

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

STAGING A QUEER NATION:
LANDSCAPES OF DESIRE IN CONTEMPORARY CATALAN DRAMA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

BY

ISAIAS FANLO GONZALEZ

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2020

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	xi
INTRODUCTION: STAGING A QUEER NATION	1
ACT ONE. GHOSTS IN THE ARCHIVE: <i>MARBURG, THE TOUCHING COMMUNITY</i> , AND THE THEATRE OF HIV/AIDS IN CATALONIA	37
1. Globalization, Gentrification, and the Epidemic in the Antipodes: Guillem Clua's <i>Marburg</i>	60
2. Aimar Pérez Galí's <i>The Touching Community</i> : Kinships, Communities, and Affects Onstage	80
ACT TWO. TRANS-CATALONIA: ONSTAGE PROPOSALS OF GEOPOLITICAL FLUIDITY	109
1. Transitionings	112
2. Enacting Negativity in <i>La fragilitat dels verbs transitius</i> and Manel Bonany's <i>La pell escrita</i>	131
3. <i>Limbo</i> : Transgender Poetics of the No-Place	154
4. Bodily Evictions in Marc Rosich's <i>A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams</i>	169
5. Trans Horizons	191
ACT THREE. CRUISING UTOPIAS: QUEERING THE FOURTH WALL	197
1. The Sex Bar as a Utopian Space: Josep Maria Miró's <i>Gang Bang</i>	207
2. Queer Trojan Horses in Guillem Clua's <i>Smiley</i>	242
3. The Rightful Mourning (A Coda on Safe Spaces)	264
EPILOGUE: AFTER THE SHOW	273

APPENDIX	285
WORKS CONSULTED	291

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A storm is coming. A scene in Act One of Guillem Clua's *Marburg*. © David Ruano (p. 285).

Figure 2: *The Touching Community*, by Aimar Pérez-Galí, at San Sebastián's La Tabakalera. © Jordi Surribas (p. 285).

Figure 3: La fragilitat dels verbs transitius. © Josep Aznar (p. 286).

Figure 4: Dancing impasse in *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius*. Screenshot from the recording of the show (p. 286).

Figure 5: The unfortunate boy in *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius* (screenshot) (p. 287).

Figure 6: "The Unfortunate Man" by Duane Michals (p. 287).

Figure 7: Bandages: *La pell escrita* (© Genia Badano) (p. 288).

Figure 8: Promotional photo of *Limbo* (© Kiku Piñol) (p. 288).

Figure 9: Roberto G. Alonso as the Mature Woman. *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*. © Guillem Pacheco (p. 289).

Figure 10: A scene of Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*. © David Ruano (p. 290).

Figure 11: A moment of intimacy with the audience in Guillem Clua's *Smiley*. © Roser Blanch (p. 290).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this dissertation would have not been possible without the help and support of a number of people and institutions. First, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the University of Chicago, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, the Center of the Study of Gender and Sexuality, and UChicago GRAD, for their financial and academic support.

I am honored to have had three extraordinary and dedicated readers in my dissertation committee: Sharon Feldman, Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, and Paul Julian Smith. I have known Sharon Feldman since my time as a coordinator of editions at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. Our conversations during that time were instrumental to motivate me to go back to academia.

No words will do justice to the fundamental role that Agnes Lugo-Ortiz has played throughout this journey. I want to thank her for being such an inspiring presence during my time at the University of Chicago (in class as well as in many conversations at her office and in many other gatherings), and for reading my words in such a careful and rigorous manner. She has been invaluable in helping me understand the importance of finding the right words to express what I was intending to say.

I can proudly say that Paul Julian Smith has been a friend and a mentor longer than I can remember. I only have admiration for his comprehensive, tenacious, and brilliant scholarly work, and for the way he has been able to inspire many readers in and out of academia. I believe he represents everything that a great intellectual should aspire to be. Furthermore, sharing the connection with the prematurely departed scholar David Vilaseca made his presence in the committee more indispensable. Having Paul on the committee has been a meaningful way to continue essential conversations for my growth as an intellectual.

I am grateful to the scholarly community that has supported me throughout this journey. Javier Aparicio Maydeu (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona), thanks to whom I fell in love with the study of literature; Lauren Berlant (University of Chicago), who, in her extraordinary wisdom, changed my way to approach queer epistemologies while having coffee; Brad Epps (University of Cambridge), a longtime friend and an intellectual inspiration; Héctor García-Chávez (Loyola University), for his indelible support; Henry Godinez (Northwestern University), with whom I have shared the passion for theatre; Jonathan Katz (University of Pennsylvania), for showing me true queer kinship; Rafael M. Mérida-Jiménez (Universitat de Lleida), for giving me the opportunity to publish part of this research; Bill Rando (University of Chicago), who has been a constant support from the moment I arrived in Chicago; and, especially, Ana Isabel Soares (Universidade do Algarve), my soul sister from Portugal and one of the most extraordinary and beautiful human beings I have ever met. I have had the immense luck to share an ongoing productive, generous, and loving dialogue with Ana for two decades.

