muñoz's work creates metaphoric movement across seemingly diverse spaces to reveal their interconnectedness. After all, the state made a violent spectacle at Tlatelolco that echoed the sensational quality of *lucha libre*. Additionally, the national media used the proud spectacle of the Olympic Games to divert citizens from the Dirty War.

If we look closely at the image of the ring, the burlap sacks filled with heavy stuffing imply human forms. The hanging bags with their weight pulling down on the ropes also evoke images of hangings while the additional remnants of shoes and hair below conjure death and disappearance. The sacks were not random choices to signify dead bodies, but referred to a specific, contemporary event in which government agents massacred militants. Muñoz recounts:

In the 1970s, cadavers in burlap sacks started showing up, so the sacks referred to these cadavers. In that time, the TV and the radio practically said nothing. So, in 1971, I heard of a case of a wonderful but naive and certainly brave young woman who decided to become part of an armed resistance group. And somehow

they [the secret police] caught one of the members of that organization and tortured him and made him confess to where the house where they all trained was. And so they showed up at the house and killed everyone there. It wasn't like they caught them and brought them to the Ministry of Justice. They just killed everyone. And so in the press this little note appeared about how a group of raiders had tried to rob a train, that they were traveling from Guanajuato or Guadalajara, something like that. But after it was known that they were friends. They lived their lives as militants in that house, when the police entered and massacred 9 to 11 of them. And the *Excelsior*, which was the most "free" of the papers said that some cadavers had shown up in burlap sacks. (V. Muñoz, Interview)

Thus, the sacks referred specifically to the many dissidents whom the government tortured and disappeared. This piece did not refer to generally brutalized bodies, but the specific bodies executed for acting in resistance to the constraints of state oppression. The sacks imply bodies whose individuality and deaths were negated and hidden by the government-controlled media, bodies that could never be buried or properly mourned. The official state narrative turned these individuals into nameless bundles and vanished them into the thin air of radio and TV silence.

The parallel of the installation with *lucha libre* performs various contradictions within *Bellas Artes* and against the state narrative. First, *lucha libre* is considered a popular "low art" in comparison to the high arts housed in the palace. *Lucha libre* fighters tend to be working class dark-skinned mestizo men with non-normatively attractive bodies. Many have potbellies and flamboyantly display their tattooed skin. They enact extravagantly theatrical and highly choreographed faux fighting. Hidden behind sparkly masks, these social underdogs become national, popular heroes through their elaborately danced spectacles of make-believe violence. It is significant that throughout the exposition in *Bellas Artes* Muñoz honors the fallen and disappeared. Since Orozco, Siquieros, and Rivera's murals in the lobby right near the Sala Internacional commemorate heroes of the Mexican Revolution, Muñoz adds a new kind of revolution to the national narratives depicted on the walls.

Performance scholar Peggy Phelan evaluates performance as a disappearing act: "The disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered" (147). In other words, performance is dependent upon the disappearance and the presence of the memory of what or who is no longer present. Seen in dialogue with Phelan, Muñoz's work enacts a reverse-performance: Through objects that evoke absent bodies, the ring remembers and metaphorically re-appears the disappeared. If the state spectacle of torture is a performance that repeats the disappearance of the subject yet denies the remembering of that subject, then the "ring" counters the full erasure and censorship by "appearing" those humans denied their humanity. It creates a performative "hauntology" as Diana Taylor argued in her analysis of the theatricality of disappearance in *Dirty War Argentina*: a performative repeating and returning of specters that push at the confines of hegemonic national discourse. Taylor builds upon Derrida's hauntology through the "performative hauntings" of Argentina's disappeared. She suggests, "Perhaps the invisible can be traced through the performative traditions that produce the sense of *nation*. For what is the ghost but the re-appeared, or restored enactment that Schechner defines as performance?" (Taylor, "Disappearing" 30). The repetitive nature of haunting is as performative

as the violent spectacles of military power and also shapes the meaning of “nation.” Thus, Pentágono’s invocation of the disappeared students in the installation performs a nation constructed on the presence of the dead students.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the ring’s spatiality evokes the geometry of Tlatelolco: The barbed wire harks to Tlatelolco’s complete lack of escape routes which enabled secret police to corner and massacre protesters. If one attempts to resist or push against the strictures of the barbed wire, she will get hurt. Resistance is depicted as resulting in annihilation in this piece via the pile of shoes and the cadaver-like-sacks. However, the movement of resistance is also located in the overlapping of locations within the installation. That is, by re-constructing an invisibilized site of torture inside of a state institution, Finck pushes against the confines of state censorship. However, Bellas Artes’ support of this project complicates a monolithic notion of state censorship. Capitalizing upon the state sponsorship of the exhibition, Muñoz and Proceso Pentágono used the museum as a platform on which to spin other state institutions on their heads. While nothing happened to the artists, undertaking this project in Bellas Artes could have cost them greatly. Ironically, by presenting a representation of inescapable State violence *within* the marble walls of a State institution, Muñoz imagined a metaphoric escape. Much of the audience was composed of workers, union members, and activists who were close to Proceso Pentágono from the student movement. Ironically, in Bellas Artes, they could indeed move freely without risking the very real violence referenced in this piece that was happening in this city, and without being executed by the government. While the dead could not move, their comrades could meander through the gallery. These survivors resisted the state by commemorating their fallen friends not outside of, but within the walls of a government institution. This is significant because the state did not provide many other, if any, spaces or rituals to honor those framed by the national media as enemies of the state. Pentágono utilized Bellas Artes’ support to honor, in a central, ritual space, the lives and political projects marginalized by the hegemonic discourse.

The Television

Tlatelolco’s postmodern panopticon was not the only “public” space that replaced the Zócalo. I previously noted that the plaza serves not only as a symbol of governmental control, but also a public forum to contest the state. It is not a monologic, but a dialogic space. Tlatelolco had once also been a plaza before modern urban planning hedged it in. Protesters saw Tlatelolco as a site for a forum, but in reality its boundaries were too easily controllable to allow for a fully democratic flow of power. A critique of privatization and state violation of the public space, in fact, was at the core of the student movement. After a massive protest in the Zócalo in August of 1968, it became illegal to congregate and protest there, and the specific demands of the movement asked for a public dialogue with the state in public space. As Williams asserts, “[The] demand for public dialogue, *in public*, bore witness to the struggle against sovereign power’s privatization of force. It brought to light the struggle against the distribution of the public and the private that structure the domination of the oligarchy throughout the state and society” (121). The controlling and limiting of public architectural space and media went hand in hand with the diminishing space for democratic social protest.

Modernity in Mexico also heralded a new kind of common space: the radio and the television. Like a plaza, the television became a centralized place for announcements and for the

embodiment of national narratives. However, unlike a plaza, the nationalized television did not provide a space for protesters to dissent. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the government rigidly controlled the media. The PRI's mirage of the "Mexican Miracle" and economic prosperity at a time of really violent oppression was a direct consequence of media spectacle. Williams recounts:

In social and cultural terms, conservative mores anchored the state's relation to Mexico's emerging urban middle classes. Radio and television, together with national and international cinema, were systematically censored. The press was almost completely servile. Social conservatives considered recent cultural manifestations such as rock music to be diabolical or communist, which for the orthodox "Left" it was a glaring symptom of Yankee imperialism. (125)

This eerily parallels the current moment of 2016, where Televisa and the state are so symbiotic that official news invisibilizes the events of Ayotzinapa; however, the internet has allowed for the global transmission of alternative news that resists the state. In Mexico, the television serves only as an illusion of a public space, a non-forum where the speakers can only agree with each other.

García Canclini alludes to this, explaining the difference between televised spectacle and embodied social protest:

The political demonstration spectacularizes the presence of the people in a way that lacks predictability: who knows how the invasion of a crowd in the street will end? In contrast, the popularity of singers or actors within closed spaces—a stadium or a television channel—with a programmed beginning and end, at precise times, is a controlled spectacle: even more so if that mass acclaim is diluted in the ordered transmission of domestic television sets. (188)

The PRI could much more easily control its citizens as long as they were glued to their televisions in their private homes watching the Olympics and other lighthearted programming. They couldn't, however, prevent people from looking out their windows in the Tlatelolco complexes and watching the military brutalize hundreds of protesters. For this reason, the state's relationship to the sanitized, private television spectacle went hand in hand with the brutal use of force in public space: The illusion of a public space created by the television worked to divert viewers from what was going on in the architectural public spaces.

José Antonio's installation, on the right side of the gallery, portrayed the tight, violent confines of televised space. There, a white, faceless, identity-less "figure" enmeshed in plaster appeared bound to a seat. As Finck relates, "It was totally wrapped and tied-down, in front of a constantly turned-on television, with incessant, snowy static" (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview). This static perhaps reflected the lack of content in the news. Finck continues, "There were bars behind the doll looking something like a chain link fence. And that was what drew peoples' attention to José Antonio's space, because the figure was trapped. There in a space of media and information" (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview). Finck's quote proposes a paradox. One might assume that the more access to information one has, the more free she becomes. On the

contrary, this figure is inundated with (one type of) information and is more confined than Muñoz's sacks or Finck's exploded car.



Fig. 15. Victor Muñoz, Photograph of *Bound Figure*, Victor Muñoz Archive. [This is a similar figure of Antonio's, though not the one facing the television.]

The spatial compression of Antonio's piece is tangible. As we can see in a similar doll of Antonio's (see fig. 15), a lump-like figure with head, torso and legs is almost fused to the chair. Its arms cannot be seen, and its body is encased with tight wire. In the television installation, further levels of constraint such as the bars and the television entrapped and minimized the figure's freedom. The television does not expand, but rather limits the figure's perception or scope of information. Bound, it cannot look around at its surroundings to see the exploding car or the Tlatelolco-like boxing ring that it faces its back to. It cannot move.

This piece is arguably more sculptural or object-based than the other two works. Its medium plays an interesting role in spatializing bodily and social movement. Plaster, used medically, encases and tightens against human bodies. As it dries, it immobilizes and dehydrates the parts of the body that it contains. It functions as a support and simultaneously a threat to bodily integrity. Thus, the plaster figure implies not a body, but an exceedingly tight space around a body that renders the body frozen. In the previous chapter, I discussed Elaine Scarry's spatialization of trauma during state torture. In it, she implies that the victim's mobility and space become limited to near paralysis by the torturer, while the torturer's or the regime's space expands. Here, the plaster figure literalizes Scarry's reading of torture, given the multiple confines on space and mobility, and the additional ropes and bars.

It appears that Antonio is correlating the television to torture. But how can watching television equate with experiencing brutality? Perhaps the resistant movement of this piece lies in this irony. After all, those viewing the television in 1968 saw anything but torture. However, the television, along with the rest of the official media, violently restricted Mexican citizens' social mobility by attempting to warp their realities, confining their potential for resistance. In a sense, this figure experiences the very thing that it does not see on the television screen, contrasting lived experience with the official government-sanctioned "truth." Those directly experiencing governmental torture did not see themselves reflected in the news. The state continued its spectacle of disappearance by establishing and sanctioning one central authoritative narrative.

Media coverage determined which sites and occurrences were recognized as public and thus "real." While much of the State violence of 1968 and the ensuing Dirty War happened out of sight in hidden torture chambers, blatant acts of national terrorism such as Tlatelolco and Corpus Cristi happened in massive, public spectacles. Although these performances to the death were orchestrated by the state, they did not count as "information." Instead, highly censored media, and not the streets and plazas, became the paramount public space. What happened visibly in the streets was not deemed "real" unless it appeared in the official television, newspapers, and radio. "Information" in this piece is used to contain and cover up reality. For this reason, misinformation is spatialized as bloodless brutality. In this way, José Antonio's work encapsulated the exhibition's strange title—*A nivel informativo* or "At the level of information." While the media that Antonio evokes substitute empty, meaningless information for the reality of hidden torture, the rest of the exhibition informs its visitors of a brutal, parasitic city.

The Performances

The Run-over Man

An important element of Proceso Pentágono's choreography was how it not only metaphorically but also architecturally inverted official and non-official spaces via its performative and site-specific movements. Significantly, the artists staged their "actions" not only within the palace, but in the streets surrounding Bellas Artes, traversing between the building's interior and the street. These non-objective performances, which happened at the later inaugural events, involved the artists using their own moving bodies to question the spaces around them. It is important to note that in 1973, the street came straight up to the door of the Palace whereas now an elegant esplanade frames the entry. The photo below (see fig. 16), taken from the front door of Bellas Artes by Finck, shows a crammed parking lot. The most congested corner of San Juan de Letrán, now known as Eje Central, and Madero, inspired Finck's *The Run-over Man*.



Fig. 16. Carlos Finck, *View from Bellas Artes*, MUAC Archive.

Finck remembers it as “a conflictive corner with a lot of traffic and . . . a sea of people, like now. It was a fight between cars and pedestrians, humans and machines” (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview). Frequent casualties resulted from this encounter, spattering the streets with blood. Thus, Finck wanted to make *un atropellado*, or “a run-over man” on the street in conversation with his exploded car in the gallery. Here, he not only brought the street into the museum, but the museum into the street. Finck relates:

We had to run over someone. So how were we going to do it? We got a huge piece of plastic and we painted a silhouette on it. We did this outside of the Palace, by drawing a body with wet paint. It had to be quick so that the paint didn't dry, and it had to be a lot of paint. We attached the sheet of plastic to some cables so that it would cross the corner. There was still a street that passed right in front of the Palace. . . . Paint stayed on the street. When the cars passed over the sheet of plastic... so that the asphalt was painted, and red paint extended on the street. . . . We had no idea that this could be called performance. (Finck and V. Muñoz, Interview)

Finck inserted the gallery in the form of an “art-object” (the plastic sheet) into the street. This time paint, not blood, splattered the cement, and cars ran over a representation of a human, not an actual person. After the “accident,” the audience, comprised of gallery attendees and pedestrians, were encouraged to paint a word or two of their reactions directly on the plastic.

The artists then returned the paint and word-covered plastic sheet back to the gallery and hung it up.



Fig.17. Carlos Finck, *The Run-over Man* (Image of Menicucci and Finck with the paint-splattered plastic), MUAC Archive.

In the image above (see fig. 17), Menicucci and Finck drag the “run-over man” into the gallery to hang it by the “ring” in the background to the left. The long plastic sheet with smudges in the middle and text across it appears to be an “art object.” After all, it is in a gallery. However, the object is only the residue of the experience on the street. The object comes to being through the violent performative action of a car accidentally bloodying a street corner. The violent movements involved in this piece were not unidirectional between the state-sponsored museum and the public street: Instead, the artists shifted between sites, between audiences, and between performance and object. This work embodied the link between violent urban planning and the performative, non-objective turn in Mexican art. That is, urban space itself had structured the potential for mass spectacles such as the massacre at Tlatelolco’s Plaza de las Tres Culturas, the Olympic Games in the Olympic Stadium, or the jerky smog-filled streams of cars crowding the streets. It was impossible for Mexico City citizens to avoid the theatrical quality of the unavoidable traffic jams, protests, and police brutality. As the city became a megalopolis, general expressions of violence were happening more frequently, visibly, en masse, in public. Thus, the explosively performative, chaotic, live quality of the city and its citizens’ daily lives could not be aptly reflected in traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture. As a result, the “performative turn” in the arts resulted from a need for a new language to express the artists’ experience of reality blurring with brutal spectacle.

The Kidnapping

The Kidnapping “action” not only linked performativity to state violence, revealing the formal shift from object-based art to performance as directly related to the PRI’s oppressive government. It additionally signaled and contested the state’s brutal inversion of public and private space. McCaughan describes the generational rift in the 1960s and 1970s between the

Mexican School artists and student artists interested in pop art, expressionism, and other foreign forms:

The younger generation's discomfort with the Mexican School of art was closely related to its deep ambivalence about the legacy of Mexico's nationalist revolution, which gave birth to the authoritarian regime and its cultural politics By the 1970s, the break with the nationalist regime of representation was even more pronounced as many of the grupos artists abandoned social realism in favor of conceptual art strategies. (14)

While he does not talk specifically about performance, McCaughan makes it clear that older forms of representation were so closely tied to the PRI and its failed promises of revolution that young artists could not express their dissent within this medium. As we shall see in *The Kidnapping*, the form of performance art served allowed to both critique the notion of art as well as to “appear” the disappeared.

As seen in Muñoz's image (fig. 10) of this chapter, *The Kidnapping* involved Finck and Menicucci traversing the crowded streets in front of the Palace in broad daylight as they “kidnapped” a third artist. Not coincidentally, the “kidnapped one” is in a burlap sack. In contrast, in *The Ring*, the burlap bags signified dead, immobile bodies, while this body stood up and walked. Actual kidnapers would not cover their victims in a giant bag in public, drawing more attention to themselves. Typically, secret police would shove dead bodies into canvas in private, hidden spaces. The sacks signify disappearance; yet, this figure is strikingly apparent in this image. The man in the sack seems larger than the men kidnapping him.

The kidnapped figure walks, albeit constrained by the other two men and by the ropes, through the street in front of Bellas Artes. Interestingly, when I asked Muñoz about this piece, he responded, “We didn't have a score, but we knew what to do: We needed to *move someone*” (V. Muñoz, Interview). This comment has various connotations. First, it refers to the act of kidnapping in choreographic terms. Kidnapping involves the involuntary transportation of one body by another body: the kidnapers violently displace the victim in space. Kidnapping is forced relocation. By theatricalizing disappearance, Proceso Pentágono drew attention to a hidden state choreography. In Dirty War Mexico, the state and secret police brutally controlled dissidents' bodies by choosing when and how they could move. The military pushed this forced displacement beyond the displacement of bodies via kidnapping, murdering, and disappearing of those bodies.

Contrary to the state-controlled choreography, in this piece, we can conversely read that *by walking*, this kidnapped figure metaphorically resisted state-imposed stillness and erasure. Portraying a walking burlap sack illustrates movement against the forces that would otherwise render that sack and its human contents immobile. Furthermore, as in the ring, the disappeared reappears through performance. Here, however, the disappeared shows up not only within state discourse as symbolized by Bellas Artes, but in *public* as embodied by the street. This street public contradicts the illusion of the public created by the media referenced in Antonio's *The Television*, forcing passers-by not to look away. Furthermore, the paint and the paintbrush that Finck and Menicucci use to stain the burlap sack are art-tools that reference the gallery. Painting in public in front of Bellas Artes draws critical focus to the elite art institution. While it is a state

entity and not a private institution, its art is primarily inaccessible to a socioeconomically diverse crowd. Security guards protect it from being infiltrated by the unwanted elements of the “public” that fill the streets outside of its doors. Proceso Pentágono pushes Bellas Artes out onto the streets, past its gilded gates. Since the symbols of “art” used (the paintbrush and the red paint) depict blood, Bellas Artes is revealed to contain violence, like the streets.

At the same time, the performance conveys irony in its subversion of Bellas Artes. Not only is Pentágono locating violence in this site, but it is also critiquing the practice of art itself. That is, by framing a kidnapping as an artistic project, Pentágono questions the value placed on art. By depicting a kidnapping as a work of high art, the group posits the act of absconding with and torturing a human body as an aesthetic, artistic, choreographic act. At the same time, this seemingly un-aesthetic, non-objective action calls into question the value of the art *inside* the museum: If putting paint on something (even if it is a body in a burlap sack) under the auspices of Bellas Artes makes it “art,” then just about anything can be elevated to art status given the right context. The paint flicks critique the practice of art, and, with it, the art-ness of reality. The fact that the presumably dead body in the sack walks, combined with the men painting the sack, marks this action as performance art. However, the performance location of the street blurs the boundaries between art and reality. By performing at this specific threshold—the space between the street and the museum—Pentágono calls into question neat delineations between the art object, art, performance, violence, and the lived reality within the increasingly violent, theatrical space of Dirty War Mexico City.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I juxtaposed diverse urban structures in Mexico City, positioning them in the specific context of the 1968 movement and massacre, as well as the Dirty War. These locations included Tlatelolco’s Plaza de las Tres Culturas, Victor Muñoz’s *The Ring* installation, Bellas Artes, and the network of streets and highways surrounding these locations. Throughout the chapter, I connected these different sites to differing levels of state violence. Central to my overall concern in this dissertation, I looked at how these spaces shaped or choreographed resistant and hegemonic movement within them during a time of national crisis. I argued that the rebellious, democratic movement produced by the student movement and Pentágono’s critical, site-specific artwork, was both produced in deep resistance to, but also propelled (and in the case of Pentágono enabled) by the state.

The governmental molding of space was highly performative. In the case of Tlatelolco, the modern housing complex construction enabled the military to seemingly control the bodies of its citizens. Modern constructions such as Tlatelolco and the Olympic Stadium also served as stages for massive spectacles of state power. The television simultaneously created a privatized illusion of public space through an intensely censored media. The theatrics of the proud Olympic Games and the police and military’s violent response to accumulating protest unleashed a powerfully performative response both in student activists as well as artists.

For this reason, the formal shift from the object-based art of the Mexican School to performance, conceptual art, and installation used by Proceso Pentágono in *A nivel informativo* emerged in direct response to an overly rigid, theatrical state. However, the increasing constraints on social movement effectively produced one of the most significant social and

artistic movements since the Mexican Revolution. While these state constraints on social and artistic liberty appeared monolithic and unchangeable, the pulsing student movement and the fragmented artwork of Proceso Pentágono revealed the state to be in crisis, unstable, and on the verge of movement. Thus, Pentágono's use of performance in *The Kidnapping*, *The Run-over man*, and even in the process of shooting *The Car* both reflected the violent state crisis as well as responded to the need for a new artistic language to address this performative violence. The Mexican School's social realist murals celebrating the Revolution while simultaneously institutionalizing it and supporting the PRI's sovereign power could not be used to critique the state. Thus, in order for Pentágono to question the institution, it needed to question traditional artistic forms of representation and create a new language for itself.

For this reason, Finck, Antonio, and Muñoz utilized the spatiality and symbolism of Bellas Artes and its surrounding streets to engage in a nuanced critique of various institutions and forms, from the museum and the larger state apparatus, to urban planning, and ultimately to the definition of art itself. By blurring the boundaries between street, museum, state, object, performance, and reality, Proceso Pentágono reflected on and implied not a stable state, but a government spiraling violently out of control. *A nivel informativo* signals not the solidity, but the breakdown of unidirectional state power as it simultaneously breaks down disciplinary boundaries. By shifting between performance, site-specificity, and improvised movements, Pentágono choreographically dissolved artistic disciplines and metaphorically pushed against and beyond the brutal state strictures.

CHAPTER 3:

DANZA CALLEJERA— DIS(PLACE)ING MEXICO CITY'S SEISMIC PAIN



Fig. 18. Jorge Izquierdo, “Zacam-Zom” at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, *Barrio Rojo*, *Arte Escenico* (1982-2007). [Laura Rocha, dancer]

Introduction

In this 1988 photograph (see fig. 18), dancer and Barro Rojo director¹⁰ Laura Rocha exposes her collarbones dramatically and vulnerably as she crouches, arching back as if about to fall, with her eyes on the ground. She furrows her brow and tensely stretches her fingers wide. Seemingly pulled by the concrete below her bare feet, she seems to interact more with the cement than the rows of onlookers at a distance behind her. The diverse audience includes children, students, and adults, all dressed in pedestrian clothing. Since there are no seats, some people sit on the ground while others stand. This dance does not take place in the usual theater setting with its lights, sound system, and typical audience. Instead, Rocha moves her tiny, muscular, mestiza body upon the very ground of the student massacre of 1968: Tlatelolco’s Plaza de las Tres Culturas. Twenty years after the massacre, she danced to honor the lives of the slain students. Her expression seems to channel the many layers of violence embodied in the plaza. At that time, in 1988, new ghosts also haunted the space.

¹⁰ Rocha is the current director. In 1988, Arturo Garrido was the director.

Only three years prior to Rocha's site-specific dance performance, much of Tlatelolco had collapsed in one of the biggest earthquakes to ever rock the city. As the ground shuddered during the 8.1 earthquake on September 19, 1985, human bodies fell along with buildings, leaving thousands homeless and over 40,000 people dead (no one knows the exact number) (Cépeda). The structure of Tlatelolco's massive modern housing complex had enabled yet another human disaster. In the 1968 massacre, the buildings provided the military with easy access to control and limit the protesters' mobility. In the earthquake, the buildings' shoddy construction could not withstand the force of a natural disaster, which destroyed the edifices and killed many of the people in them. While Miguel de la Madrid's PRI government did not directly orchestrate the disaster, regulations for architectural construction adopted by Ordaz's earlier administration allowed the buildings to be erected on unstable foundations. Set on saving money, Ordaz's team made the complexes with cheap materials and without attention to seismic construction standards. The housing complexes *Unidad Habitacional Nonalco-Tlatelolco* and *Multifamiliares Juárez* became major disaster scenes. About 30,000 units were lost, along with schools and medical centers. While the exact numbers are unknown, newspapers *Excélsior*, *La Jornada*, *El Día*, *Unomasuno*, *El Universal*, *Novedades*, *La Prensa*, *El Sol de Mexico*, *El Financiero*, *Ovaciones*, *El Nacional* each reported on the first day approximately 4,000 dead, 7,000 missing, 10,000 injured, and across the city 250,000 without homes and 500,000 sleeping in the streets in front of their homes (Poniatowska, "Nocha" 20, 29). The tall Nuevo León building at Tlatelolco collapsed in the middle, breaking in half, as Poniatowska puts it "like a poorly cooked cake" (*Nada, Nadie* 20). Trapped residents jumped to their deaths from the windows of crumbling buildings. This time the military did not move violently; the buildings themselves did. Poniatowska continues, "like 17 years ago, the Plaza de las Tres Culturas is a battlefield" (*Nada, Nadie* 20). While the violence appeared natural this time, lives would not have been lost if the man-made buildings had been properly designed and constructed.

As a result, when Rocha danced at Tlatelolco's Plaza de las Tres Culturas, her body's pained movements evoked overlapping traumatic histories embedded in the site. Tlatelolco was not only the plaza of three cultures, but also the site of multiple acts of bloodshed: from colonization, and 1968's student protests, to the 1985 earthquake. Thus, the meaning of Rocha's dance cannot be separated from the overlapping temporalities of the architectural site in which it was performed. By drawing a relationship between both her agonized posture and her expression with the site in which she danced, Rocha visibilized painful, hidden histories. What did Rocha's dance and other post-quake "site-specific" dances *do* to these multiple layers of spatialized historic violence in terms of redefining local and national communities? How might these site dances attempt to "heal" space through embodied movement? Here, I examine this correlation of suffering to location via embodied site-specific movement in response to the post-earthquake socioeconomic crisis. Furthermore, I look at how the inception of Mexican site-specific dance nuances conceptions both of site-specificity and of site-specific dance.

In this chapter, I theorize how dancers moving within the sites of Mexico City that were hardest hit by the 1985 earthquake attempted to provide ideological healing to their own communities and these communities inhabiting the sites. While the earthquake serves as an impetus for site-specific dance, the dances in the years following the earthquake expanded beyond the specific context of the earthquake to address ongoing concerns with marginalized communities in specific neighborhoods. Thus many of the performances did not only relate to the earthquake, but also to the social displacement and simultaneous sense of place experienced

by residents in the different locations. Under the umbrella of local community I include the survivors, victims, and residents of areas affected by the earthquake as well as the inhabitants of various marginal neighborhoods. I address the dance community of postmodern *danza callejera* choreographers; a network of disparate, independent dance collectives that banded together to provide disaster relief and later to continue performing in the disaster sites long after the quake. As acknowledged in the previous chapter (via my reading of Nestor García Canclini): since Mexico is premodern, modern and postmodern at the same time (41), Mexico's "postmodern dance" does not follow the same trajectory as do those traditions in the U.S. and Europe. In many ways *danza callejera* stood at the threshold of modern and postmodern dance: Many of the movement forms and archetypal characters referenced Martha Graham and Anna Sokolow's legacy of traditional concert dance. At the same time, the choreographers' choices of venue (the street), direct engagement with audience and occasional use of improvisation were postmodern. That said, the choreographers who I interviewed considered their work to be wholly postmodern since it broke with traditional forms and spaces associated with modern concert dance (Díaz; C. Appleton; Contreras Villaseñor; Vera; Rocha; Garrido, Interviews).

While at times the choreographers conflated a larger communal healing with the cathartic experience they felt as individuals or as a dance community, the lines between communities become blurred. I look at how *danza callejera* revealed the architectural space of Mexico City's streets and plazas in order to embody imagined national communities. By bringing movement into conversation with site, *danza callejera* redefined architectural locations as painful memorials and sites for communal contestation of hegemonic power structures and governmental corruption. Consequently, these dances destabilized rigid definitions of national belonging. The dances, in dialogue with the earthquake, exposed shaky social foundations by moving in, or by ideologically moving, objective space.

As I mentioned in the previous chapters, dance theorist Randy Martin explains sociopolitical crisis through his understanding of postmodern dance.¹¹ Postmodern dance may reject traditional venues such as theaters, break the fourth wall between audience and dancers, and may involve improvisation and pedestrian movement. Crisis, choreographically and socially defined, involves a loss of balance and a fall from "center" that provokes mobility (Martin 1). Thus, it is possible to see how the earthquake might paralyze rather than mobilize marginal communities. Thinking of Scarry's reference to the limited space of torture victims and people with extreme physical pain, it is easy to see how the earthquake literally closed off physical mobility and transit for some. Those crippled by the earthquake literally had less access to bodily movement. Simultaneously the damage to the city—including fallen bridges and fractured roads—further limited all citizens' mobility across larger distances.

To think of this in ideological terms, Miguel de la Madrid's government's utter lack of aid to the many survivors left entire communities immobilized, without the ability to work, to eat, to have any kind of social mobility. As addressed earlier, tens of thousands died, thousands of people were injured, thousands disappeared, and 500,000 became homeless. Additionally, hospitals were destroyed or closed. For the first few days after the earthquake 60% of the city

¹¹ By postmodern dance I refer to the experimental dance forms born in the 1960s and 1970s in opposition to more formalistic concert modern dance such as Martha Graham's work.

had no drinking water and no electricity or telephone service, and the city was filled with military and police who did very little to help civilians (Poniatowska, *Nada, Nadie* 29). The government's ineptitude and corruption virtually froze rescue efforts. The president specifically rejected foreign help and kept foreign rescue groups detained in luxury hotels instead of letting them assist. (Cépeda). In her testimony as part of the thirty-year commemoration of the earthquake, Ana Lilia Cépeda pointedly critiques the disorganized, greedy, impotent governmental actions towards the earthquake, discussing both how police were sent to detain communities from rescuing people trapped in the rubble, and the government rejection of humanitarian aid. She reveals how the earthquake exposed the violent governmental system upon which the nation rested. She reflects, "the system within the rubble was laid bare, as apparent in finding cadavers with torture marks in the basements of the destroyed state prosecutor's building. Also isolated instances of avarice and pettiness appeared. It is enough to remember the mythic case of the unending search in the rubble [by the military] of the child "Monchito," when in reality, as was told, they were looking for a safe" (Cépeda). Saving civilian lives was at the bottom of the Madrid administration's priorities.

The aftermath of the disaster had long-lasting effects. The economic collapse both preceding and following the quake—commonly referred to as "la Crisis"—further constrained social mobility. Thus the impetus for social mobilization was directly brought about by the crippling spatial constraints left in the wake of an urban disaster. While the postrevolution and the 1968/Dirty War crises were manmade, the economic and social strife of the mid-1980s to early 1990s was catalyzed by a different kind of jolt: In this case, the earth literally *moved*. Here, social movement ceased to be a metaphor. Natural disasters appear far more democratic than human ones: After all, people from all walks of life lost loved ones and homes. But earthquakes and governmental relief efforts (or lack thereof) in urban areas also tend to exacerbate and expose social inequity. Seen thusly, the earthquake was not entirely a natural disaster after all. Human decisions preceding and following the quake magnified its destructive power: From shoddily constructed public housing projects and nonexistent disaster preparation to overall corruption, the earthquake wreaked much more havoc than it might have in a different place at a different time.

In this chapter, I articulate how the earthquake both incited a social crisis and simultaneously inspired a social movement. The *danza callejera* events literalized this social movement via embodied dance as they became spaces for activism. Their work did not occur in a vacuum but within a larger social choreography of resistant movement spurred by the earthquake. As Mexican art historian Alejandro Navarrete Cortés writes in "Symbolic Production in Mexico in the 1980s," while development appeared dead in its tracks following the 1985 earthquake, the quake both unearthed and impelled differential *movement*. He states:

The general disillusion, prompted by the State's inability to orchestrate response, led to other types of restrictions, moments of crisis or seriousness that permitted the interaction of forces. This was not so much about ending one story and beginning another, a rupture that appears to forget or erase the past, but more a notion of *transit*, modeled on a principle of circulation; in spite of noise and instability, this mechanics allowed the redistribution of forces in different directions. (293)

Navarrete's analysis of post-quake Mexico City runs in tandem with the choreographic nature of the other historical crises that I examine in this dissertation. Past constraints set the momentum for the violent thrust that both set new parameters and simultaneously opened new spaces for circulation. The brutal shift, which was an accumulation of past brutality, shook the center from its axis and allowed for social power to be repositioned, re-moved.

This was made evident by a powerful civil movement, which, in the face of governmental ineptitude, formed lasting NGOs and social service organizations. Cépeda explains the earthquake's impulse to massive social change and political reorganization in the face of a broken political system: "in the '85 earthquake, we Mexicans discovered with fright a civil society capable of saving lives, finding torture victims in basements, and removing tons of rubble In effect, that civil society that emerged in the quakes, in a few years would make rubble out of the Mexican political system. 1985 would be the most immediate referent to bring forth a new political culture" (Cépeda; my translation). In many ways the aftermath of the earthquake marked the second moment since the student movement of 1968 (referred to by Gareth Williams) in which democratically organized civil groups significantly contested the PRI's sovereignty (128). While the formation of NGOs was not the same as a social protest and was not met with as much government brutality given the immediate need for aid, the impact of the NGOs similarly posed a significant threat to the state's overarching control of its citizens.

Since the *danza callejera* choreographies both echoed and differed from what is commonly thought of as "site-specific dance," it is important to define both site-specific dance and *danza callejera*. Although it could be argued that choreographers such as Isadora Duncan, Rudolf Laban, and Anna Halprin had begun site-specific dance earlier, the term emerged in New York City in the 1960s through the Judson Church movement of choreographers, who worked in tandem with visual artists to create postmodern "happenings." While there is no one definition of site-specific dance, it is commonly viewed as dance that is made outside of the traditional concert stage and that directly engages with its unique architectural surroundings in such a way that the architecture shapes the choreography. Audiences come and go and street noise often interjects. Site-specific dance thus interacts with the world outside of the black box. Choreographers such as Trisha Brown, Meredith Monk, and Lucinda Childs created dances within the principles of visual arts site-specificity that I refer to in Chapter 2. For example, in Lucinda Childs' 1964 *Street Dance*, audiences watched through windows as Childs and another dancer on the ground below interacted with different aspects of the buildings' facades (Briginshaw 44).

The street becomes a zone of aesthetic exploration, subject to critical scrutiny. For example, San Francisco choreographer Jo Kreiter, who choreographs aerial dances off the sides of murals and alleyway walls sees site-specific dance as revealing social conflict. She reflects, "My own love of site work has to do with bringing an audience to the exact place where an issue, conflict, or need lives" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 239). Here, the audience is provoked to question the sociopolitical construction of this space. Most often, choreographers create site-specific dance in the unusual non-theatrical physical terrain in which the work takes place.

The closest Spanish equivalent for site-specific dance, *danza para espacios alternativos* (which translates to "dance for alternative spaces") is more "specific," or limiting, than the English term. While "site-specific" may refer to using absolutely any site, including theaters and

museums, in an alternative manner, the term “alternative spaces” excludes these traditional venues. French sociologist Pierre-Alain Baud, who worked extensively in Mexico and was one of the *Encuentros Callejeros* organizers, defines *danza callejera* as resistant dance activism in public Mexican sites and laments its evolution into *danza para espacios alternativos*. He bemoans that “current groups no longer . . . [make] dance for the streets, but rather for alternative exterior spaces, becoming a more aesthetic than social issue” (Baud 203; my translation). *Danza para espacios alternativos*, as Baud suggests, connotes the “purely aesthetic” site-specific dance associated with the U.S. and Europe, which I argue is still indeed political and not solely aesthetic. Like site-specific dance in the United States, *danza callejera* choreographers made dances for public urban settings that drew critical attention to the institutional structures that the sites were founded on. However, many of the Mexico City *danza callejera* choreographers approached the site of the street first as a social, politically resistant site, only exploring its architecture secondarily. There is no clear binary between the two forms of site-specific dance. However, the majority of the early post-quake *danza callejera* pieces, unlike the Judson site-specific works, did not begin with an exploration of the physical terrain. Instead, notions of community and suffering embedded in the sites themselves inspired these pieces. While at first glance it might appear that site-specific dance from the United States visually foregrounds the aesthetic exploration of architectural space over the investigation of site as community, like *danza callejera*, it often involves both a community dimension and political motivation. While marking the difference between site-specific dance and *danza callejera*, I do not imply a binary relation between invocations of aesthetics and community of the two forms. Rather, the forms foreground different gradations of these in their visual embodiment.

For Baud, the term *danza callejera* fails to capture its resistant social goals. The literal English translation, “street dance,” is not accurate either, since it evokes dance forms specific to marginalized populations in the United States. Whereas *danza callejera* uses a Western movement vocabulary, *Danza azteca*, or “Aztec dance” (which like both street dance and *danza callejera* is site-specific) is more like street dance in that the movement form emanates from highly marginalized communities. This does not mean that some of the dancers and choreographers were not indeed from the communities in which they danced, but only that the style of movement reflected a particular codified embodiment with roots in the United States. However, like United States street dance, *danza callejera* is uniquely urban. But the “street” component of *danza callejera* is another misnomer, as it also occurred in plazas, roofs and other public spaces. That said, changing *danza callejera* to *danza para espacios públicos*, or “dance for public spaces” would diminish its edge: The street evokes movement, violence, conflict, and most importantly class struggle. It is also significant that the term is gendered. *Callejera* is a feminine adjective referring to a streetwalker, a woman who occupies public space. All of the linguistic ellipses and shadows that I discuss here relate to the resistant, unique quality of *danza callejera*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the street in Mexico City is a popular space. And during and after the earthquake, the street came to represent the home of the newly homeless, the only space available.

Following Martin’s moving-body-based logic, crisis either produces movement away from a center or creates new centers from previously peripheral locations. As I dance, falling from my axis, my center becomes relative, shifting from my pelvis to my head and sometimes my chest. Similarly, the earthquake decentered, recentered, and moved Mexico City’s spatiality.

Over 500,000 people now lived, not inside buildings, but in the streets—a transformation of the city that imploded public and private, inner and outer space (Poniatowska, *Nada, Nadie* 29). Gone, in particular, were the neat spatial separations that the Dirty War of the 70s depended upon to hide brutality behind closed doors. Thus, I will argue that the 1985 earthquake both brutally and also productively forced social movement by inverting the city's spatiality, *des-plaza-ndo*, or dis-place-ing entire communities, including imagined national ones.

Importantly, I contend that by defining site as pain and moving through it, *danza callejera* choreographers reimagined movement in spaces paralyzed by trauma. By potentially providing embodied movement to communities stagnated by pain, the choreographers “performed” ideological movement that imagined social mobility. As mentioned earlier, multilayered brutal events existed in the various streets and plazas where *danza callejera* was performed. Consequently, these spaces and their pain were heterotopic. Michel Foucault describes heterotopia as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (Foucault 1998, 26-28). In Tlatelolco, Colonia Roma, and other marginalized sites I examine, colonial architecture exists on top of ruins, and multiple temporalities, subjectivities, and experiences collide in the same space.