One of the many reasons why I decided to attend the University of Chicago was the extraordinary sense of personal and intellectual collegiality within the graduate community, most particularly within the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. I appreciate the support of my fellow graduate student colleagues, most especially Ebenezer Concepción, David Gregg, Viviana Hong, Manuel Olmedo, Susana Inés Pérez, and Pablo Ottonello. They all have been lavishing interlocutors throughout these years, and have contributed to my intellectual growth in a significant manner. I also want to thank Alba Girons and Cinta Pelejà for becoming a sort of *família catalana* that provided solace and company, most especially during the convulse fall of 2017 in Catalonia.

In the course of my research, I have been able to rely on the generosity of a number of playwrights and stage artists. I treasure the intellectual and creative exchanges that we have

shared as a critical part of this process. I am especially grateful to Guillem Clua, Josep Maria Miró, Aimar Pérez Galí, and Clara Peya, for sharing so many ideas, projects, and inquiries, many of which are studied in this dissertation. I would also like to thank other noteworthy artists who have been cherished interlocutors in Barcelona, Chicago, and New York City: David Cale, Clàudia Cedó, Denise Duncan, David Harrison, Marilia Samper, Victoria Szpunberg, and Helena Tornero. Without our conversations during these years, this work would have been much less comprehensive. Also, my friends and traveling companions Lola Armadàs, Ariadna Castellarnau, Mireia Massagué, and Miquel Seguró, have participated in these conversations in a meaningful manner.

I am grateful to have Jerry Holderman in my life. He invested his talent and generosity to proofread this dissertation, and has always given me his unwavering support. I will never forget a conversation in Palm Springs with him and his husband, Terry O’Neill, which was critical to push my career onward in one of the many turning points we always find in the long and winding academic roads. My friendship with Jerry and Terry has been extremely important in every aspect of my life, including my career as a scholar.

I want to thank the staff at Casal Lambda, Sida Studi, Institut del Teatre, and Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, for their invaluable help during my archival research.

Moving from Barcelona to Chicago would have been a much more challenging endeavor had I not met Denis Frankenfield, William Host, and their beautiful Great Pyrenees, Chloe, the true queen of Hyde Park. From my first weeks at the University of Chicago, Will and Denis’s role in my life evolved from neighbors to one of those “families we choose”, providing shelter, conversation, and love any time I needed it: be it Thanksgiving, Easter, or just after a hard week. Having the keys to their home, I never felt alone in Chicago. I am incredibly grateful for their loving support.

I also want to thank Rick and Mary Kay Richardson, my wonderful neighbors and friends in the South Loop, with whom I have had the immense pleasure to share memorable evenings, always around great conversation, great food –and even better red wine. Their scholarly and personal advice has always been precious to me.

I met Jaime Manrique when I began my research for the dissertation project. His 1999 book *Eminent Maricones* (half memoir, half essay) is, to me, a queer masterpiece and one of those artworks that have been decisive in my sentimental and intellectual education. Meeting Jaime has been one of the greatest gifts in my life, and I want to thank him for always being by my side, for being an inspiring force, for constantly challenging me to improve my writing, for unconditionally believing in my potential, and for his willingness to offer me collaborations on very different projects. Being able to help him as he wrote the novels *Like This Afternoon Forever* and his current book, with the working title *The Black Rooster*, has been a unique privilege. Jaime has patiently read my essays, my articles, and parts of this dissertation, always providing thoughtful advice. He has also been the best possible mentor as I wrote my novel *Ya no estoy aquí*, which would not exist without his relentless support.

As a queer scholar and activist, I have learned that the idea of the family should be flexible enough to embrace any kind of non-normative kinships that decisively define our lives. I can't understand my core family, or my life, without Gerard Wozek. Gerard has given me the chance to create and to share the sanctuary that I have called home from my second year in Chicago on. He provided peace, love, understanding, support, and there has not been a single day in which he has not helped me strive a little bit further. I have been blessed to share with him my joys and my fears; together we have created, we have traveled, we have discovered, we have dreamed, we have learned. As I completed my dissertation, Gerard conceived his second poetry collection, *A Little Wounded but on Fire*, and I can't be more

proud of his perseverance and his talent as a poet. One needs to be tremendously brave to show vulnerability. And Gerard is one of the bravest and warmest souls I have ever met.