So what might dance *do* to trauma in heterotopic space? Dance scholar Anurima Banerji posits dance performance in relation to Foucault's heterotopia as a paratopia, a temporal space that is different because it

materializes specifically *through embodied movement*—it is not a defined architectural zone that the body enters, in which corporeal experiences are structured and shaped. The site of the paratopia, then, extends as far as the body's peregrinations and exists for the duration of the embodied act. As such, the paratopia is a highly grounded idea of performance, and can be deployed specifically to theorize a spectrum of territorialized acts—among them, dance (350)

If we conceive of the plazas and streets as heterotopias, in which conflicting social meanings are constructed, fought for, and negotiated, then paratopias are the embodied spectacles that take place within them, from military parades and protests to *danza callejera*. I contend that within paratopia lies the possibility for the embodied subject to define her physical and ideological surroundings differently, to not only be shaped by, but to shape space. As de Certeau argues, “[*Space*] is a *practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” (117). Consequently, by putting the heterotopias of the streets and plazas in conversation with the paratopias of the *danza callejera* performances, I show how dance can encourage interventions that temporarily transform site. In many of these cases a static, unmoving physical place becomes a dynamic, shifting, and creative space, perhaps in the way that breath and movement can transform a space paralyzed by pain into a space of potential healing.

Finally, I use a diverse methodology to re-member un-filmed postmodern dance events inspired by an earthquake that took place over thirty years ago. Like any project that analyzes ephemeral dance events from the past, I step through the rubble of archival and ethnographic

fragments to piece together an already fissured experience. I waded through photographer Jorge Izquierdo's archives along with the choreographers' memories as recalled in interviews. As with my research from the previous chapter, there was no video footage of the particular dances that I address. This renders an incomplete picture and often-conflicting recollections of locations and the dances. Thus, I focus on readings of the photographs in juxtaposition or communion with my interviews with the choreographers. I filter these fragments through the lens of critical dance studies, trauma theory, and site-specific theory, not to piece together a whole picture, but rather to reach an understanding of how these shards of memory initiate a choreography of re-membering and re-moving potentially dismembered, paralyzed spaces.

A History of *Danza Callejera*

Danza callejera, which was created in part in response to and in memory of the earthquake, and lasted from 1985 until approximately 1992, emerged from various crises. First, were two depressions—in 1976 and 1982—that resulted from fiscal mismanagement, from increasingly neoliberal economic policies of the 1970s, and from the PRI's endless rule, leading to economies that peaked, fluctuated, and ultimately crashed. The economy did not stabilize until the end of de la Madrid's presidency in 1988 (and then only momentarily). Writer Humberto Mussachio recounts that the 1982 economic disaster hit before the earthquake: “[as] the Secretary of Finance of that time would say: we had no money in the box. López Portillo left the country in an awful economic situation and the six-year term of Miguel de la Madrid would be one of “tightening the belt strap” but seriously. With inflation running wild, the inflation reached 152 percent” (Mussachio; my translation). The 1990s would see hyperinflation of the peso, along with the brutal effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Second, was a crisis in dance and the arts: Following the 1982 depression, contemporary dancers found themselves struggling to make ends meet. Dance was experiencing reduced government funding, and choreographers had increasingly limited access to space. Third, were a series of political crises: During the 1980s many dance groups were inspired by struggles for liberation throughout Latin America, such as the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador. When the 1985 earthquake hit Mexico City, social inequity and economic instability were already high. Monsivaís reflects on both 1985 and 2015: “We currently live in a comparable disaster, and it is the disaster of inequality, and I am not making a playful end of party discourse, I am simply saying that inequality has destroyed the social fabric of Mexico City and the rest of the country” (my translation). Underlying the 1985 disaster was a society already deeply uneven in terms of access to resources, with a large concentration of wealth in the hands of few while the majority lived in poverty. And because of the prior and ongoing economic crises, edifices and structures in the megalopolis were ticking time bombs: Since much of the city was erected atop lake Texcoco, buildings were particularly precarious, and the lack of regulation in terms how to construct over the subsoil in seismically unstable areas made the disaster imminent (Kurian Fastlicht et al.). Crisis was already in motion.

De la Madrid's government, underprepared for a disaster of this scale, created a media blackout after the event, and initially prioritized salvaging business owners' machinery over saving human lives (Poniatowska 24, Céspedes). With a city in ruins and no infrastructure to support its citizens, communities organized NGOs to piece together the support that the government was not giving. Within the newly imposed constraints of a city in shambles, one paralyzed by government action, citizens improvised their own forms of support and solidarity.

Writer Daniel Carbajal—along with Elena Poniatowska, Carlos Monsiváis, Lilia Céspedes, and multiple others—wrote in 2015 of the 1985 earthquake, signaling the importance of the formation of deep social solidarity, and contrasting this with governmental inaction, claiming that the earthquake “convoked the most impressive social solidarity movement of the century” (Carbajal; my translation). He continues:

The government and its agencies of control and repression not only were diminished and nullified as consequence of the quake and the social movement *in crescendo*, but also by the disobedience (the maximum sin for authoritarianism) en masse of the instructions of the state communications, that instructed citizens to not go close to places of tragedy. Instead, we took power, individual power, human power, and we collaborated to save lives [The] survivors needed to put our pants on and confront pain in order to watch ourselves give birth to a new social imaginary. (Carbajal; my translation)

Not only did the earthquake force citizens to band together for support, but, as Carbajal highlights, the needs for both survival and to help others, forced people to organize in new ways, ways in direct opposition to the state’s emergency policies.

The Neighbors and Survivors Union (UVyD) was formed at the corner of Jalapa and Chihuahua Streets in the neighborhood of Colonia Roma in 1985 following the earthquake. The UVyD emerged in direct response to the Madrid (and, later, Salinas) administration’s shocking lack of aid to the dispossessed survivors, many of whom lived in marginal and working class neighborhoods (Baud 167). *Danza callejera* emerged alongside the founding of the UVyD. The *callejera* performances took dance, along with food and rescue efforts, to the most affected zones of the city, performing for the dispossessed in streets, plazas, and other makeshift spaces. The first period of *danza callejera* was concurrent with relief efforts in 1985, and was undertaken without institutional support. By *danza callejera*’s second phase of, from 1986-1990, the performances became more institutionalized, being supported by the UVyD and Danza Mexicana, A.C (DAMAC), the UVyD’s dance branch. Together, these NGOs organized and funded *Encuentros de Danza Callejera*, street dance festivals, in various locations that had been affected by the earthquake (DAMAC archive). These areas included Tepito, la Plaza de Santo Domingo, La Roma, and Tlatelolco. Performances after 1985 were part of festivals, and no longer part of disaster relief efforts (though they still took place in neighborhoods that had been affected by the quake). The first wave of *danza callejera* involved mostly staged dances that the choreographers had on hand when the earthquake hit, adapted to the new spaces. The subsequent wave contained more dances choreographed in direct response to the sites in which they occurred. Many of the dancers and choreographers lived in or had family in locations affected by the disaster and had experienced loss. Participating groups included: Utopia, Anadel Lynton-Snyder, Barro Rojo (Laura Rocha, Arturo Garrido, Pancho Illescas), Asaltodiario (Miguel Angel Diaz and Jaime Leyva), Contradanza (Cecilia Appleton), and UX Onodanza (Raul Parrao). Most of the choreographers would go on to become renowned figures in Mexican dance, decades later receiving governmental support and awards for their work.

Due to economic causes and political motivations, many of the groups had been working in the streets prior to the earthquake. Asaltodiario, a group of ex-gang members, considered their dance interventions “assaults” that ruptured daily routine and revealed society’s face as a

farce (Baud 167). For this to be effective, the assaults needed to happen in everyday spaces, especially in the street. Barro Rojo, an overtly leftist troupe, began presenting work in student marches in the State of Guerrero. They identified strongly with the working classes, performing socialist works at guerrilla headquarters in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and had never considered the theater home (Garrido, Interview). Contradanza, a group with feminist leanings, was forced by the economic crisis to dance in the streets. But the group also felt compelled to expand its audience from intellectual elites, to include “the real people” (C. Appleton, Interview). The *danza callejera* movement protested the government elite for ignoring the needs of those who inhabited the public realm. Contradanza’s manifesto encapsulates much of *danza callejera*’s philosophy:

[Dancers] also belong to the street, where every day, instead of living, we are surviving, due to exploitation, the crisis, unemployment, and so much more This is why dance has returned to the street, to be close to the people, to speak their language. In this way, dance can also be nurtured by all of the violent magic that streets emanate, the people who live in them waiting for a form to move through speaking, to speak with movement. (D. Appleton et al.)¹²

Here, Contradanza elides dancers’ displacement to the public realm with other struggles. The street is not a mere site, but a community, a place where “people” are. Of course, the dancers separate themselves from the people in this quote by referring to them as “they” and not us, underscoring (without recognizing) the difference of privilege between those “living in the streets” and the dancers who had chosen to go to the streets. Importantly, by equating their cause with the streets, the dancers embraced their displacement from the private sphere. Rather than portray themselves as evicted and without agency, Contradanza saw their move to the streets as an impetus for a different kind of movement. The dispossessed and homeless did not have the same choice. This conflation of the dispossessed and the marginalized communities of refugees with unemployed dancers elides an important difference: the physical survival of the marginalized cannot be equated with the aesthetic survival of an artistic community.

Speaking of the relationship between the postmodern aesthetic shift in the arts and the earthquake, Olivier Debroise and Cuauhtémoc Medina note:

After the earthquake of 1985 wrought havoc on Mexico City, these searches for identity coincided with a profound critique of the discourse of modernization. “Modernity” and “modernization” had appeared to be the shared values of diverse social and political groups in Mexico during the so-called “transition to democracy,” concepts at the heart of the changes instituted by Mexican elites Nevertheless, we hope to show precisely the degree to which artistic practices at the end of the century rejected these (not so) shared values, as part of an extended critique of cultural “universalism,” of practicality and rationalism, and the normativity of capitalism. (Medina et al. 29)

¹² While Diana Appleton is credited with this manifesto, this is contentious, and other members such as Miguel Ángel Díaz also claim credit.

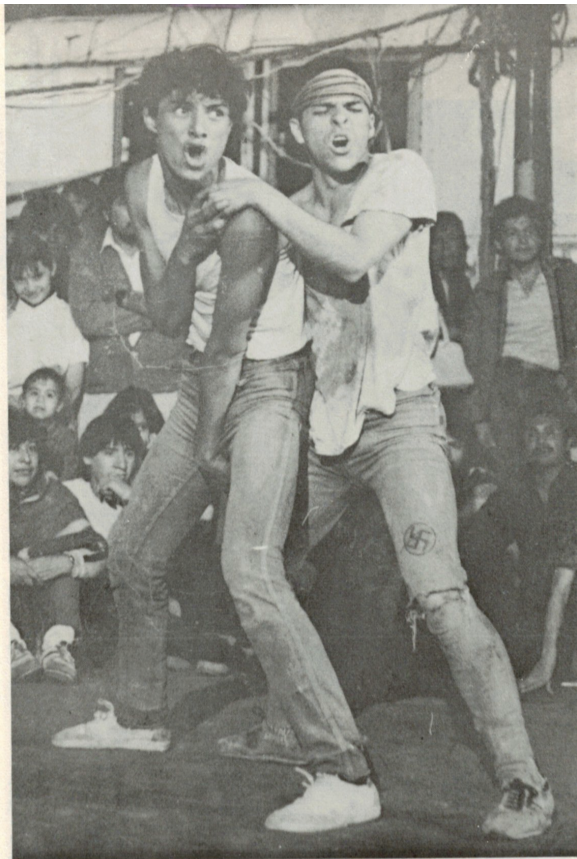
Danza callejera's criticism of the government by dancing in the streets was, then, also a critique of both modernism itself and of capitalism. Interestingly, the aesthetic of such dance was often modern. Groups like Contradanza and Barro Rojo drew heavily from traditional Western modern dance techniques. However, the collectives' actions were postmodern in their alternative spatiality and propagandistic critique of the government's myth of democratic modern progress. The dances contained clear, specific messages related to political goals. At the same time, they did this not in the traditional theater space of concert dance, but rather out on the alternative site of the street. While the street was a common site for political protest, it was not historically a site for concert dance. The choreographers demonstrated an explicit political stance by presenting alternate narratives from underrepresented, invisibilized communities, such as Asaltodiario's focus on and work with gang members.

Since *danza callejera* groups came from different backgrounds and had different intentions in creating and performing their work, generalizations are impossible. Nevertheless, in the five years following the earthquake they found themselves performing in the same spaces, while approaching what "dancing in the streets" meant from different angles. The theatrical repertoire of characters that many of the *danza callejera* choreographers used developed, as well, out of associations with the communities who inhabited the sites in which they performed: working-class women, gang members, prostitutes, and drunks. Many of the choreographers wanted to express themes that their diverse audiences (which were not typical postmodern dance audiences) could relate to. Thus, by evoking types of people that audience members knew and experiences they could relate to, the choreographers aimed to connect their dances to the sites and communities in which they performed. It was no coincidence that the majority of the characters in the dances were poor or working-class. These stock characters often drew upon a common repertoire of characters familiar to the residents of the neighborhoods in which the performances occurred. This tendency toward generalized character-types may also have reflected some *danza callejera* choreographers' training in the Martha Graham tradition of modern dance, which utilized such archetypes in order to convey meaning. Instead of engaging with abstract concepts or dealing purely with form, many of the choreographers relied on characters that stood for symbols of larger issues. For example, the homeless character in Cecilia Appleton's unnamed street dance choreographed for Colonia Roma stood for the displacement felt by the neighborhood's residents. The use of archetype also calls back to the Mexican Muralist tradition with its socialist realist aesthetic and hundreds-year tradition of street theater. In both Muralism and *carpa* theater, symbolic characters such as "the revolutionary soldier" came to stand in for greater social themes and experiences. Asaltodiario, the "rebels" of the *danza callejera* collectives (though not in terms of gender representation), intentionally rejected the modern dance aesthetic for more "urban," pedestrian-style movements. Even they, however, adhered to the use of theatrical stock characters rather than relying on more abstract concepts.

Dis-placed Communities

In the image below (see fig. 19) from the second *Encuentro Callejero* of 1987 commemorating the earthquake in the then-working class Colonia Roma, Asaltodiario's Miguel Ángel Díaz and Jaime Leyva spread their legs and scrunch their faces as if screaming violently at someone nearby. Díaz holds his crotch with one hand à-la-Michael Jackson and grasps Leyva's hand by his shoulder with his other. They both wear jeans, white shirts, and sneakers.

Leyva's shirt is particularly stained, and his pants are torn. An out-of-place swastika, which was not a reference to anti-Semitism but an inappropriate evocation of punk anarchist culture, sits above Leyva's thigh. The violence and rage in the image is palpable. One can see it in the facial expressions of the dancers and in their tensed muscles. While their wide stances and flexed muscularity are hypermasculine, their touch could be read as homoerotic. Behind Leyva and Díaz a group of Colonia Roma's inhabitants sit and stand. Many stare in the direction of the aggressor to which Leyva and Díaz direct their focus. A small girl appears to smile back at the camera. Messy electric wires hang close to a simple facade in the background. This site is packed with mestizo people sitting on the ground in casual dress, implying that they are working-class to lower-middle-class. Given their clothing and location, neither the people nor the dancers appear to be the stereotypical modern dance audience of middle-class intellectuals.



Asaltodiario, *Todo aquel sorprendido, todo aquel consignado* de Luis Enrique Mueckay. Bailan: Miguel Ángel Díaz y Jaime Leyva. II Encuentro Callejero de Danza Contemporánea. Colonia Roma, México, D.F. Foto: Jorge Izquierdo, 1987.

Fig. 19. Jorge Izquierdo, *Asaltodiario*, II Encuentro Callejero de Danza Contemporánea, Mexico City. [Jaime Leyva and Miguel Ángel Díaz, dancers]

As with the image of Rocha in the introduction to this chapter, this dance seems both “out-of-place” for modern dance and simultaneously rooted in its location. Before the earthquake two years prior, it was not common for staged dance to occur in the streets. However, in this image Díaz and Leyva are not doing something so completely out of the norm like jeteéing in spandex across the street. Their apparel and subjectivities appear as urban and working-class as the community and architecture surrounding them. In the image, it is not even

clear that Leyva and Díaz are “dancing,” or acting out a performance of gang violence. This *asalto* (assault), as they called it, told a cautionary tale of two *chavos banda* (gang members) who were brothers, and who ended up killing each other instead of the policeman antagonist. As Díaz recalls, they would begin by fighting on the street. It was not until they got in front of the audience and someone turned on a boom box, that the audience would realize that they were dancing (Díaz, Interview). While Leyva and Díaz performed this dance in different locations, they always chose marginal neighborhoods where communities had firsthand experience with poverty and violence.

In this section, I contend that *Asaltodiario*’s work mobilized and protagonized marginalized characters within both peripheral community spaces of the post-quake *Encuentros Callejeros* and in other parts of the city. In this way, the choreography shifted notions of national belonging from the center to the margins, much as the earthquake had displaced entire segments of the population (such as many residents of the central Tlatelolco) to housing on the city’s periphery. This spatial inversion echoes the literal shifting of bodies following the earthquake from the private to the public, from the center to the margin. *Danza callejera* falls under the category of “community art.” Community art projects often bring with them complex power relationships between artists and communities. It is possible to see that while the postmodern choreographers’ desire to help the disaster survivors was genuine and profound, *Contradanza*’s conflation of an artistic struggle for funding with the atrocities suffered by those affected by the earthquake was tactical: a utilization of one community’s pain to strengthen another community’s cause.

As site-specific visual arts theorist Miwon Kwon cautions, community art may “aid in the colonization of difference—for benevolent and well-intentioned gestures of democratization can have effects of colonialism too—in which the targeting of marginalized community groups . . . leads to their becoming both subject and co-producer of their own self-appropriation in the name of self-affirmation” (458). In other words, *danza callejera* choreographers might have felt better about themselves by doing outreach work than those did who received the outreach. Furthermore, as I will discuss later, in reference to Susan Foster’s critique of “kinesthetic empathy,” the catharses experienced by the dancers could never transfer fully to the communities/audiences in the locations where they performed. “Audience,” like “community,” often serves as a blanket concept, one that does not take account of the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of individual audience members. However, it is important to note that in *Asaltodiario*’s work, the socioeconomic lines between “community” and “artist” are not as clear. While Kwon oftentimes refers to white, upper-middle-class artists either going into marginalized communities of color in the United States or traveling to the global South, *danza callejera* choreographers did not always have this kind of distance from the communities for which they choreographed. Given Mexico’s longstanding history of national funding for dance training institutions, choreographers and dancers often came from a variety of class backgrounds.

Díaz’s relationship to site and pain in Mexico City emerges directly from his community. He remarks: “[Jaime Leyva and I] are *chavos banda*, gang members from the slums. I am from Azcapotzalco and Jaime was from a neighborhood ironically titled el Progreso Nacional (National Progress) in the northern periphery of the city. In the north we had crime, in the south they had art” (Díaz, Interview). When Leyva and Díaz danced in their neighborhoods,

they inverted this map by bringing art up north into gang territory. Their neighborhoods were geographically and socially marginal—as of 2013 Azcapotzalco, for instance, was ranked 9th of the sixteen most dangerous neighborhoods in Mexico City, and is known for crime and drugs. In making multiple dances with *chavos banda* as the protagonists and the police as the antagonists, effectively turning narratives of good and bad on their heads, Díaz reiterates the centrality of his community in his work. He has given regular expressive movement workshops to young gang members, many of whom he met while they inhaled bags of chemicals together, allowing them to do whatever they wanted outside of the workshops, and insisting only that they not come to rehearsal high (Díaz, Interview).