Who would believe that there is no soul behind those luminous eyes?, French writer Théophile Gautier wondered, writing about cats. Indeed, three pairs of feline “luminous eyes” –Mannheim in Chicago, and Misha and Pelota in Barcelona– have illuminated these years of my life. A significant part of this dissertation has been written with (at least) one of these three wonderful creatures gently purring by the computer, or on my lap.

I am beyond grateful to have Marc Rosich by my side. He is a generous companion, selfless and kind, and an unparalleled creative genius. Marc is always willing to cheer me up: his laughter –fearless, robust, extravagant– has been, for over a decade, the heartbeat of my life. I will never forget his words as I was considering to quit a stable job to embrace this intellectual adventure: “You always wanted to do this. You should do it. And you don’t worry about anything: I will be by your side. Together, we will make it.” Those were the words that changed my life. Marc’s fecund stream of creativity has never ceased to inspire me. I have been the proudest man every time he shows his extraordinary, prolific and interdisciplinary talent in his work –from *N&N* and *Renard o el llibre de les bèsties* to *Carwash* and *La dona vinguda del futur*, from *Rive Gauche* and *A tots els que heu vingut* to *Diàlegs de Tirant i Carmesina* and *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*. As a queer scholar, I am skeptical about the happily-ever-after paradigm, and yet, any dreams and expectations that I might have happen to include him.

Last, I want to thank Mario Santana, who, besides my advisor, has been a generous mentor and a true friend. From the moment we first discussed my application to the PhD program at the University of Chicago, I knew that working with him would play a decisive role in my learning process. I am grateful for his extraordinarily sharp eye, capable of finding the slightest imprecision in any text. Being his teaching assistant, I was inspired by Mario to

become a warm and rigorous instructor. Through my years in Chicago, he and his wife, the brilliant Elisa Martí-López, have been a constant, comforting presence in gatherings on and off-campus. Mario represents everything I love about academia. I am grateful for his intelligent and encouraging support, his thoughtful advice, his kindness, and his generous heart.

ABSTRACT

This work addresses Catalan plays and performative works created and staged between 2010 and 2017 (that is, within the context of the emergence of contemporary pro-independence movements). I argue that queer themes, dramatic conventions and languages in these works generate a framework that exceeds the debates on national identity in Catalonia to embody a utopian space of critical observation that re-elaborates important sociopolitical debates by a complex negotiation of the textual/literary and the staged/extra-literary. At the same time, I examine how Catalan theatre –recognized as one of the cutting-edge dramaturgies in Europe– has dealt, sometimes in a highly problematic manner, with non-normative topics.

In Act One, “Ghosts in the Archive: *Marburg*, *The Touching Community*, and The Theatre of HIV/AIDS in Catalonia”, I address the precariousness of dramatic representations of HIV/AIDS, through the exploration of what I define as an archive of invisibilities. I consider the ethical implications of such absence, and I advocate for the recovery of an archive of ghosts. Finally, I analyze the only mainstream Catalan theatre play that tackles HIV/AIDS as a central issue, Guillem Clua’s *Marburg* (2010), as well as Aimar Pérez Galí’s *The Touching Community* (2016).

In Act Two, “TransCatalonia: Onstage Proposals of Political Fluidity”, I argue that the Catalan political debates about self-determination have organically overlapped with the emergence of a considerable amount of transgender narratives. These plays generate an archive of complex transitionings in which the individual and the sociopolitical bodies engage in a dialogue that doesn’t necessarily succeed in escaping binary regimes in both structural forms and narrative schemes, thus generating contradictory readings.

Lastly, Act Three studies the challenging of normative spatialities and temporalities through the queering of genre standards and the emergence of alternative utopias. The chapter starts with the sabotage, by a radical Christian group, of one of the performances of Josep Maria Miró's queer play *Gang Bang* (2011), while it was performed at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. I argue that this homophobic violation of the fourth wall functions as a metaphor of the anxieties of heteronormative thinking. The chapter explores two other representations of queer spaces in Catalan drama –Guillem Clua's *Smiley* (2011) and *L'oreneta / The Swallow* (2017).