Consequently, Díaz's engagement with his community signifies a relationship with his reclaiming of his own body as well. By moving marginalized bodies in marginalized sites, Asaltodiario considers their work acts of resistance to oppression. Díaz comments:

The re-appropriation of public space was also the re-appropriation of bodies. We appropriated our own bodies, showing that they could not be bought or sold. Our youth workshops showed them that their bodies were theirs and that they could do marvelous things with their bodies. The body is a space. Space doesn't exist without the body. Space is a place that is occupied by another, and we need to take it back—this is Asaltodiario's politics. We attempt to liberate ourselves from prejudice and corporeal hegemony, from the aesthetic dictatorship. (Díaz, Interview)

Through embodied movement, Díaz puts two highly contentious, violated, and occupied spaces into conversation: the poor mestizo abject body of the gang member, and the marginal neighborhood he inhabits. Whereas colonization made poor, indigenous, mestizo bodies abject sites of violence, the modern and contemporary worlds diminished those bodies with drugs and gang wars. The brutality latent in Mexico City's architectural and social construction manifests itself corporeally in the bodies of its unwanted citizens. By moving their bodies differentially within the brutal choreographic constraints of their lives, the workshop participants ideologically reclaim the social mobility limited by structural oppression. By dancing within their "occupied" (as Díaz puts it) neighborhoods, Díaz and Leyva imagine the movement of others in their communities. Their energy force moves within and in resistance to the state.

Asaltodiario's projects, like other site-specific dance, reveal spatial politics. They do this by questioning what kinds of bodies get to dance where. The dancers' subjectivity, paired with their movements and locations, re-choreographs space itself. Writing about the social critiques in European choreographer Roxane Huilmand's site-specific dance videos, dance scholar Valerie Briginshaw asks how site-specific dance by women in typically male public spaces challenges gender constructions. She notes:

Different spaces for dance such as cities . . . hold connotations and associations. They are not empty. Like bodies, they can be gendered, 'racialized' and sexualized. What happens when dance is seen in such places? . . . How does the space between dancers, and between dancers and spectators, affect constructions of subjectivity? How can investigations of body/space relations in dance

contribute to rethinking notions of subjectivity, to opening up possibilities for previously excluded subjectivities? (5-6)

Her questions reveal the politically charged interplay between dancing bodies and public spaces, and the power of these performances to socially or ideologically transform those spaces. While Briginshaw's argument rests upon gender critique, with *Asaltodiario*, Díaz and Leyva used their positionality as gang members (dancing instead of fighting in the streets), to redefine their own identities, and, with that, the identities of the spaces in which they danced.

As I remarked earlier, the image of Díaz and Leyva is both rooted in and is out of its place. This shifting of place-ness through dance in public spaces echoes a larger socio-spatial unhinging that the earthquake had mobilized three years prior. An image from *Contradanza*'s piece—from a 1987 *Encuentro* that took place across from the UVyD on Jalapa and Chihuahua streets in Colonia Roma—reveals this tension between and inversion of margin and center. In this image (see fig. 20), Teodoro Villagrán's¹³ body inserts itself brutally into the site he dances in. He scales the wall of a residential house. His shabbily clad body appears crucified between the iron-barred window and the stone wall of the urban facade, creating a stark tension between the harshness of the public street and the protection offered by the private house. The character's enmeshment with his architectural setting is not a neutral one: His strained posture and defiance of gravity abstractly question how bodies should move within this symbolic public space evoked by the street, as well as which bodies have access to this space. Both Villagrán's mestizo body and his character's costume challenge the neutrality of the building. Wearing the torn rags of a beggar, slave, or survivor of an apocalyptic disaster, his character is dispossessed, having no choice but to inhabit the street. The window bars reject his entry into the house. Supported by ropes, chains, and ripped tires, he is bound, in pain, struggling. His movements, frozen by the camera, transform the facade into a symbol of traumatic experience.

¹³ While Baud's book credits the dancer as Teodoro Gonzalez, the choreographer Cecilia Appleton asserts that his last name was Villagrán. Despite this ambiguity, I will refer to him as Teodoro Villagrán throughout. It is plausible that they were both his surnames, not uncommon in Latin America where people have paternal and maternal last names.



Fig. 20. Jorge Izquierdo, *Una Danza Tan Ansiada*, II Encuentro Callejero de Danza Contemporánea, Mexico City. [Teodoro González, dancer]

While the dance takes place on the street, and not in a plaza, both streets and plazas symbolize belonging to the public sphere in Mexico. For this reason, I argue that Villagrán's character's exclusion from the private sphere questions and reorients the spatialization of national citizenship. Literary scholar Michael Dowdy analyzes the symbolic significance of the plaza through the poems of Puerto Rican writers Victor Hernández and Martín Espada. Through an etymology of "plaza," which shares roots with the English "place," Dowdy explains the relationship between feelings of belonging to, and expulsion from, the national space:

[*"desplazar"*] means "to displace," while *"desplazamiento"* can mean "displacement," and a *"desplazada/o"* is a "displaced person." Each shares linguistic roots with plaza, symbolically indicating that to be in the plaza is to have a place in society, while to be outside of it is to have none—to displace, then, is to remove from the plaza, from the public space itself, to have neither place nor voice. The experience of *"desplazamiento,"* then, is the forcible removal from the public sphere Yet when the verb is made reflexive, *"desplazarse"* means "to travel"; this shift emphasizes active movement rather than displacement as well as the substitution of mobility for exclusion and containment. (4)

The post-seismic plaza, and other public urban spaces like streets, became microcosms of the society at large. The *desplazados* were displaced not only from their physical homes, but also by the inactivity of the Madrid administration. Their displaced bodies literally embodied, in Randy Martin's sense, crisis—and, in a national sense, la Crisis.

Having no “place” in society, the poor and working-class homeless were forced to inhabit the public space of the plazas and streets. Yet the moving bodies of *danza callejera* aimed to give the *desplazados* an ideological sense of *desplazamiento*, or social movement. The earthquake metaphorically shook artists and citizens into movements for social change, such as the establishment of NGOs and intensifying protests. In fact, Villagrán’s moving, non-static body shifts the metaphor from *damnificado* to *desplazado*, from the passive “damned” to the active, mobile, “displaced.” This is an important metaphoric shift in that it allows for an exit, via movement, from a fatalistic religious sense of being “damned,” a shift I will address later in this chapter. Instead of the stasis of the damned victim in pain, he travels, simultaneously excluded from but also un-contained by the hegemonic strictures of the national sphere. He is an out-of-place element that mobilizes ideological change.

Consequently we can see Villagrán, Díaz and Leyva as symbols of larger communal action through crisis. Furthermore, this sense of displacement from the center, brought about by the earthquake, unhinges stable notions of community by both destroying and strengthening deep familial bonds and creating new groups. For example, large segments of the population were displaced to the periphery of the city after losing their housing. The majority of these residents were from low income households. At the same time, civil organizations and NGOs sprung up, uniting citizens and creating social support services (Kurian Fastlicht et al.). As a group of *danza callejera* choreographers recalled, there was a new sense of collective action set in motion by the Madrid administration’s immobility (C. Appleton et al., Interview). Since the government was not doing its job to protect and save its citizens, citizens who had been strangers to each other banded together to pool resources and organize relief efforts. Since death has a tendency to unite disparate surviving family members, the earthquake effectively strengthened extended communal support systems.

For artistic and activist communities, these forms of collective organization had been set in motion in the late 1960s, and had continued, albeit underground, during the Dirty War’s resistance movement. The communal response and rage against the government’s inertia in 1985 signaled a new era for open communion and critique after a decade of censorship. The decision, taken by the choreographers and visual artists of the 1970s and 1980s, to work in groups signaled a shift away from the single-artist-auteur model. The move from individual genius to the collective ultimately questioned rigid top-to-bottom hierarchies latent in governmental structures. That is, the dancers’ formation of collectives—rather than single-authored dance companies—echoed the civil organization that took place outside of the government’s disaster relief program. In the face of an inefficient despotic authority, the people organized democratically in groups. Subsequently, the dance movement embodied this form of social organization. The social movement, which arose in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and took on its own life in subsequent years, had destabilized rigid notions of who did and did not belong to national communities. The earthquake’s *desplazamiento* of refugees revealed other, related displacements of communities already invisibilized in the national imaginary. The dis-placed dancing bodies of *danza callejera* engendered the destructive and productive displacement of and reformation of communities.

A Mexican dance theorist and choreographer who came to political and artistic consciousness during the *Encuentros*, Javier Contreras Villaseñor, signals a shift in the definition of community through his reading of *danza callejera*. For him, it is important, though

not unproblematic, that *danza callejera* performances attempted to lessen the barriers between contemporary dance communities and communities of manual laborers. He claims of the represented pain in the dances:

It is as if a bridge of solidarity were strung between the dancers and the oppressed people that they represented [in their dances]. It showed that the dancers shared with the members of the subaltern classes the risks of living in a bourgeois dependent patriarchal society. And if the effect of this representation between symbolic and real pain is hugely disturbing I don't consider it adequate that the dancer risks herself so much as to jeopardize her own physical integrity. The reduction of the distance between manual laborers and cultural laborers is a process that . . . requires another form of social organization. (Contreras Villaseñor 43; my translation)

While Contreras Villaseñor implies both that the distance between dancer and marginalized communities was not an easily crossable one and that the symbolic pain chosen by the dancers by no means equates to the real pain experienced by the *damnificados*, he suggests that larger governmental structures marginalize (albeit differently) both subjects' bodies. While it is highly problematic for dancers to equate representational strife with the violence experienced by the subaltern, it is productive for the dance community to vindicate its existence by defining its work as labor. Contemporary dance during la Crisis had effectively been excluded from national belonging, and the *Encuentros* forced into public view (via public spaces) a group that had been excluded from the official cultural narrative of the time.

Contreras Villaseñor argues that, due to the earthquake, two communities came together on an organizational level that never would have united: manual workers and dancers. Given that the UVyD was a predominantly worker-based, social NGO and the DAMAC a cultural group, their pairing was unlikely. For Contreras Villaseñor, it is highly important that neither of these organizations, especially the DAMAC, were state-sponsored. While some groups had indeed danced in the streets before the earthquake, what was so new was that, unlike previously, when "the organizational initiative has always been in the hands of the state," now this was outside of the state's hands (Contreras Villaseñor 43, my translation). Strikingly different from the situation in the United States (where dance has never been predominantly supported by the state), in Mexico City the state has controlled, enabled, and sponsored most artistic practice since the days following the Revolution. Independent dance groups were radical by rejecting dependency on the state. As they were expelled from the national arts community, *danza callejera* choreographers embraced a new freedom from institutional constraints, making work that could be more openly critical of the state, and simultaneously creating new alliances with important communities of activists and workers.

Traumatic Sites

Returning to the photograph of Villagrán, if *danza callejera* unsettles definitions of belonging to national communities, what does it do to mobilize individual and collective suffering? In the image, Villagrán is supported by ropes, chains, and ripped tires. He is bound, in pain, struggling. His movements, frozen by the camera, transform the facade into a symbol of traumatic experience. Describing this six-person, unnamed dance, choreographer Cecilia

Appleton remarks that it “represented pain, anguish; There was no argument or plot. I was just interested in discovering the connection that could exist between a dancer and the urban site” (Appleton, “Message”; my translation). What exactly is the relationship that Appleton is establishing between this specific urban site and these abstract notions of pain and anguish? What conditions produced her association of this street with trauma? And, most importantly, what did the movement of her dancers do corporeally and ideologically to heal, resist, question, or accept this architectural and social space? Villagrán’s body was quite literally making visible the trauma of this site, and with it, the potential traumas of multiple sites including his body.

Contreras Villaseñor explains the relationship between the earthquake and the *danza callejera* dances in terms of how the dancers purposely abused their bodies:

On the one hand, their dances were about social issues. But they also had a way of living dance, of inhabiting dance so passionately that it was as like if you didn’t die in the attempt to dance, you were not up to the risk that that the situation of that moment implied. I think that is why many of the dancers put their bodies at high risk, because it was a way of taking on the fragility of the victims. (Contreras Villaseñor, Interview)

In the streets, dancers would put themselves in situations that were recipes for injury, jumping on surfaces that did not absorb impact, dancing barefoot and without knee pads on rough concrete, scaling walls without harnesses. Díaz and Leyva did acrobatic stunts in the middle of traffic, risking life and limb by jumping in front of and dancing on top of cars.¹⁴ As Contreras suggests, the dancers and choreographers tried to connect to their architectural and social surroundings through different levels of self-inflicted violence.

In his book, *Tárgum en una Botella (Cartas desde la danza)*, Contreras Villaseñor describes how *danza callejera*, unlike the other “joyous, liberating” forms of contemporary dance that he analyzes, embodied a “culture of death” or wounding. It “brings us close to another body, to the suffering, the lacerated. In this case, the fundamental notion is the wound, and derived from this wound, the concept of the limit, the border It is about the manifestation of the marks of a culture of death.” He continues, “This culture—the very one of authoritarian power, with its misery and injustice—writes wounds upon bodies” (42). His reference to the dancers’ portrayal of wounds, through their own self-inflicted scars and torn clothing, evokes religious stigmata as well as borders. Furthermore, Contreras Villaseñor connects the dancers’ symbolic martyring to wounding by the state. The wound-as-border, examined in Chapter 1, serves to describe how the socio-institutional division of space via state power has profoundly painful effects upon the bodies and psyches of Mexico City’s citizens. And this (particularly Mexican) culture of death encompasses not only a non-Western, syncretic spirituality that refuses to separate life and death, but also visibilizes and thus *moves through* death. *Danza callejera* both critiqued brutal state oppression by making wounds visible in the dances and also mobilized the wounds. Instead of depicting wounds as static, immobile death,

¹⁴ Tragically, if unsurprisingly, Leyva ended up dying from an epileptic seizure as he performed a risky aerial act in New York City.

their symbolic wounds danced on the tightrope between life and death, destruction and production.

The dancers' self-inflected pain, in tandem with the earthquake survivors' deep loss, resonates with theological martyrdom. The Catholic reference to sacrifice links Mexico's brutal colonial and neocolonial history with urban planning. During the conquest—when Spaniards built upon destroyed Aztec temples—many of the indigenous colonized people, who had converted to and become devoutly Catholic, linked their trauma to Jesus Christ's martyrdom. While Appleton herself was agnostic, she seems to have had Christ's sacrifice in mind in her depiction of Villagrán's crucifixion. Further, *Asaltodiario* choreographed a dance explicitly about Christ in 1990, and performed it in front of the Templo Mayor, the ruins of the Aztec temple and the city of Tenochtitlán. The Templo Mayor looks defiantly upon its counterpart, the cathedral—a symbol of the violent imposition of one religion and power structure on another. The Spaniards built Mexico City over a sacred Aztec site, using both physical violence and the ideological violence of a graphically brutal religion. Thus, it is no surprise that the city's stones would hold religious connotations associated with pain and martyrdom for the dancers. While this dance did not take place in the *Encuentros Callejeros*, it followed in its critical site-specific legacy. By choosing to dance upon ruins, like in many *danza callejera* performances, *Asaltodiario* marked a previously destroyed space as sacred, visible.

However, the type of brutal spirituality that *Asaltodiario* summoned was not necessarily the hegemonic Christianity of the Catholic Church. Instead, they referenced Latin American Liberation Theology that emerged in the 1960s, which used Christianity to question the harsh power structures and to fight for the oppressed. Díaz remarks:

One of our “assaults” was an intervention based on the Passion of Christ. But we chose to make it about the guerrilla movements in Latin America, and the armed fight of the Left. We made Christ a guerrillero and the Romans policemen It was bloody The police were always oppressors. At night we'd dance this for the gang member kids who lived there, and we were inspired by Revolution Theology. We chose to dance this in front of the Templo Mayor because they [the powers that be] always say that we [implying people of indigenous descent] don't have culture, and there in front of the Cathedral the Temple is an in-your-face demonstration that we have culture. It is still there, right in the center of power. (Díaz, Interview)

The religious undertones of this work and others capitalized on a latent spirituality in the sites. This spatial religiosity brought forth the kind of fervor associated with anti-hegemonic social movements. While most of the choreographers were atheists, their political views had been shaped by both Latin American social movements and rebel theology. The spirituality in the dance interventions and in the sites did not refer to institutionalized religion.

Given the cultural pervasiveness of Catholicism for the communities affected by the earthquake, the dancers constructed the urban landscape as a martyred body. Thus, as we can infer from Díaz's comment, Mexico City symbolized the colonized body of “the oppressed.” The streets belonged to bodies excluded from the national sphere and yet upon which the national sphere was built: mestizo bodies, poor bodies, indigenous bodies, and collective bodies.

The spiritual element of *danza callejera* summoned the kind of radical spirituality that ethnic studies scholar Laura Pérez describes in her examination of Chicana feminist art. For Pérez, the spiritual dimensions of these works by feminists of color are key to their political, decolonizing potential, are recuperated as resistance to hegemonic, rationalist discourses, and, most importantly, foreground voices that have been silenced and hidden within these discourses—the voices of the subaltern, women, people of color, and others. Pérez articulates this in the following manner:

A language of the ephemeral, the unseen, the half-preset that expressed the spiritual as reference either to the divine or to that which is socially ghostly—certain bodies desires, cultures, even locations. In this sense, the artwork itself was altar-like, a site where the disembodied—divine, emotional, or social—was acknowledged, invoked, mediated upon, and released as a shared offering. (6)

This idea posits the spiritual as both the divine but also (and coexisting within) the subaltern, the abject, the hidden, and the underground. While institutionalized religion can often brainwash and subjugate, spirituality can empower disenfranchised communities. The kind of spirituality that Pérez theorizes allows us to think of the spiritual as innately political in its ability to call forth banished ghosts and un-suppressible souls. The spirituality implied in these *danza callejera* works is a non-hegemonic spirituality that strives for communal healing and resists state violence. That said, these healings are never complete, and these definitions of community are potentially problematic.

Villagrán's character in Appleton's dance also appears Christ-like. Almost impaled on the wall by the ropes and tires that hold him, he serves as a symbol of a larger site, and perhaps of the martyrdom of an entire, diverse community. With his apparent inability to enter the private house across the street from the Union de Vecinos y Damnificados, he could additionally be read as a *damnificado* himself. Like the *damnificados*, his character has limited social mobility due to his marginalized subjectivity as a homeless mestizo. *Damnificado/a* is the official term for what would translate in English as "victim" or "survivor," although both of these concepts can be more directly translated as *víctima* and *sobreviviente*, respectively. *Damnificado*—a term with Christian connotations—evokes something larger than individual pain. It refers to the ones in pain, those specifically and collectively damaged by a disaster. Unlike "survivors" they are passive recipients of the action of being hurt, injured, damned. Villagrán's individual body on Jalapa Street suggested a collective, social body in pain, which extended beyond his lone character to the street he uneasily inhabited. Housing and tending to the post-quake *damnificados* was not the government's priority. In this way, the survivors did not belong to the national space. However, as I argued earlier, by bringing dance into peripheral "non-sites" where *damnificados* were living, *danza callejera* shifted the metaphor from the hopeless damned to the mobile, resistant *desplazados* or "displaced." Dance embodied the productive social movement and change that emerged from the destruction of crisis, revealing the relational tension between structural violence and the impetus for social resistance.

A Body/Space in Pain

Throughout my chapters, I have explored Elaine Scarry's choreographic evocations of the spatialization of terror. In *The Body in Pain*,¹⁵ Scarry examines scenes of torture and extreme illness, arguing that, because it obliterates language, physical, bodily pain is deeply political. She claims that, while the expression of physical pain is cultural and thus politicized, the experience of pain resists culture (5). Physical agony's "resistance to language" is different from other forms of suffering, "for physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything" (Scarry 5). The power of her claim lies arises out of resistance to culture of the body's physical sensation. In this section, I examine the complex relationship between communal healing and the dancers' catharses via *danza callejera* performances.

Obviously, it is impossible to equate the intense physical pain of someone crushed by a building in an earthquake with the pain a dancer's character represents. However, there is something powerful about the potential ideological healing brought about by sensing bodies in motion that are not in actual pain dancing in a space where pain of such magnitude has been felt—pain that no words could express—and where no state system could reach. The pain experienced in these sites by these communities was the unspeakable somatic product of cultural violence coupled with a natural disaster, so it seems fitting that the nonverbal, physical form of dance could speak to an experience at a bodily level, beyond words. How then, did the *danza callejera* choreographies potentially resist state paralysis and shift traumatic spaces?

I have often been instructed and have instructed others during injury or illness to "breathe into the pain," contrary to the body's desire to tense, freeze up and attempt to reject the pain by ignoring it. Even when the body rests or is constrained, breathing produces movement. Breathing into pain sends air, energy, and movement to places paralyzed by trauma, potentially allowing that movement *through* the painful places as healing. Breathing and moving into the trauma does not obliterate the painful zone, but brings the pain to the foreground, attempting to transform it by moving through it. The idea of breathing into bodily pain allows one to imagine what it could mean for dancing bodies to circulate in architectural and social sites where residents had experienced both severe trauma and immobility resulting from thin state relief efforts. Moving bodies, like breath, can serve to ideologically move through sites in pain, often eliciting painful emotions in the audience as part of their grieving process.

Cecilia Appleton describes a particular performance in Colonia Roma directly following the earthquake of *El Nido de la Serpiente* (The Serpent's Nest), a piece about the holocaust. Due to colonial and subsequent waves of urban planning, la Roma has always been an unstable site, always on the verge of violent movement. La Roma, an appropriate colonial name, sits on top of the Aztec lake Texcoco, and is literally sinking under the weight of its buildings, evidenced by doors that dip into the sidewalks and uneven pavement. It was one of the neighborhoods hardest hit by the 1985 earthquake with many casualties, since it is one of the most seismically active neighborhoods, balancing precariously on top of water.

According to Appleton, *El Nido de la Serpiente* choreographed pain and elicited strong emotion from la Roma's residents. As it did this, the performance uncovered histories of trauma

¹⁵ Coincidentally published in the United States in 1985, the year of Mexico's earthquake.

associated with the devastated site. By dancing in a post-disaster zone Contradanza helped mobilize the communal grieving process. Appleton describes it in the following way:

A catastrophe had just occurred, and there had been huge losses. After seeing *El Nido de la Serpiente* the audience thought that the dance was about the earthquake. It was about the holocaust, and there was this scene with the gas chambers. After all of this frenetic movement of being chased, we fell on top of each other like mountains of dead cadavers. The people thought that they were seeing a representation of the earthquake and of all of the people who died crushed. Of the spectators I remember the women in black. In many neighborhoods they were there, in la Roma Everyone was in mourning. The señoras were dressed in black, and they would cry a lot. We would say thank you and cry with them It was intense. (C. Appleton, Interview)

The anguished movements of running and falling into piles disinterred memories of very real catastrophic violence that residents of these neighborhoods and their loved ones had experienced on a somatic level. While it was not Appleton's intention, the dance allowed the widows to imaginarily re-live the trauma, even if their viewing bodies were not also "dancing." The movement potentially produced a sort of catharsis in the audience members and the dancers. This movement enabled them to express grief and move through pain via tears.

However, the catharses experienced by the dancers and the tears shed by the widows were not the same, and any claim that the residents experienced the same thing as the dancers would warrant a serious consideration of the pitfalls of "kinesthetic empathy." In *Choreographing Empathy*, dance scholar Susan Foster defines kinesthetic empathy by stating, "[The] notion of empathy . . . theorizes the potential of one body's kinesthetic organization to infer the experience of another" (175). Foster finds this idea highly contentious since it assumes a hierarchical relationship between the object and subject of that empathy. At the same time, this idea can serve to help us understand how the residents might have conceived of their own bodies as taking the places of those of the dancers. By seeing dancers move in ways that defy society's dictates regarding how they should move in those spaces, audience members could kinesthetically imagine themselves transgressing those spaces. This kinesthetic imagination from feeling to action could hold the potential to transform trauma into social movement.

Kinesthetic empathy is complicated, however, by the situation in which the *danza callejera* dancers found themselves: In attempting to heal the sites in which they danced, the dancers were on some level moving in empathy with those traumatized social and architectural spaces. Foster's critique ties back into Miwon Kwon's analysis of the pitfalls of community art. While Kwon might say that well-intentioned artists may feel good about themselves by making "community art" that unintentionally re-colonizes marginal communities, Foster questions an audience identifying too easily with dancers onstage. In the case of *danza callejera*, however, their audience was the community. And, in the case of many but not all of the dancers, that community/audience was also their own community. While not all of the artists could personally identify with the experiences of the community members, and not all community members were somatically or emotionally moved by the dances, *danza callejera* performances set up a somatic dialogue of interactions between community, architecture, sensing bodies, and experiences of pain. This is important because, as Scarry points out, humans experience trauma

at an embodied, not verbal level. By bringing dance into streets affected by the earthquake, *danza callejera* provided a channel through which artists and survivors, on different levels, could process and move through pain via their bodies.

Conclusion

Mexico City's post-quake *Encuentros de Danza Callejera* unearthed an army of dancing marginalized characters amidst the rubble and on the streets: the zombie-like Christ figures, survivors of apocalyptic disasters, homeless beggars, drunks, prostitutes, "the disappeared," and other bodies in pain. From Laura Rocha's pained solo *Zacam-Zom* at Tlatelolco and Contradanza's homeless character amongst the ruins of Colonia Roma to Asaltodiario's dancing gang members, a makeshift community of others populated and moved through the streets via dance. The ragged characters in the paratopic space of the performance summoned the colonized ghosts embedded in the multilayered heterotopic streets and plazas where they danced. *Danza callejera* visibilized the latent trauma in these heterotopic spaces by moving bodies through it in a different way. Through dancing in these post-apocalyptic marginal spaces in Mexico City, *danza callejera* choreographers and dancers evoked the *desplazamiento* of the *damnificados* and transformed this into a metaphoric call for social movement. In so doing they showed that various displaced communities were not damned and cast out of the national center, but were capable of moving it.

On the one hand, the earthquake and the Madrid administration's lack of aid seriously constrained the physical and social movement of those living in the most devastated marginal sites. On the other hand, the act of moving through these painful sites, like breathing into the pain, brought ideological release where movement had been stagnated. The *Encuentros* mirrored, participated in, embodied, and impelled simultaneous grassroots organization that resisted and questioned the state's narrative of neoliberal progress. While the crises leading up to and unleashed by the earthquake visited mass destruction upon an already unstable population, they were also able to produce new social movements from the momentum created by a city socially and geologically thrown off its axis.

CHAPTER 4:
POSMESALTO!
(JUMPING, DUCKING, AND TURNING THE METRO'S STYLE)



Fig. 21. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez, Children Jumping, 22 December 2013, Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive. [Coyoacán Metro Station]



Fig. 22. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez, Coyoacán Metro Station #1, 22 December 2013, Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive. [Andrea Zolá and Enrique Melgarejo, dancers]

Introduction

PosMeSalto translates into English as: *IMightaswellJump*. Why jump? Why not bend and crouch, slither, or squeeze by? In the above images, citizens move in different ways,

trespassing the turnstile. On December 13, 2013, PosMeSalto—a movement that arose in protest of the 3 to 5 peso (25 to 40 cent) fare hike in Mexico City’s Metro—joined the ranks of many failed anti-government protests that have popped up regularly and are then squelched by the city’s government. In a city with a minimum wage of \$5.10 per day, this fare hike was a hardship to many of its citizens. Nine days after the movement began (on December 22), in an attempt to keep the movement from sinking, photographer, activist and videographer Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez took photos of dancers Andrea Zolá and Enrique Melgarejo vaulting over the turnstiles. The mass movement to evade paying the newly raised fare was often accompanied with shouts of “*a gritar a gritar, por un metro popular,*” and “*a mi no me encuestaron,*” (“To shout out for a people’s metro,” “They didn’t survey/ask me”). The movement also involved pamphlets, marches, and the burning of a capitalist symbol: the Coca Cola Christmas tree. This more lighthearted, playful protest preceded the angrier civil unrest that would follow approximately a year later in the wake of the Ayotzinapa disappearances. Unlike those later protests, few members of the PosMeSalto movement were detained and none were tortured. After all, as I will discuss, this movement aimed at critiquing and improving the system rather than taking the system down. Nevertheless, this movement can be read as signaling the megalopolis’ ongoing and increasing instability. In this protest, neither the impressive dance photos nor the potentially rebellious movement of hordes of bodies stopped the fare hike. PosMeSalto became just another blip on Mexico City’s blip-filled protest radar.

As a dance scholar, however, I am not interested in defining a social movement’s success solely in terms of institutional reform. Instead, I seek to examine how embodied movement in space via protest performance can both subvert and give momentum to hegemonic power. In this chapter, I intersect site-specific theory, border theory and critical dance theory via the social and “danced” choreography of PosMeSalto. I do this in order to enunciate a spatial resistance to and disruption of state authority via individual bodies moving en masse, a disruption that simultaneously followed capital’s hegemonic flow. Central to PosMeSalto’s disruptive political performance, or rather its (in)effectiveness as a social movement, is embodied mobility. I locate the movement’s “effectiveness” in the differential micro-movements of the protesters’ bodies.

The activists’ jumps (see fig. 21) and ducks serve as gestures that disrupt the state surveillance of their bodies, exceeding the limits of scripted citizen motility. Juana María Rodríguez defines gesture as political, relational actions that happen both metaphorically and physically. She claims:

[Gesture] 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; the ephemera of affect that leaves no trace. Gestures are where the literal and the figurative copulate. (4)

Rodríguez writes of the rebellious gestural excesses of queer Latino and Latina performances of sexuality. This subversion happens specifically due to the queering of movement. While the PosMeSalto protest’s resistance has nothing to do with queer affect, we can productively apply Rodríguez’s definition of gesture as resistance that spills over the confines of social structures.

By defining gestures as “activist interventions” that manipulate social forces, Rodríguez illuminates how embodied movements without direct institutional consequence affect their political contexts. The gestures made by the PosMeSalto activists’ thighs, feet, and backs impact and engender figurative movement within a social struggle against state exploitation. Importantly, as Rodríguez suggests, gestures do not exist in isolation. Since gestures point toward relationality, they create community (albeit only temporarily). Thus, the stretches, hunches, and leaps explored in this chapter are not only individual moments of embodied rebellion. Instead, they connect personal bodies to collective ones, structuring both miniature dances and larger choreographies of protest.

These jumps and crouches (see fig. 23) performatively reshaped both individual and collective bodies, resisting and re-signifying the Metro stations’ social and architectural spaces. The PosMeSalto protesters performed political gestures—one’s that do not necessarily set out to be large or impactful, but are, as Agamben would say, “means without ends” (57-58). Álvarez’s photos of Melgarejo and Zolá, then, do not merely aesthetically mimic the movement. Rather, the images encapsulate the movement’s central message of social change via the protesters’ embodied movements through political space. If we define choreography as the negotiation of spatial constraints by mobile bodies, PosMeSalto’s performativity was fundamentally choreographic. The protesters shifted spatialized power like dancers in a site-specific work, calling into question the political construction of the space. The embodied movements of the protesters within the spaces of the Metro stations had real consequences in social space, both as micro-movements of resistance and as macro-movements of rebellion. By micro-movements, I mean the small actions of the individual protesters who moved their bodies differently by jumping, ducking, or finding other creative ways of evading the fare. By macro-movements, I refer to the ways organizers coordinated or inspired masses of citizens to actively critique a system and ask for change via their actions.



Fig. 23. Photograph from *Arestegui Noticias* #1, 13 December 2013, “Videos: Así es el #PosMeSalto y #PosMeAgacho, tras alza al Metro en DF.”



Fig. 24. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez, Coyoacán Metro Station #2, 22 December 2013, Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive. [Enrique Melgarejo, dancer]

In the various images of PosMeSalto across the Internet, we see two different moments and movements within the protests. First, everyday commuters passed under the turnstile and sometimes over it. They did this at least once each trip en route to and from work, but they may potentially have crossed multiple times, each a gesture of defiance. Significantly, the act of repeatedly crossing disrupted the demographic sorting of individuals that turnstiles as body-counting machines perform. By traversing multiple times, these individual commuters formed part of a collective unsettling body, disallowing and destabilizing surveillance. Second, two professional dancers engaged in a photo shoot. Via multiple takes, they repeatedly leapt virtuosically over the metal structures (see fig. 24). Both the pedestrian and the codified movement, frozen by the camera into images of political propaganda meant for the Internet, trespassed the sanctioned boundaries of the Metro stations' intended use.

In this chapter, I argue that the actions of the metro-jumpers and duckers, of moving around but not through the turnstiles, draw attention to the actual mobility of a supposedly rigid government-imposed border (one that formed part of a transportation system meant to permit citizen movement). PosMeSalto articulated a disruptive choreography within the constraints of the economic and social space that it occupied. While doing nothing to halt the literal stream of human bodies that drives and is driven by the Mexican economy, the individual and collective embodied movements of PosMeSalto participants—around the turnstile and through the space of the Metro stations—made visible the state apparatus that choreographs the movement-possibilities of everyday commuters. For its brief duration, PosMeSalto imagined a world where movement existed free from the constraints of an economy requiring everyday people to live beyond their means in order to go about their daily business. At the same time, the protesters

neither abandoned the trains that took them to their jobs, nor obstructed them. Certainly a full-scale, million-person boycott of the Metro or a blockade of its stations might have been more politically effective by paralyzing the city and its government. However, PosMeSalto's aim was not at all to shut down the system, but to call its problems into question by making them visible. This was, after all, a movement of people dependent on the public transportation system for their survival, and, given the masses of protesters in the stations encouraging others to go under the turnstiles, it did indeed hinder the regular flow of bodies.

In the previous chapters, I examined performative, choreographic actions within and pushing at the borders of different artistic disciplines. From Kahlo's paintings and Pentágono's installations to *danza callejera's* site-specific dance, I traced a shaky line from visual art through the performative turn in Mexico City aesthetics, acknowledging how the boundaries between performance and object, and between life and art had always been blurry. This becomes significant now as I depart from the analysis of a formal art object or performance to examine the aesthetics and artistry of pedestrian bodies moving in space. While social protest has always been theatrical in Mexico City, PosMeSalto's use of dance indicates a moment where the lines between art and activism further dissolve. In this chapter, the borders between political action and art further disintegrate, as I analyze not only artistic performance, but also a social protest's choreographic aesthetic tactics. While the formal intervention of a photographer and two dancers served as a key action within the movement, I give equal importance to the artistic strategies of the larger protest. In this case, hordes of citizens with no dance training unknowingly and powerfully used strategies from site-specific dance in order to stage political dissent.

This chapter inspects intersections of space and movement in order to understand the intricacies of the political interaction between protesters and the turnstiles. As I examine the question, "why jump," I also must consider *how* the protesters jumped. Many people jumped in different ways, but all of the protesters jumped in the prescribed direction of body traffic and not against it. This is significant since the protest was set not on blocking the stations and overturning the public Metro system, but on critiquing it and changing it from within. After all, the Metro is a complex institution that at once provides a public service while also enabling the flow of Mexico's national and city economies. It is highly significant that the movement used dance as its central symbol of dissent: The dancers' super human jumps, frozen in photographs, served as a form of dissent, an imagined freedom from the constraints of the Metro fare via embodied mobility. Here, I apply an understanding of critical dance studies to explain the inextricable relationship between support and autonomy, both within the social movement of PosMeSalto and the literal movement of the protesters' bodies through the turnstiles. I see how the very architectural and economic constraints that the protesters shook up both propelled and enabled the disruption. Importantly, the PosMeSalto movement relied upon the very structures that it critiqued in order to unsettle the strictures imposed on Mexico City's citizens.

A Mobile Site

Since site-specific dance (and, in PosMeSalto's case, site-specific activism) reshapes the subjectivity of both the movers and the space in which they move, we must examine the Metro stations and their turnstiles as sites that shape and choreograph bodily movement. The Metro, or the Sistema de Transporte Colectivo, was a huge urban planning project. It opened in 1967 at

the volatile moment in Mexican history discussed in Chapter 2. At that time the city was modernizing rapidly, producing some of the violent social and urban-design changes that would bring about the 1968 student protests and subsequent massacre at Tlatelolco. A sprawling system with twelve lines and 195 stations, the Metro enables citizens to travel more efficiently from remote places to get to and from work. During its construction Mammoth fossils and Aztec ruins were unearthed, uprooting and exposing charged histories buried under the city's surface. Initially conceived of by engineer Bernardo Quintana, the Metro is unlike any other subway system in its many poetic and Mexico-specific station names and accompanying icons—created for illiterate passengers as a visual reference. On a given day, one might go from *Barranca del Muerto* (Dead man's Gully) to *Chilpancingo* (Nahuatl for Wasp's Nest) to *Revolución* (Revolution), spanning a whole map of conflicting and evocative images whose meanings, in conversation with each other, string together clashing narratives. The Metro system is a spatial intervention that has reshaped the city politic. It enables more democratic spatial movement for its citizens but it also allows for the mass displacement and dismemberment of the local, a displacement associated with capitalism. Trains have historically cut through poor communities severing them from other communities. Thus, while creating access to movement the Metro disconnected working class neighborhoods from more affluent ones.

Recall that in *Space and Place*, philosopher Yi Fu Tuan asserts that place is security, pause, and containment. Space, on the other hand, is movement, time, and freedom. These two entities interact symbiotically and depend upon each other: “from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (6). Tuan's conception of space and place is highly choreographic and relational since movement and pause constantly have the ability to redefine each other. In many ways, the Metro System adheres to Tuan's definition of space. It is a site with multiple zones of movement that contains many potential risks. Trains move through it, transporting hordes of bodies. Within the momentum, however, there are architectural and embodied pauses that create place: For many Metro workers, guards, and beggars, the stations are labor sites and not channels of passage that carry them to work, and there are pauses when commuters wait for trains. Consequently the Metro can be defined both as a location and also as un-locatable movement. This is important to acknowledge, since PosMeSalto's tactics capitalized upon both the insecurity and rootedness of the Metro stations in order to call attention to their demands. That is, by exaggerating movement within the Metro stations but also demanding focus on the sites through this movement, PosMeSalto drew critical attention to what they saw as an unjust fare hike.

By centering the protester's actions within the Metro stations, PosMeSalto called attention to the politics of that site, and specifically to the function of the turnstile as a symbol of contested power. First, subway turnstiles regulate the flow of individuals so that one person passes at a time. In this way, they record attendance (and money paid), and act as security measures so that police or guards can have a clearer view of each patron. They are symbols of a diffused yet omnipresent state surveillance and authority that accompanies public services of this sort. At the same time, state authority creates infrastructure and public services that allow citizens to move great distances by traversing the turnstiles. Turnstiles are waist-high metal bars that do not fully prohibit movement, but rather regulate and organize streams of millions of bodies that course through them on a daily basis. Turnstiles structure a choreography of citizen

complicity. These apparatuses allow for movement in only one direction so that those entering the station do not clash with those exiting it. The turnstiles presume a normative, able body of a certain size and ability, performing the scripted movement of walking in a straight line.

In their spatial representation of state power, the turnstiles function as internal borders. They are patrolled “in-between” sites, through which movement occurs—for a fee. They are thresholds not necessarily between two places, but between a “static site” (a neighborhood, for example) and the movement (the liminal space of the train) it takes to get to another site. Patrolled or not, borders are often defined as third spaces or non-spaces where two supposedly distinct places touch. In this chapter, I argue that the protesters’ movements question the delineation of space itself and the power structures that create symbolic borders in order to remind citizens of their “place.” In this way, the jumpers and duckers perform a Certeauian spatial tactic that evades the panoptical map of state and capital control that attempts to design the movements of its citizens.