INTRODUCTION: STAGING A QUEER NATION

*All true feeling is in reality untranslatable.
To express it is to betray it.*
Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*

*Només m'interesso pels qui han travessat la insensatesa,
perquè la massa dels tebis, aquesta,
no farà la revolució.*
Clara Peya, *Suite TOC 6*

Something queer suddenly occurs in the hall of the theatre. It might be a sudden blinking of the lights, or a message announcing the performance is about to start. The last spectators to arrive at the theatre pick up their tickets at the box office, and hurry to their seats. Phones are (hopefully) turned off, cough drops are (hopefully) unwrapped as rumors begin to fade. Backstage, the performers share their last impressions: they might tell a casual joke to loosen up, or they might pronounce some encouraging words. Some will exchange motivational glances; others will choose to be more introspective, focusing on getting inside their characters. A certain creative tension is palpable.

The sense of anticipation that emerges whenever a performance is about to start truly unfolds as an ecumenical experience. Since each performance depends on the interconnection of very different individuals (spectators, actors, stage managers, ushers, etc.), part of the excitement and the tension emerges from the possibility of failure: an actor can forget a line, a phone might ring in the middle of the performance, a technical glitch may occur. Each performance aspires to be identical to the others. But, in the end, everybody knows that is an impossible endeavor. Hence the uncertainty, the tension, and also the hope: as a precarious, mutable experience, as a story that is constantly re-told and embodied through subjective agents, it would not be completely impossible that, in one particular performance of *King Lear*, Cordelia would not die and give her father an unforeseen redeeming chance. The

impossible can happen, and each day we are entitled to dream about a better future. As Karl Popper famously said, just because the sun has risen every day until now does not necessarily entail that it will rise again tomorrow.

This dissertation follows the traces of intellectuals such as José Esteban Muñoz and Jill Dolan, and claims that live theatre and performance provide a place, both physical and mental, in which citizens can capture reverberations of an ideal futurity. In Dolan's words, theatre has the potential to be "a way to reinvest our energies in a different future, one full of hope and reanimated by a new, more radical humanism" (*Utopia 2*). With that aim, in my dissertation I study Catalan plays and performative works created and staged between 2010 and 2017 (that is, within the context of the emergence of the current pro-independence movement and the efforts to redefine, claim or question notions such as "nation" or "state"). I argue that queer themes, dramatic conventions and languages in these works generate a framework that exceeds the debates on national identity in Catalonia to embody a utopian space of critical observation that re-elaborates important sociopolitical debates by a complex negotiation of the textual/literary and the staged/extra-literary. At the same time, this work examines how Catalan theatre –recognized, in the last ten years, as one of the cutting-edge dramaturgies in Europe– has dealt, sometimes in a highly problematic manner, with non-normative topics.

In the title of my dissertation, I understand the term "Nation" as a promiscuous, polysemic, and problematic word – especially within the queer community, after the emergence of Queer Nation in 1990¹. It primarily points to, quoting Benedict Anderson, the "imagined political community" of the Catalan stateless nation, conflictive as it certainly is (49). Catalonia is, as the prominent historian Josep Fontana states, "a people with a strong sense of identity, of belonging to a community who shares, by majority, besides a language

¹ Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman dissect Queer Nation and their "nationalist-style camp counterpolitics" (197) in their article "Queer Nationality".

and culture, a way to understand the society and the world”. “Identity”, in the Catalan case, “is a reality born from a long shared existence, not a consequence of land or blood”, writes Fontana (5)².

Many Catalan intellectuals such as Fontana tend to speak about “identity” in singular terms and as a fixed, static category. By doing so, they overlook, on one hand, that national identity, in Catalonia, is fluctuating as well as dramatically divided (and, even if the last years have seen an increase of pro-independent voting, the polls indicate that half of the population in Catalonia is positioned against independence). On the other hand, identities (national, racial, sexual, gender, class, etc.) tend to be multiple, and they flow and operate simultaneously. As Juana María Rodríguez argues, “[i]dentity is about situatedness in motion: embodiment and spatiality. It is about a self that is constituted through and against other selves in context that serve to establish the relationship between the self and the other” (*Queer Latinidad* 5). “Subjects are continually involved in *negotiating* the accumulated narratives of identity that circulate within these localized ‘horizons of meanings’ and the contradiction revealed within their articulations”, she adds (7, my emphasis). Within the subject, identities are not stationary values: they complement, contradict, expand and contract –often at the same time.