The Metro hosts its own marginal, contraband economy in the form of beggars, sex workers, and vendors. Thus, it is a border site where alterity resides, a margin internal to the heart of the center where Others converge. It is geographically inside the city, yet connects the city with the margins. Its unconventional economy of vendors and panhandlers contradicts and moves differentially from the official flow of the economy. After all, the Metro takes citizens primarily to and from their places of employment, and thus aids in the flow of capital. Once inside the trains, this alternate economy run by the city’s Others pulses and moves not from point to point, but within the movement itself. Shifting from car to car, ambulant vendors sell a wide array of products: from nail files and cookbooks, to gum and *alegrías* (amaranth sweets). Miraculously everything costs 5 pesos (approximately 30 cents). Passengers are reminded of this by the vendors who repeatedly sing “*solo diez pesos cuesta, solo diez pesos vale*” (“it only costs ten pesos, it’s only worth ten pesos”). The sound of this pirate economy interrupts the space inside of the trains at regular intervals, most prominently when people with giant battery-operated speakers in their heavy backpacks blast music from the pirated CD’s they sell. Beggars abound. Some use walking sticks due to their blindness; others carry children with deformities. And hunched-over elderly indigenous women in traditional dress shuffle with outstretched hands. Some of these beggars sing heart-wrenchingly beautiful songs or pitifully off-key ballads. Not completely isolated from each other, the vendors and groups of beggars at times congregate at a certain stop to count earnings or distribute wares. In addition, the Metro plays host to a sex work economy. Prostitutes, like the other vendors, circulate the system selling their goods. Their bodies are not neutral bodies, and their business—while operating in some sense within the capitalist economy that enables their commerce—defies state controls and regulations ensuring that money flows to the government and large corporations.

There is something literally and metaphorically unstable, risky, and mobile about the border as exemplified by the Metro. Of course, the tracks and trains themselves pose threats to bodies while simultaneously enabling rapid movement. But the risk of violence is also posed by pickpockets, petty criminals, suicides, and sexual predators on the trains. In close-quarters with millions of bodies pressed up against each other, gendered and sexualized violation becomes a constant threat. With mass mobility comes the danger of individual bodily harm. It is no wonder, then, that this precarity associated with movement would be capitalized on by PosMeSalto. As Zolá recounts in her observations about other protesters, “the act of crossing the

turnstile didn't only symbolize jumping over the establishment but it also implied certain risk" (Álvarez et al., Interview). The Metro is already a site within but simultaneously outside of the map of hegemonic surveillance and control.

Consequently, PosMeSalto's insertion into this space was an intervention into an already contested site, a site inextricably linked to risk, movement, and alterity, decentralizing the city as well as connecting it. The protesters' movements mimicked the vendors in that they highlighted the alter-economy that exists within a space of supposedly state-inscribed movement. The jumps and ducks around the turnstile made visible the fact that despite official attempts to regulate and thwart movement, the turnstiles are only arbitrary symbols that cannot cordon off bodily movement in this mobile border site.

Why Dance?



Fig. 25. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez, Coyoacán Metro Station #3, 22 December 2013, Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive. [Andrea Zolá, dancer]

On December 22, 2013, Álvarez shot photos of Zolá and Melgarejo jumping over the turnstiles in different awe-inspiring ways (see figs. 22, 24, and 25). When I asked Álvarez, who was also one of the core organizers and activists of PosMeSalto, "Why dance?," he explained that it was a way of "revitalizing a movement that was falling apart" (Álvarez et al., Interview). The movement was losing steam and looked like it would fizzle out before Christmas Eve. Álvarez's goal with the photos—some of which ultimately amassed over a million "likes" on Facebook and were copied and shared widely—was to keep the movement strong until Christmas. While PosMeSalto itself did not succeed in its goal, the dance photos did what they had set out to do by keeping the movement going until January. Álvarez, who had previously worked on dance films with Zolá, got his inspiration for these political propaganda photos from a seemingly apolitical source: photographer Jordan Matter's best-selling coffee table book, *Dancers Among Us*, in which superhuman dancers across the U.S. and Canada jump and pose in all sorts of highly-staged, cute (and impressive) scenarios in public, challenging the presumption of what normal bodies would do in those spaces.

What did Jordan Matter's seemingly benign images have to do with inspiring the aesthetic symbol for a protest in Mexico City? As Zolá pointed out, "there was a newspaper that thought that we were there to choreograph a dance *about* PosMeSalto, but they were wrong. *What we did was a kind of protest,*" to which Álvarez added, "the newspaper was incorrect to say that we were inspired by the movement for our photos, but *this is the movement. The act itself was a political action*" (Álvarez et al., Interview). It is necessary here to extract how specifically the making of a dance photo shoot was a political action, and, importantly, how the shoot was related to and different from the actions of the other protesters. I wholeheartedly agree with Zolá's and Álvarez's claim that the photo shoot was a political action, and I see in their statements the implication that, in order to be political, their action did not need to fulfill the goal of bringing about institutional reform. While they did not succeed at changing the system and returning to the old Metro fare, the photo shoot did imaginatively resist the systemic constraints of the city's decision to raise the fare. The effects of their action were performative at the level of bodies in space creating a new socio-spatial imaginary. The dance itself did not directly bring about policy reform, but the change enacted by the dance happened by the insertion of bodies moving hyper-differentially in a charged political space. Furthermore, the power of the shoot existed not in its difference from, but in its direct relation to, the core protest strategy of PosMeSalto. The movement, made vivid through the images of Zolá and Melgarejo's mobile bodies, did not affect institutional reform but did enact change through a differential social choreography at the level of bodies by reshaping the architectural and social space in which those bodies moved.

Asked the same question of "Why *dance* for PosMeSalto?" Melgarejo responded, "What the movement did was interfere in physical space. Dance was the most obvious way to take this to another level, a metaphorization or a hyperbolization of the movement" (Álvarez et al., Interview). In fact, one of the many memes created from the photos of Melgarejo depicted him with a Superman cape. There indeed was something more-than-human about Melgarejo's and Zolá's jumps that took the other protesters' act of trespassing to the extreme. While the dancers did have fun attempting slides beneath the turnstiles, Álvarez was not impressed by the quality of those photos or the impact of those images. Like Matter's images, Álvarez's photos produce attention-grabbing contrasts by juxtaposing abnormal bodies doing abnormal movements in quotidian space. Given PosMeSalto's focus on freedom of movement, it makes sense that the extra-ability of dance would provide the best symbol of the movement (in an exaggerated form). But wouldn't a different kind of abnormal body in this everyday space be just as shocking? Not a hyper-able body, but a disabled one? Could we imagine PosMeSalto's symbol as a man with no legs on a scooter sliding under the bars? What would it look like if PosMeSalto used an image of woman in a wheelchair finding difficult access through the regular turnstiles?

Choosing modern dance as the poster image for the movement portrays a more-than-able bodied metaphor of movement. Then again, this depends upon a definition of dance as necessarily for the able-bodied, which is not necessarily the case. What the images do, however, is set up an interesting parallel between the symbolic image of the movement as hyper-able and the diversity of movement experiences within the larger protest. As I commented earlier, PosMeSalto did not choose to halt movement, fully congesting and blocking the stations, and shutting down the Federal District's economy. In this case, an image of limited or blocked ability, not super-ability might have better served PosMeSalto's political choreographic tactics. As performance and disability scholar Petra Koppers describes in her use of Benjamin's

reference to turn-of-the-century turtle-walkers as a metaphor for disability's radical potential to disrupt the modern city's flow: "Like the trickster . . . the turtle's slow pace subverts the city's rhythm by its presence" (2). The disabled performer, like the turtle, is a seemingly out-of-place character whose differential presence calls the "normal" world around it into question. Financially speaking, people with disabilities have the ability to move easily through the Metro since they ride for free. Able-bodied people, on the other hand, are limited in movement by their obligation to pay. PosMeSalto does after all, protest the economic hindrance to access created by a higher fare, and not the literal hindrance to access to disabled people produced by the Metro's predominantly disability-unfriendly architecture.



Fig. 26. Photograph from *Arestegui Noticias* #2, 13 December 2013, "Videos: Así es el #PosMeSalto y #PosMeAgacho, tras alza al Metro en DF."

Not all protesters deployed hyper-mobility; Instead, some used the occasion to highlight the other ways that resistance and disruption can function. In this image (see fig. 26), a protester in a wheelchair is hoisted above the turnstiles. His disruption occurs partially through a dependence on the larger community that aids his passage. However, as Koppers might argue, his mere presence in the wheelchair is already disruptive. While individually he does not need to pay the fare, he chooses to join the others. This shows the complexity of transgression and access in the PosMeSalto movement. While this man experiences unequal access to the Metro space in a different way, his action of allowing himself to be hoisted identifies one (not necessarily equal) exclusion with another. He transgresses not by crossing without paying, which is something he legally can do. Instead, he transgresses by crossing *over* the turnstile in an elevated manner, which is not an act he can physically perform on a daily basis. This photo imagines a different kind of mobility than that of the other protesters—a mobility that simultaneously questions the able-bodied mobility of the Metro space *and* follows the flow of the PosMeSalto protest. His facemask could simply be a protection from potential contagion, or a sign of infirmity. However, the mask also signals the instability of the definition of disability. This passenger could be temporarily disabled with illness and injury. He might not have been disabled in the past and might not be disabled in the future. "Disability," after all, coupled with "performance," as Koppers suggests, is a mobile concept: "Their meeting points in disability

performance . . . create unexpected encounters, fleeting moments, puzzles and unanswerable questions—above all . . . these meetings are characterized by a flow of energy, a way of being alive, that negates fixity” (1). Koppers description of disabled performance does the opposite of what stereotypes of disabled people do. Instead of being frozen into social and embodied immobility, disabled performers mobilize and question the social and architectural space around them. By being hoisted over the turnstiles, the man performs disability outside of the norm, destabilizing immobile definitions of disability.

Unlike public transportation systems regulated by the American Disabilities Association (ADA) in the United States with elevators in every station, elevators and wheelchair ramps are few and far between in Mexico City’s Metro. In theory, people with disabilities ride for free. In practice, just getting to the turnstiles and then to the platform might be an impossible task. While some disabled people with means might have access to drivers, or to wheelchairs, the intersection of disability and poverty gives certain Metro-goers even more scarce access to mobility. The creative solutions employed by disabled beggars in the Metro (people with no legs walking on their hands or on skateboards, for example) are potentially more choreographically radical than jumping over turnstiles. The question becomes one of agency and access. Who has the choice to resist the social structure via moving differentially in the Metro’s architecture? And who moves differentially and resistively out of necessity? While not all of the PosMeSalto protesters had the ability to pay the new fare on a daily basis, most had the privilege of moving their bodies through the Metro’s space in protest. Choosing a disabled body as a symbol of protest would not only have gone against the tactical choreography of PosMeSalto. Using a man in a wheelchair as a symbol of the movement would have been like blocking the doors to the station and shutting down the economy. His disability would have been too threatening to the central idea of the movement: that mobility was ultimately possible within the architectural and social structure of the Metro. As I will later discuss, the PosMeSalto movement was simultaneously dependent on, and not willing to fully challenge, the structures that it resisted.

As suggested earlier, there are political and theoretical limits to associating the virtuosic movement of a hyper-able body with social progress (as PosMeSalto did). What dance theory and disability theory have in common, however, is a shared interest in the radical politics of *differential movement*. (And, of course, not all dance is performed by able-bodies.) What able and dis-abled dancers doing site-specific dance share with all disabled people is non-normative movement (with respect to the specific spaces they traverse). Their gestures are not always functional within the movements proscribed by the socioeconomic systems in which they move. Some might move in macro-movements and others might move in micro-movements. What the “dances” of the everyday PosMeSalto protesters show, however, is that bodies of varying abilities have the capacity to move outside of the norm. This is choreographic in nature, since, as Koppers characterizes disabled performance, “. . . every encounter with the Other, every performance and citation of the order, makes Foucault’s ‘biopower’ system momentarily visible and inserts a sliver of difference into the safe spaces of ‘normality’” (6). Dance, on the other end of the spectrum, also inserts differential movement that questions normality.

These disruptive bodily movements socially and ideologically literalize Chicana feminist Chela Sandoval’s *differential movement of oppositional consciousness*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the resistant mobility of the third zone/war zone/borderlands is the transformational power of *oppositional consciousness*. Critiquing Frederic Jameson, Sandoval sees the fragmented

condition of the so-called postmodern subject as one encompassing the lived experience of the colonized, the mestiza, the marginalized, and the queer—products of colonization’s violations. Like with Lugones’ transgressions across the power grid, Sandoval uses the negotiation of movement against the constraints of a hegemonic map as a “kinetic cartography” of moving energy through these border-spaces of violence, fragmentation, and rupture (Davis and Sandoval 53). The differently moving bodies through the border-space of the metro make metaphors of an oppositional movement via oppressed subjectivities.

In inspecting disability through the lenses of both the PosMeSalto movement and Sandoval’s differential movements of oppositional consciousness we see that one’s subjectivity (race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, and so on) greatly affects one’s access to movement through space. What might be a pathway for some is an impassable wall for others. Transgression, then, means different things for different bodies. If all bodies experienced the space of the Metro equally, it would not have a “woman’s only” car during rush hour to avoid the sexual harassment prevalent on packed trains. In fact, the language of site-specific dance and site-specificity utilized by Zolá and Melgarejo taps into the ability of differential movement in order to renegotiate both the individual’s and the location’s subjectivities.

Site-Specific Moves

As described in previous chapters, one of the premises behind site-specific art is that architecture is not neutral; it embodies certain institutional power structures. By placing unexpected objects in certain spaces, artworks draw attention to the site itself as a charged container. These sites can be found inside of institutions such as galleries, or outside in public plazas. PosMeSalto, unlike the *Encuentros de Danza Callejera* or *A nivel informativo*, was not an artistic movement with political motivations, but rather an explicitly political movement using site-specific artistic tactics. If site-specific “art” can reveal the politics of aesthetics, then we can read the spatio-aesthetic tactics of PosMeSalto as politics. Unlike site-specific visual art, however, and like site-specific dance and performance—PosMeSalto inserted moving bodies into space in order to highlight the non-neutrality of that location.

Returning to the question of subjectivity and movement: the juxtaposition of moving bodies in static architectural spaces might call into question the social structures that formed those spaces and bodies. As we have seen, Briginshaw contends both that spaces and bodies mutually construct each other and that site-specific dance offers a construction of alternate subjectivity by placing differential/gendered bodies in certain spaces. Bodies perform movements that challenge the construction of those spaces (Thomas 46). In this way, site-specific dance theory helps us to understand why neither space, nor bodies (nor embodied movements) are neutral. The question of subjectivity shapes both how certain bodies gain access to or are barred from certain spaces and whether certain borders (turnstiles, passport checks, neighborhoods, times of day, etc.) function as passages or blockades for some and not for others.

Thus, it is impossible to theorize the resistant potential of the protesters’ bodies in motion without considering the specificity of those bodies. To begin, the Metro attracts an overwhelmingly lower-middle-class, lower-class, and marginalized demographic. The upper-middle-class and elite tend to remain aboveground in their cars. In fact, the question of access to

spatial mobility (not necessarily social mobility) and class is not so clear-cut as one would think in Mexico City. In a megalopolis of 20 million people stretching a distance of 573 square miles, moving from one place to another can be a time-consuming, heroic feat. All citizens are subject to the constraints imposed by distance and congestion (of bodies and/or cars) that might hinder smooth passage. While many upper- and middle-class citizens refuse to use the Metro due to concerns about heat, danger, and discomfort, they are nevertheless stuck above ground in cars and taxis, in traffic jams that often turn 20-minute commutes into 2+ hour commutes. These jams are the result of overpopulation and too many cars. Oftentimes social protests strategically shut down the main arteries of Reforma and Insurgentes that span the city in both directions.

Paradoxically, the privilege of personal space afforded those who travel via automobile does not grant one better access to spatial movement in the city at large. “Less fortunate” Metro-riders—while exposed to certain bodily dangers and the trauma of being smashed like sardines in the trains and stations—actually have smoother and faster access to the city at large. Seen this way, the ability to move one’s individual body and the ability to displace oneself in space have a converse correlation to what one might expect of bodies in motion. In the trains, less privileged Metro-riders have less corporeal mobility but their bodies can be taken greater distances across the city more quickly than those people in cars stuck in intense traffic.

Constraining the Flow and Supporting the Jump

Throughout this chapter a pressing question surfaces and resurfaces: If PosMeSalto reimagined an alternate corporeality for its protesters at the level of individual movement that resisted hegemonic patterns, why did that movement still follow the conditioned flow of traffic and not veer in the opposite direction or zigzag back and forth across the turnstiles? And what did this choice have to do with the spatial and ideological relationship between autonomy and support, between freedom, mobility, and constraint? What does it mean to resist *within* the flow of the city’s economy via a public not-for profit service?

Zolá, Álvarez, and Melgarejo explained to me that neither a strike nor complete anarchy made sense to a movement bent on changing the system and not shutting it down. As Álvarez said: “We had to take advantage. We couldn’t be naive. We had to capitalize upon what the people wanted . . . and they felt affected in their pockets If we had a strike, the people would be against us, saying ‘ah, I can’t go to my job,’ and we had to follow what the people wanted.” Zolá continued, “Blocking the stations was also in the favor of those in power to criticize the movement. That’s why the Metro director gave us permission to protest. But we were taking advantage of this to pressure the people to protest” (Álvarez et al., Interview). Both Zolá’s and Álvarez’s reasoning recognizes certain social constraints that could limit the movement’s possibilities of receiving support. Paradoxically, this support came both from other protesters and from the authorization of the transportation system itself. To move fully outside of the structure—that is, to encourage the radical act of shutting down the system—would have proved impossible given that “the people”¹⁶ who wanted an un-raised fare also wanted and were dependent upon a functioning transportation system. For one day on December 13th the Sistema

¹⁶ This is always a slightly problematic term, but here it refers to the majority of protesters who joined the cause en route to work without partaking in other activist activities.

de Transporte Colectivo even permitted the protests to the extent that guards stood by idly and even helped protesters pass. If the protesters supported the system, and the system enabled the protest, then if resistant movement was to happen at all, it could only happen within its set path.

This pre-scripted path is part of the infrastructure that allows a city to function. The Metro system facilitates the city's economy, allowing capital to flow by bringing people to and from their places of employment. It takes domestic workers from peripheral locations to opulent neighborhoods far away from their homes. Within these comings and goings from home to work, the Metro also allows for people to connect with other people, for family members and friends to meet, and for new experiences to occur. While it is a regulating mechanism that channels and tracks bodies, the Metro also provides its passengers the relative freedom of movement across space. Consequently, PosMeSalto was a movement that at once critiqued the local government and simultaneously supported its public transportation service. In other words, PosMeSalto protesters wanted the metro to continue working and the city to keep on functioning. They felt, nonetheless, that the local government was not fulfilling its responsibility of making the Metro as *public* and accessible a service as it should be.

With low fares, many citizens enjoy freer movement. Thus, by jumping and ducking under the turnstiles en masse without paying, the protesters enacted a kind of movement utopia: Instead of being thwarted by the reality of unfair fees, anyone in the protest could move as freely as she wished, both through embodied movement and through larger movements across the city by taking the train. This imagined freedom of access to public space did not hinder the Metro's functioning, but only critiqued the government's unfair management of it. After all, as many complained, the government had not surveyed or asked its citizens about the fare hike, and there had been no popular vote. Their freedom of movement alluded to local government's refusal to fulfill its responsibility to provide accessible transportation to the majority of its citizens.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Danielle Goldman uses dance improvisation as a critical lens to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the politics of freedom in its inextricable relation to ever-shifting constraints. She suggests that danced "improvisation does not reflect or exemplify the understanding of freedom as a desired endpoint devoid of constraint" (3). In her questioning of the idea that freedom from constraint is wholly achievable, she treats politics as an always unfixed, mobile negotiation from one *tight place* to another (3-4). Goldman's relation of constraint to mobility allows one to theorize, in fact, micro-movements of resistance even within the most seemingly immobile situations. Interestingly, in the PosMeSalto case, the government was not fully blocking movement in the Metro, but only restricting access to it. Since the turnstile is literally a tight place, it becomes a symbol of the restriction of movement within the context of the daily commute. At the same time, in negotiating passage through that tight space, the protesters produced differential mobility and social movement.



Fig. 27. Photograph from Blog PSK, 16 December 2013.

In this image (see fig. 27), two men and a woman hunch their torsos and walk in a squat beneath the turnstile, quite literally embodying the notion of the turnstile as a border constraining movement. Shaping their bodies into the tight crevice below the metal bar and between its two supports, the people move forward within the flow of other protesters who have not paid the fare. The momentary freedom achieved by moving through this constricted zone, is defined by and reacts to the strictures of space both physical and social (both the tightness of the distance between turnstile and ground, and social space, which requires a higher fee in order to pass. In effect, these strictures shape and produce the way the protesters' bodies move and determine their movements as transgressive. The potentially subservient posture of the protesters (e.g. their hunching) is a direct result of their refusal to obey and pay. Like Kahlo's painting within and against the confines of postrevolutionary gender tropes and Proceso Pentágono's critique of the state within the sponsorship of Bellas Artes, the protesters needed and utilized the support of hegemonic structures in order to question them. It is at those times when the protesters appear most subservient that they turn hegemonic constraints on their heads.



Fig. 28. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez, Man Jumping, 22 December 2013, Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive. [Coyoacán Metro Station]

As we look at the many images of PosMeSalto fare-evaders (see, for example, fig. 28), it becomes clear that the act of protest—of not paying—engendered in many of them a playful creativity of movement that aligned them with the dancers. These images depict protest as fun, imaginative, and creative. Like dancers in an improvised score, some Metro-goers saw the turnstile as both a constraint and an opportunity, and appeared to enjoy the differential movement possibilities created by the inability to walk erect, deciding instead to go over or under the bars. Pressing their hands on the supports of the turnstile, men in business suits and students hoist their bodies forward like gymnasts. In doing so they imagined a different kind of movement through architectural space, one that reflected a desire for freer movement in social space, one without the fare hike. The constraints imposed by both the turnstile and the mechanized ticket-taker produced differential movements that momentarily sketched out a more democratic citizen mobility. By not following the rules, the protesters could not pass as comfortably through the turnstiles. However, by experimenting with different kinds of movements, the protesters opened up embodied possibilities available to all (able-) bodies (regardless of funds) by crossing into the Metro. The key to passage was no longer money, but rather using creativity to get to the other side by moving differently—a creativity inherent in most bodies but suppressed due to fear of flouting convention. Both the regular protesters and the dancers transformed the constraints posed by the turnstiles into opportunities, literalizing how the system—the pathway, the flow they followed—intrinsically supported or enabled embodied experiences of freedom.



Fig. 29. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez, Coyoacán Metro Station #4, 22 December 2013, Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive. [Enrique Melgarejo, dancer]

In this image (see fig. 29), Enrique Melgarejo is suspended right above the turnstile, frozen in forward motion, vaulting like an Olympic champion with one hand swung upwards and the other propelling him over the turnstile. We can see, here, how his (hyper-able) body contrasts with his surroundings. The cold, hard, immobility of the architecture is somehow softened and charged by the ephemeral, flexible, moveable, yet muscular and defiant human body. The rows of metal turnstiles and the green horizontal Metro signs crisscross in uniform right angles, expressing perfect order and bringing to mind complacent bodies filing in straight lines on a daily basis. Melgarejo's body, on the other hand, shapes arced diagonals, upsetting the clean right angles that surround and support his jump. He is quite literally dependent on this metal structure for support—this constraint imposed by the turnstile. He needs it in order to propel his weight up and over. His contrasting, curvy leap is shaped by the limitations provided by the architecture.

This question of support is key in understanding a politics of resistance that cannot be understood apart from the structures that it resists. Goldman's tight place, literalized by the space between the turnstiles, is also the very constraint that propels the dancers' jumps. Shannon Jackson looks at the state and capital as an extension of the citizen body, observing how "[the] social world is in fact a large systemic prosthesis for the normative bodies its structures support" (7). Applying Jackson's point to the spatial and choreographic: architecture and city planning serve as structural prostheses for maintaining the flow of citizens' bodies in concordance with the flow of capital/state power. The image of Melgarejo's jump (a jump potentially protesting the system) is a visual example of Jackson's idea of support. Much like Goldman's notion that freedom cannot be separated from constraint, no social or artistic movement can be fully autonomous from the socioeconomic structures against which they revolt. And, in fact, these movements necessarily depend on such structures. Melgarejo's prosthesis is the turnstile structure, and without it he could not perform this particularly high jump. The turnstile becomes part of his body's gravitational lever as he extends his weight into it in order to push away from it.

Beyond the support of the Metro system, there are other invisible supports involved in the dance photo shoot. Coordinated by Álvarez and his fellow PosMeSalto organizers, the hour-long photo-shoot involved more than just two dancers and one photographer. A group of organizers inside the Metro encouraged passengers to pass without paying. Another group outside successfully deterred the police until the photo shoot was finished. Additionally, a second photographer accompanied the three in order to videotape the process. The dance, then, was not only between the dancers and the Metro station, but also between the dancers, fellow pedestrians, the photographer, and fellow activists. This action was far more than individual, involving coordinated collective movement. And it is worth mentioning that this collective support extended beyond the photo shoot to include the dissemination of the images on the Internet. Were it not for the existence of social media, Álvarez would not have had the idea to help the movement by spreading those powerful images. The idea for the photos would not have been conceived without social media; and their wide circulation also relied on social networks like Facebook that operate outside of and apart from official Mexican news outlets. While Facebook certainly can be exploited for surveillance purposes, it can also be utilized by social movements to convey information suppressed by traditional news outlets. In the case of PosMeSalto, the support garnered by the larger community was due largely to social media.

Jackson's analysis of support and autonomy within social movements verging on art (and art verging on activism) incisively points at the nuances of Zolá's claim that doing the protest with a blockade and without the support of "the people" would be futile. Jackson observes, "the subtle difference between 'holding up' and 'keeping from falling' emphasizes the fragility and indeed gravitational vulnerability of the thing held, making clear what would happen if it was withdrawn" (31). Metaphorized by the dancing bodies supported by the Metro's architecture, Jackson's musings read almost as a contact improvisation duet between bodies and social/architectural space. While those moving bodies relied on the constraints and support of the space surrounding them, the space also depended upon its contact with those differently moving bodies in order to gain its meaning. Through the differential touch between the Metro and the movers, both bodily space and architectural space changed, even if PosMeSalto's aim of preventing the fare-hike was not successful.

Melgarejo's and Zolá's jumps re-urge the question: why jump? Why *PosMeSalto* and not *PosMeAgacho* when citizens were both ducking *and* jumping? In the hopeful terms often associated with a social movement, jumping connotes a forward action, one that potentially elevates a person or a cause to "higher ground." To jump over could mean to overcome. It is a muscular action that involves some sense of both risk and faith. Jumping could involve falling, but might also involve (momentarily) experiencing a sense of freedom associated with height. Jumping *above* the turnstile might call to mind jumping over the system altogether, even though, as these images illustrate, it is the support of the system that enables the jump. Jumping in a forward direction, or rather, in the expected direction of pedestrian traffic does not imagine a flow other than the one choreographed by the state and the market. It is significant that the forward-jumps of the PosMeSalto movement's dancers were the products of the constraints of the particular space in which they performed. Álvarez had chosen the Coyoacán station for its friendly police, its lack of congestion, and for the runways that the space provided for the dancers. Unlike many other stations, where a jump could be cut short by stairs, there was enough flat space before and after the turnstiles in the Coyoacán station to allow the dancers to continue their momentum. What Álvarez did not account for, however, was the low height of

the ceiling. As a result, the symbolic projection of a forward-versus-upward movement was largely a function of the architectural constraints in the space in which the photo shoot occurred.

On the other hand, *PosMeAgacho*, or “I might as well duck,” might more aptly describe a movement that promoted resistance under the radar of the system. Potentially more subversive in its micro-movement below the line of sight of security guards, a *PosMeAgacho* movement would equate resistance with invisibility. It would also have the ability to suggest fear of getting caught, whereas *PosMeSalto*’s brazen jumps flaunted surveillance. In either case, neither the under-duck or the over-jump recognizes that the movers must still move *through* the power structures that enable their movement.

Conclusion

In 1995, the prolific Mexican theorist, Carlos Monsiváis published a collection of short poetic essays depicting the Federal District—via the flow of masses of human bodies—as violent yet ritualized chaos. A deeply performative, choreographic reading of the overstuffed megalopolis on the eternal verge of crisis, *Los Rituales del Caos* reads the country’s capitol as a densely packed gravitational center where movement is forced, improvised, and difficult. In it, Monsiváis describes Mexico City as a space so packed with spatial constraints that citizens must adopt tactics in order to move within it:

The bicycles flood the atrium, and the rivers of people clash and neutralize, walking is impossible, allowing yourself to be dragged with the flow moves you, . . . tiredness is the preamble to transfiguration, and the people are a set of sale clothing, and the technique of adapting bodies to the lack of space. (39)

The constraints, described by Monsiváis, placed on the movement of the citizens are not purely architectural: The lack of space is produced by the swells and surges of other bodies, bodies that at once immobilize individuals inside of packed trains and also sweep individuals unwillingly along the currents of mass movement. As in the case of travelling via the Metro, citizens engage in a choreography of survival in which they sense the other bodies around them in order to keep going and not crash into others. They follow the flow as they also find room to move around obstacles and other bodies, veering in and out of stations and onto the street, convening with others en route to work. These techniques for adapting and surviving the tsunami of bodies in the Federal District at once allow for the system to continue running, and also push up against and challenge its limits and limitations.

As we have seen, in a Certeauian sense, the lack of room provided would make moving in a different direction tactically difficult. But if we think of Monsiváis’s rituals of chaos in terms of Goldman’s tight spaces and Lugones’ concept of micro-movements, we can see the embodied acts of the *PosMeSalto* protesters as disruptive to the hegemonic body patterning associated with human commerce in the spaces of the Sistema de Transporte Colectivo’s stations. Not only did the bodies of these protesters go with the flow of the city’s economy, they followed the flow of other bodies, and were even influenced by the mass decision to perform differential movement by those surrounding them. As Álvarez points out:

People are funny. Sometimes you give them the invitation to break a barrier that scares them, but if there is someone there to encourage them, they say ‘ah. Ok.’ and transgress. All you need is someone to invite you, to open a door for you. Everyone was watching whomever was in front to see if they were going to jump, and then at the police who were doing nothing. And then, with neither pain nor glory, they ducked or jumped. (Álvarez et al, Interview)

In this way, PosMeSalto gave permission, en masse, for Metro-goers to renegotiate a differential choreography in resistance to (but within) the system, a choreography that used that very system to enable its freedom of movement. While the movement may have failed to reverse the fare hike, it did produce lasting ripples in the corporeality of those who (albeit only briefly) reconceived the politics of their bodies in a particularly non-neutral space and chose to defy a choreography of mass complicity. As Melgarejo mused, “PosMeSalto was like going to a concert. When the event ends, everyone continues vibrating. The concert explodes and the people disperse. The experience doesn’t disperse but grows, and no one is the same as before” (Álvarez et al, Interview). Melgarejo’s reflection resonates with queer Latino performance scholar José Esteban Muñoz’s quote about how dance resonates far beyond its temporality: “Dance, like energy, never disappears; it is simply transformed. Queer dance, after the live act, does not just expire” (441). While Muñoz refers specifically to queer dance in its temporal and lasting resistance to the logic of heterosexuality, his understanding of dance as resistance that persists beyond the danced-moment can be applied to PosMeSalto. While the social movement technically ended, the corporeal movement of the protesters left lasting effects on their bodies. These effects involve an embodied memory of movement and an understanding that that movement could be used again to enact social change. These traces of an alternate way of moving remain in the bodies of the protesters long after the movement itself was judged a failure and the fare was raised.

As I have argued throughout, by using the turnstile machines simultaneously as symbols of hegemony and as support for their unconventional movements, PosMeSalto protesters resisted the mass dance of obedience to state power. In so doing, they drew focus to this border site as a site of movement where not only hegemonic, but also unsanctioned, resistant movement was possible. The result of moving differently in the space of the Metro produced a similar spatial critique as site-specific dance, which unearths the non-neutrality of a space by placing differently moving bodies in it. The choice of hyper-able dancing bodies as symbolic mascots for the movement highlighted the limits and possibilities of imagining social process in terms of bodies that enable, rather than thwart the flow of capitalism. However, those bodies and the bodies of the everyday protesters reconstruct and interrogate the border space of the Metro, literally performing its border-ness and calling into question its symbolic status as a site of control and surveillance. While both the individual subjectivities of the participants and their movements shaped the particular possible meanings of resistance and rupture within the act of moving differently, their movements also reshaped the subjectivity of the space itself. Given that the movement was constrained by the capitalist system and the hegemonic flow of bodies, individual protesting bodies used the support of the architecture (and, thus, of the system) to perform, on a mass scale, disruptive micro-movements against the very system that supported, constrained, and produced their movements.

CONCLUSION



Fig. 30. Still from “Performance por Ayotzinapa.”

In November of 2014, only two months after 43 students had gone missing in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Pablo Álvarez, the videographer and organizer of PosMeSalto, posted *Performance por Ayotzinapa*, a video of student actors on YouTube (see fig. 30). The video spread far and wide, from Mexico City to all corners of the Internet, amassing 77,126 views and 1,033 likes by June 2015. Its multilayered spatiality encompassed the global space of the Internet, the Centro Nacional de las Artes in Mexico City (CENART) where it was filmed, and the town of Ayotzinapa in Guerrero where a combination of local police, national military, and narcos disappeared the young teachers-in-training.

The video begins with three young men, student actors of the INBA at CENART, shirtless and in jeans, standing like statues on black square pedestals in a courtyard littered with old shoes. Pedestrians peer at them from the street through the building’s festively purple bars as buses and cars speed through behind them. A large banner behind the actors says “¿Cuántos muertos son demasiados?” or “How many dead are too many?” A fourth male actor, fully clothed, wearing sunglasses and smoking a cigarette, enters on stilts, swinging a large bucket of red paint. Over the course of performance the actor with the bucket dumps the blood-like paint over the other three, as their bodies slowly crumple from standing, to squatting, to shaking, at times taking on the gestures of “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.” At first, the fourth actor uses a shoe, presumably of a disappeared friend, to ladle the blood onto his victims. As a soundtrack of bullets goes off, the bloodied men, fallen from their pedestals, begin convulsing, and, with pained, weighted movements, drag themselves through the sea of owner-less shoes, picking them up as if holding on to what little is left of their community. As two performers fall motionless, the remaining “victim” moves gingerly with stilted steps, tenderly gathering mismatched sandals in his arms, until the “torturer” swings the remaining contents of the bucket at him, and he collapses amongst the red-stained shoes.

This video eerily echoes Proceso Pentágono's 1973 *Al nivel informativo* in many ways: The courtyard full of old shoes evokes the shoes in Victor Muñoz's boxing ring, though in this case the burlap sacks are replaced with exposed human bodies. Although not in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, this takes place in a related institution. A contemporary counterpart to Bellas Artes, CENART was founded in 1994 in the southern part of Mexico City by the Mexican government and serves as the national center for art training, investigation, and performance. Like in Muñoz's *The Kidnapping* paint/blood is poured over bodies in a public space of a private national arts institution, right by a public street teeming with traffic, onlookers, and passers-by. The "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" gestures call to mind José Antonio's white figure chained to the television screen behind bars.

The events inspiring both the 1973 and 2014 performances bear uncanny resemblance as well: In 1968 the military and secret police, sponsored by the PRI government, rained bullets upon student protesters at Tlatelolco in Mexico City. The student teachers of Ayotzinapa Normal School in Guerrero, in a twist of devastating irony, were both protesting their local government and commemorating the fallen students of 1968, three days before the anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre. The same Partido Revolucionario Institucional, that had both established the socialist Normal school system to which Ayotzinapa belonged in the early 1920s *and* ordered the murder of socialist student protesters on October 2, 1968, had deep, direct ties to the September 26, 2014 disappearance of the 43 students. Were the shoes on the ground of CENART's patio those of the disappeared in 2014 in the State of Guerrero? Were they remnants of those disappeared and lost during Tlatelolco or the Dirty War? Could the beat-up women's shoes pertain to the victims of the femicides in Juárez and across Mexico and the countless deaths and disappearances due to organized crime and state corruption since the 1980s? Could they summon the ghosts of the victims of the 1985 earthquake? By now, Mexico has so many unmarked, hidden mass graves littering its countryside that it becomes hard to separate the piles of historical bones and bruises.

It is important to note within this performance and its context the postrevolutionary reverberations that prioritize male centrality in narratives of resistance. Like in the national archetypes that Frida Kahlo's paintings resisted, here, the lives commemorated are male. That is, the movement for the 43 focuses on the very massive human rights abuse committed in complicity with the military, local government and police and narcos, that disappeared the lives of this group of young men. While an awful and necessary impetus for massive social change and an egregiously terrifying act, that it was this event commemorated—and not the 300+ femicides in Juárez near the U.S./Mexico border—signifies an ongoing erasure of gendered violence in national discourse. Mobilizing the country to decry state-sponsorship of violence and narcotraffic on as massive a scale as what has happened since Ayotzinapa did not emerge when the bodies in question were female. However, the Ayotzinapa protests seemed to unearth calls for justice, connecting to the larger issues of mass disappearances in the country. Perhaps the Ayotzinapa disappearances provoked greater rage and social mobilization given the sheer visibility of 43 people disappeared at once, and the undeniable part that the local government and police played. The femicides, on the other hand, have not happened to large groups of victims at a given time but to individual women. The sheer numbers of femicide victims, however, far surpass the Ayotzinapa disappeared. The discourses surrounding Ayotzinapa and Juárez beg further critique in terms of national narratives of empathy and heroism based on gender.

This performance, along with the protests, exposed Mexico to still be an open wound, as Corrine Andersen argues in her analysis of Frida Kahlo's representations of *mestizaje*. The blood depicted amongst the sea of shoes, harks to escalating violations throughout the country due to the continual ruptures that, as the PRI tries to smooth over by participating in corruption and by attempting to squelch resistance, only become deeper and more volatile. Performances like this, *A nivel informativo*, Kahlo's paintings and Appleton's *danza callejera* dances do not attempt to heal or cauterize the wound, or restore "order" and stability." Instead, they allow that wound to bleed productively, in opposition to the state.

By *moving*, albeit fitfully *through* the violent constraints of an oppressive narco-state, the performers and protesters revealed what remains buried, the socially seismic foundations upon which the nation rests and needs healing. After all, Peña Nieto's desire for the country and city to return to stability is built upon myths constructed postrevolution. That is, things were never stable in Mexico. The PRI should know what the architects of Tlatelolco's housing units learned after many crumbled in the 1985 earthquake: to construct a rigid, unresponsive structure on top of a shaky, earthquake-prone filled-in lake is to create a structure that will break. A government built upon flexibility and listening to its citizens, might avoid the escalating ripples of violence occurring now. This returns me to the kinds of violence enunciated in Erin Manning's *politics of touch*: the mutual, ever incomplete violence of multiple Othered bodies in motion diverts the rigid, unidirectional violence of the state.

The scene of the performance reverberates with a similar drama and trauma expressed in Cecilia Appleton's post-earthquake *danza callejera* performance on Jalapa street. The actors' faces contort in grimaces as they slump further towards the ground. Site here, embodies pain. However, the pain in this public location refers and extends to another painful site, where indigenous rural students did not have the privilege to act out a performance of violence in an urban institution of higher learning, but rather were forced to be literally brutalized and butchered. Here, Guerrero, the poorest and most dangerous state of the nation, finds itself represented at performances and protests across the map and in the heart of the nation's capitol. The margin shakes the center. Despite Peña Nieto's attempts to curtail protests and severely control the media, the country's bloody margins found themselves in its urban center. Performances and massive protests had erupted across the city, becoming so dense and threatening to Peña Nieto's government that congress passed its "law of mobility." These protests were not led by *chilangos*, but by citizens of Guerrero, the families of the disappeared 43. Shortly after the "Performance por Ayotzinapa," the police began arbitrarily arresting protesters, detaining and torturing them. Thus, to speak of site and pain in Mexico City it is impossible not to speak of Guerrero. The law of mobility that curtailed the movement of protesters was in direct relation to the government's fear of the margins invading the imagined center.

It seems that space and time themselves here *move*, cycle, and expand from beyond Mexico City to Guerrero, the U.S., and beyond, like a spreading bloodstain. This video performance contains eerie traces of *Al nivel informativo* and *danza callejera*, yet the situation and the performance speak to contemporary political realities that further jolt Mexico City's spatial maps and move it in its eternal crisis. Mexico, after all, is on the verge of explosion, of a jerky fall, a man-made earthquake of global proportions. Unlike the PosMeSalto protesters a couple years prior, the Ayotzinapa protesters in Mexico City did not go with the flow of the

capital's official economy by surging through its pathways. Instead, they blocked the Zócalo, Insurgentes, and Reforma, led by the parents of the 43, crowding the streets leading to the presidential residency in the affluent Los Pinos, and even effectively shutting down the airport by blocking the road. The PosMeSalto protesters never thwarted the mobile machinery of cars and trains that would soon become threatened by the Ayotzinapa protests. Returning to Susan Manning's definition of choreography that I used in Chapter 1 as setting spatial limitations that shape, hinder, and permit movement, the massive Ayotzinapa protests so severely limited the movement of the neoliberal state and capital, via shutting down traffic, that the state would react as oppressively as it had in the Dirty War of the 1970s by employing the law of mobility. The state choreography of impeding protest was in response to the citizens' choreography of impeding traffic.

But as I suggested in the introduction, the Ayotzinapa protests *moved* and mobilized the city while hindering the flow of traffic. This metaphoric movement pushed against the violent state oppression as the throngs of bodies pushed against the limits of police barricades. Despite using the law of mobility to immobilize resistance, the space of the social movement has grown, expanding beyond Guerrero and Mexico City, through the Internet and into the streets across the world. In May of 2015, Caravana 43, a Caravan led by the families of the disappeared student teachers, traced multiple routes across Latin America, the U.S., Canada, and Europe, to raise awareness and anger towards the abuses of human rights in Mexico, hoping to put pressure on governments like the U.S. that economically and militarily support the "drug war" and the drug economy that fuels the state sponsorship of this level of oppression and violence against citizens. Resistant movement, the pushing up against the strictures of oppression, cannot be fully contained to the margins and squeezed to paralysis. In the U.S., many Ayotzinapa protests joined with the Black Lives Matter protests, acknowledging the connectedness of police brutality towards black and brown bodies on both sides of the border.

The movement that began in Guerrero and spread to Mexico City extended out all the way to UC Berkeley, where I am completing a doctorate. On a rare torrential day in 2014 during the seemingly endless California drought, I had the honor to help organize, or "choreograph," our own performance for Ayotzinapa, which was lead primarily by Latino and Chicano students with family in Mexico. With my assistance, two powerful women spearheaded the performance: Valeska Castañeda and Amy Andrea Martinez. Curiously, the main organizers of the performance piece and 70% of the performers at Berkeley were female. Thus, the representation of violence and homage to the 43 young men also alluded to the femicides and abuses of human rights against women in Mexico. Many other performances for Ayotzinapa across Mexico included female performers. While the intention may not have been to refer to the Juárez disappearances and other femicides, the presence of female bodies evoked another kind of violence not specifically committed in Ayotzinapa.

Under an endless stream of cold water, we marched in black through the streets of Berkeley, the *danzantes* leading the way. When we arrived at the steps of Sproul Hall, where the Free Speech movement of the 1960s had occurred, we brought a little bit of the Zócalo with us. At the beat of a drum, 43 of us lined up in rows, and as a poet called out the name of each missing student, we turned around, one by one, removing red bandanas from our mouths, lifting our fists, and screaming "presente." Our arms stayed up in the rain for thirty minutes. As I stood still, feeling the bodies of the undergraduates who surrounded me and observing the sea of

dripping protesters under umbrellas watching us, for that short span of time, space shifted and moved. Our extreme stillness performed a micro-movement of resistance: fists frozen in the wet air, resolute in their positions yet shaking. U.S./Mexico Border. Mexico City was present. So was Guerrero. We pushed as hard as we could against the constraints of large oppressive global systems with our small, still bodies, and even if it was only for a brief moment, we felt that we moved the rain.

REFERENCES

Interviews

- Álvarez, Pablo Tonatiuh, Enrique Melgarejo and Andrea Zolá. Interview regarding PosMeSalto. Mexico City. 5 May 2014.
- Appleton, Cecilia. Personal interview. Mexico City. October 2013.
- Appleton, Cecilia, Tania Álvarez, Miguel Ángel Díaz, Jorge Izquierdo, Anadel Lynton-Snyder, Laura Rocha, and Francisco Vera. Interview with *Danza Callejera* Choreographers (Group). Mexico City. November 2013.
- Contreras Villaseñor, Javier. Personal interview. Mexico City. October 2013.
- Díaz, Miguel Ángel. Personal interview. Mexico City. October 2013.
- Finck, Carlos and Victor Muñoz. Personal interview. Mexico City. 26 May 2015.
- Garrido, Arturo. Personal interview. San Luis Potosí. June 2014.
- Izquierdo, Jorge. Personal interview. Mexico City. September 2013.
- Lynton-Snyder, Anadel. Personal interview. Mexico City. October 2013.
- Muñoz, Victor. Personal interview. Mexico City. 25 May 2015.
- Rocha, Laura. Personal interview. Mexico City. November 2013.
- Vera, Francisco. Personal interview. Mexico City. November 2013.

Images

- Finck, Carlos. Photograph of *The Run-over Man*. A nivel informativo. 1973. Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC) Archive, Mexico City.
- . Photograph of the View from Bellas Artes. A nivel informativo. 1973. MUAC Archive, Mexico City.
- Izquierdo, Jorge. Photograph of Asaltodiario, II Encuentro Callejero de Danza Contemporánea, Colonia Roma, Mexico City. 1987. Dancers Jaime Leyva and Miguel Ángel Díaz. *Una Danza Tan Ansiada*. By Pierre-Alain Baud, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1992, p. 169.
- . Photograph of II Contemporary Street Dance Event, Colonia Roma, Mexico City. 1987. Dancer Teodoro González/Villagrán. *Una Danza Tan Ansiada*. By Pierre-Alain Baud, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1992, p.130.

- . Photograph of “Zacam-Zom” at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, Tlatelolco, Mexico. Dancer Laura Rocha. *Barro Rojo, Arte Escenico (1982-2007)*. By Juan Hernandez Islas, Conaculta, 2010, p. 55.
- Kahlo, Frida. *The Broken Column*. 1940. Dolores Olmedo Foundation, Mexico City. *Olga's Gallery*. <http://www.abcgallery.com/K/kahlo/kahlo61.html>. Accessed 8 June 2016.
- . *Memory (The Heart)*. 1937. Dolores Olmedo Foundation, Mexico City. *Olga's Gallery*. <http://www.abcgallery.com/K/kahlo/kahlo35.html>. Accessed 8 June 2016.
- . *Self-Portrait Inside a Sunflower*. 1954. Private Collection, USA. *Art Eyewitness: Frida Kahlo's Garden*. <http://arteyewitness.blogspot.com/2015/07/frida-kahlos-garden.html>. Accessed 1 July 2016.
- . *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*. 1940. The Museum of Modern Arts, New York. *Olga's Gallery*. <http://www.abcgallery.com/K/kahlo/kahlo50.html>. Accessed 8 June 2016.
- Muñoz, Victor. Photograph of *Bound Figure*. 1973. Victor Muñoz Archive (private archive), Mexico City.
- . Photograph of *The Car*. 1973. Victor Muñoz Archive (private archive), Mexico City.
- . Photograph of *The Kidnapping*. 1973. Victor Muñoz Archive (private archive), Mexico City.
- . Photograph of *The Ring*. 1973. Victor Muñoz Archive (private archive), Mexico City.
- Photograph from *Arestegui Noticias #1*. 13 December 2013. “Videos: Así es el #PosMeSalto y #PosMeAgacho, tras alza al Metro en DF.” aristeguinoticias.com/1312/mexico/videos-asi-es-el-PosMeSalto-y-posmeagacho-en-el-df-tras-aumento-al-metro. Accessed 23 November 2015.
- Photograph from *Arestegui Noticias #2*. 13 December 2013. “Videos: Así es el #PosMeSalto y #PosMeAgacho, tras alza al Metro en DF.” aristeguinoticias.com/1312/mexico/videos-asi-es-el-PosMeSalto-y-posmeagacho-en-el-df-tras-aumento-al-metro. Accessed 23 November 2015.
- Photograph from Blog PSK. 16 December 2013. www.blogpsk.com/2013/12/se-saltan-torniquetes-del-metro-por.html. Accessed 23 November 2015.
- Sherman, Stephanie. Photograph of Bellas Artes Exterior. December 2015. Mexico City.
- . Photograph of Corset in Case. Casa Azul, Coyoacán, Mexico City. 1941.
- . Photograph of a Photograph of Frida Kahlo in Corset. Original photograph by Florence Arquin, 1941, Casa Azul, Coyoacán, Mexico City.

---. Photograph of Sala Internacional #1. December 2015. Mexico City.

---. Photograph of Sala Internacional #2. December 2015. Mexico City.

---. Photograph of Tlatelolco #1. December 2015. Mexico City.

---. Photograph of Tlatelolco #2. December 2015. Mexico City.

Still from "Performance por Ayotzinapa." www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3XavMalxFg.
Accessed July 16, 2016.

Tonatiuh Álvarez, Pablo. Photograph of Children Jumping, Coyoacán Metro Station. 22
December 2013. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive (private archive).

---. Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #1. 22 December 2013. Dancers Andrea Zolá and
Enrique Melgarejo. Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive (private archive).

---. Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #2. 22 December 2013. Dancer Enrique Melgarejo.
Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive (private archive).

---. Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #3. 22 December 2013. Dancer Andrea Zolá. Pablo
Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive (private archive).

---. Photograph of Coyoacán Metro Station #4. 22 December 2013. Dancer Enrique Melgarejo.
Pablo Tonatiuh Álvarez Archive (private archive).

---. Photograph of Man Jumping, Coyoacán Metro Station. 22 December 2013. Pablo Tonatiuh
Álvarez Archive (private archive).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*. 1st ed., U Minnesota P, 2000.
- Albright, Ann Cooper. *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*. Wesleyan, 1997.
- Álvarez, Tania, comp. *DAMAC (Danza Mexicana, A.C.)*. 1985-1992. Archive of documents involved in the planning, recording, and commemorating of the Encuentros de Danza Callejera. Mexico City.
- Antonio, José, Carlos Finck, and Victor Muñoz. *(Catalogue) A Nivel Informativo*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional De Bellas Artes Y Literatura, 1973. Print. Accessed at the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporánea's archives.
- Appleton, Cecilia. Appleton's Personal Archive of Documents from the Encuentros de Danza Callejera. Mexico City, 1985-1992.
- . "Message to the author." E-mail to Stephanie Sherman. Cited with Appleton's permission. 6 December 2011.
- Appleton, Diana, Cecilia Appleton, Cesar Arvizu, Raymundo Becerril, Díaz Miguel Ángel, Norma Batista, Laura Rocha, Jaime Leyva, Sergio Gómez, Ricardo Najera, and Jaime Ortega. "Foro Urbano, Una Alternativa Cultural, Contradanza." *Zurda* (1985), Cecilia Appleton Private Archive.
- Andersen, Corrine. "Remembrance of an Open Wound: Frida Kahlo and Postrevolutionary Mexican Identity." *South Atlantic Review*, 2009. highbeam.com, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41337719>. Accessed 26 December 2015.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 2007.
- Banerji, Anurima. "Paratopias of Performance: The Choreographic Practices of Chandralekha." *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory, and the Global*, edited by A. a. J. Lepecki, Jenn, Seagull Books, 2009, 346-371.
- Baud, Pierre-Alain. *Una danza tan ansiada: la danza en México como experiencia de comunicación y poder*. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, 1992.
- Briginshaw, Valerie. *Dance, Space and Subjectivity*. 2001 ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.
- Bustamante, Maris. "Non-Objective Arts in Mexico 1963-1983." *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*, edited by Coco Fusco, Routledge, 2000, pp. 225-39.

- Carbajal, Daniel. "1985: Una Experiencia de Ayuda a Damnificados." *Terremoto. Ausentes/Presentes. 30 Años Después*. Spanish ed., edited by Stephanie Kurian Fastlicht, Martha Merodio, Ana Lilia Cepéda, Daniel Carbajal, Gonzalo R. Carillo, Editorial Ink, Property of Sextil Online, 2015. Kindle E-book.
- Cépeda, Ana Lilia. "Hoy, a los 30 años del terremoto." *Terremoto. Ausentes/Presentes. 30 Años Después*. Spanish ed., edited by Stephanie Kurian Fastlicht, Martha Merodio, Ana Lilia Cepéda, Daniel Carbajal, Gonzalo R. Carillo, Editorial Ink, Property of Sextil Online, 2015. Kindle E-book.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 1st U.S. ed., U of California P, 1984.
- Coffey, Mary K. *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State*. Duke UP, 2012.
- Contreras Villaseñor, Javier. *Tárgum En Una Botella (Cartas Desde La Danza)*. Instituto Nacional De Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2013.
- Davis, Angela Y., and Chela Sandoval. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. U of Minnesota P, 2000.
- Dowdy, Michael. "Spaces for Congregation and Creative Play: Martín Espada's and Victor Hernández Cruz's Poetic Plazas." *College Literature*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1-23.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Revised ed., translated by Richard Philcox. Grove P, 2008.
- Ford, Eileen Mary, "Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico: Politics, Culture, Identity, and the Body." *Journal of Women's History* 25.3 (2013): 221-31. Print.
- Foster, Susan. *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2010.
- . *Choreographing History*. Indiana UP, 1995.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." *Other Spaces: The Affair of the Heterotopia*. Ed. Roland Ritter and Bernd Knaller-Vlay. Graz: Haus Der Architektur, 1998. Print. 26-28.
- . and Jacques Lagrange. *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1973-74*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Fuentes, Carlos. *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait*. Abrams, 2005.
- Gallo, Ruben. "The Mexican Pentagon." *Collectivism After Modernism*, edited by B. Stimson, and Gregory Sholette, U of Minnesota P, 2007.

- García Canclini, Nestor. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez, U of Minnesota P, 1995.
- Goldman, Danielle. *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom*. U of Michigan P, 2010.
- Hedrick, Tace. *Mestizo Modernism: Race, Nation and Identity in Latin American Culture, 1900-1940*. Rutgers UP, 2003.
- Hernandez Islas, Juan. *Barro Rojo, Arte Escenico (1982-2007)*. Conaculta, 2010.
- Herrera, Hayden. *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. Harper Collins, 1983.
- Jackson, Shannon. *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. Routledge, 2011.
- Kahlo, Frida. *El Diario de Frida Kahlo: Un Íntimo Autorretrato*. La Vaca Independiente, 2010.
- Kloetzel, Melanie, and Carolyn Pavlik. *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces*. U of Florida P, 2009.
- Kraus, Arnoldo. "Frida Kahlo Pain as Life." *Frida Kahlo: Retrospective*. Ed. Helga Prignitz Poda. Munich: Prestel, 2001. 52-57. Print.
- Kuppers, Petra. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on the Edge*. Routledge, 2003.
- Kurian Fastlicht, Stephanie, Martha Merodio, Ana Lilia Céspedes, Daniel Carbajal, and Gonzalo R. Carillo. *Terremoto. Ausentes/Presentes. 30 Años Después*. Kindle. Spanish Edition ed. Mexico City: Editorial Ink. Property of SEXTIL ONLINE, DE C.V., 2015. Web.
- Kwan, SanSan. *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.
- Kwon, Miwon. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. MIT P, 2002.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991. Print.
- Lepecki, André, and Jenn Joy, editors. *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory and The Global*. Seagull Books, 2010.
- Lindauer, Margaret A. *Devouring Frida: The Art History and Popular Celebrity of Frida Kahlo*. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2011. Print.
- Lugones, Maria. *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

- Manning, Erin. *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*. 1st ed., U of Minnesota P, 2006.
- Martin, Randy. *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. Duke UP, 1998.
- McCaughan, Edward J. *Art and Social Movements: Cultural Politics in Mexico and Aztlán*. Duke UP, 2012.
- Matter, Jordan. *Dancers Among Us: A Celebration of Joy in the Everyday*. 1st ed., Workman, 2012.
- Medina, Cuauhtemoc, Mantecon, and Oliver Debroise. *La Era de La Discrepancia: Arte Y Cultura Visual En Mexico, 1968-1997 / The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1968-1997*. Bilingual ed., Turner/UNAM, 2007.
- Meyer, James. "The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site Specificity." *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, U of Minnesota P, 2000. 23-37.
- Monsiváis, Carlos. "El Empoderamiento De La Sociedad." *Terremoto. Ausentes/Presentes. 30 Años Después*. Spanish ed., edited by Stephanie Kurian Fastlicht, Martha Merodio, Ana Lilia Cepéda, Daniel Carbajal, Gonzalo R. Carillo, Editorial Ink, Property of Sextil Online, 2015. Kindle E-book.
- . *Los Rituales del Caos. Los Rituales Del Caos*. Ediciones Era, 1995.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York UP, 2009.
- Mussachio, Humberto. "Ciudad Quebrada." *Terremoto. Ausentes/Presentes. 30 Años Después*. Kindle. Spanish ed., edited by Stephanie Kurian Fastlicht, Martha Merodio, Ana Lilia Cepéda, Daniel Carbajal, Gonzalo R. Carillo, Editorial Ink, Property of Sextil Online, 2015. Kindle E-book.
- Navarrete Cortés, Alejandro. "Symbolic Production in Mexico in the 1980s." *La Era de La Discrepancia: Arte Y Cultura Visual En Mexico, 1968-1997 / The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1968-1997*. Bilingual ed., Turner/UNAM, 2007. 289-296.
- Olcott, Jocelyn H., Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, editors. *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*. Duke UP, 2007.
- Pérez, Laura Elisa. *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. Print.
- Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 1993.

- Poniatowska, Elena. *La Noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral*. Spanish ed., 2nd ed., Ediciones Era, 1998.
- . *Nada, nadie: Las voces del temblor*. Ediciones Era, 1988.
- Prignitz-Poda, Helga, and Frida Kahlo. *Frida Kahlo: The Painter And Her Work*. Slp ed., Distributed Art P, 2004.
- Rodríguez, Juana María. *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*. New York UP, 2014.
- Rubenstein, Anne. "The War on Las Pelonas." *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, edited by Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, Duke UP, 2006, pp. 57-80.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. 1st ed., Oxford UP, 1985.
- Stimson, Blake, and Gregory Sholette, editors. *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*. 1st ed., U of Minnesota P, 2007.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke UP, 2003.
- . *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War."* Duke UP, 1997.
- Thomas, Helen. *Dance in the City*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1997.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. U of Minnesota P, 1977.
- Vaughan, Mary K. Introduction. *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*. By Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, editors. Duke UP, 2006, pp. 21-34.
- Williams, Gareth. *The Mexican Exception: Sovereignty, Police, and Democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.