In general terms, scholarship on Catalan studies has ignored the potential of intersectional analysis. As Josep-Anton Fernández claims, “Nationality is ... the central but usually undiscussed tenet of Catalan Studies, at the expense of almost any other category of identity” (*Another Country* 1). Fernández argues that there is “a tension between the nation and the body in Catalan literature”, before claiming a certain Catalan exceptionalism: “Catalonia is another country, a nation different from Spain, a cultural and political minority in the European context; but the existence of sexual minorities within its boundaries reveals

² Unless specified otherwise, I provide the translations of essays and works of fiction originally in Spanish or Catalan.

its inner complexity, which resists homogenization and the erasure of differences. Catalonia is thus another country in more ways than one.” (1)

Fernàndez is one of the few Catalan scholars who have consistently explored the intersectional “discontents” between national, gender, and sexual identities in Catalonia. David Vilaseca, in both his fictionalized diaries compiled in *Els homes i els dies* (L’Altra Editorial, 2017) and his academic work, mainly *Queer Events. Post-Deconstructive Subjectivities in Spanish Writing and Film, 1960s to 1990s* (posthumously published in 2010), also addresses these intersections, while stating that “there has been so far little attempt to test the prevailing politically affirmative and ‘identitarian’ frameworks” in the field of Iberian Studies (*Queer Events* viii). Whereas Fernàndez’s object of study are mainly Catalan novels and Vilaseca works with autobiographical novels and films, I have chosen to focus on Catalan plays and performance artwork, which, in recent years, have experienced an extraordinary evolution.

The Golden Age of Catalan Theatre

On July 17th, 2016, the Catalan newspaper *Diari Ara* published a special supplement to celebrate the reopening of Sala Beckett, one of Barcelona’s most important theatrical venues. After years of pressures by the Catalan real estate giant Núñez i Navarro, Sala Beckett was forced to move from its older location in the Gràcia neighborhood³. With the support of Barcelona City Hall, they eventually settled in a much bigger, more modern and comfortable venue in another peripheral district of the city with blue-collar roots, Poble Nou: a possible defeat turned into a celebrated victory for the scenic arts lovers.

³ Marc Rosich’s play *N&N (Núria y Nacho)*, premiered at Sala Beckett in July 2008, plays in a sarcastic manner with the eviction threats that the venue had been suffering, in order to make a criticism of real estate speculation in Barcelona.

The supplement in *Diari Ara* was titled *Teatre Català. L'edat d'or* (“Catalan Drama: The Golden Age”) and brought together a comprehensive number of playwrights that were having an active career. One of the featured authors was Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, the most veteran of the group and the symbolic “father” of the later generations –born in 1940 and with a consistent career that encompasses highly influential plays such as *Una vella, coneguda olor* (1963), *Revolta de bruixes* (1976), *Desig* (1990), *Testament* (1997), and *Salamandra* (2004). Alongside *Papitu* (Benet’s well-known nickname, which also evokes the figure of the father, the “papà”), the supplement featured some of the authors that were considered his “children”; playwrights born in the 1950s and 1960s like Teresa Vilardell, Sergi Belbel, Carles Batlle, Jordi Galceran or Lluïsa Cunillé. However, the next generation –*Papitu*’s “grandchildren”– was by far the most prominently represented in the supplement, a clear sign that the “family” had expanded: 19 out of the 30 authors featured in the special pages of *Ara* were born in the 1970s or later. In the introduction to the supplement, journalist Laura Serra – who coordinated the issue– quotes playwright Sergi Belbel when he states that “I have no doubts that we are living the golden age of Catalan authors. Never before have we had as many plays, and of so much quality, as nowadays” (5)⁴. According to David George, Stuart Green, and Duncan Wheeler, “fin-de-siècle Barcelona” positioned herself “as a center of theatrical innovation alongside (and often ahead of) Madrid and within European trends”, “provided a new perspective on theatre and multiculturalism”, and “proposed an alternative history of twentieth-century theatre in Spain” (“Spanish Theatre” 109).

One of the points of departure of this research is the emergence, in the first years of the 21st century, of a generation of young and talented playwrights in Catalonia, who have embraced the legacy of the writers that immediately preceded them, as well as the theatrical

⁴ First as a member of the Artistic Committee of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (TNC), and later on as the artistic director of this prestigious public institution (2006-2013), Belbel was also one of the promoters of the newer generation of Catalan playwrights. He was the creator of TNC’s Projecte T6 (2002-2014), a program devoted to the promotion and support of contemporary writing.

tradition that emerged in Catalonia after the nationalistic and literary movements within the *Renaixença*, led by names such as Àngel Guimerà and Frederic Soler “Pitarra”, in order to generate new scenic languages that blend tradition and innovation. These playwrights created a narrative through the history of Catalan drama (scattered and divided for historical reasons), and inserted it among the most innovative and productive theatrical traditions in the world. This profuse generation of authors, whose names include Jordi Casanovas, Clàudia Cedó, Cristina Clemente, Marília Samper, Esteve Soler, Helena Tornero, and playwrights that I study more in depth in this dissertation, such as Guillem Clua, Josep Maria Miró, and Marc Rosich, are also nurtured from the new tendencies of contemporary drama. They helped introduce Catalonia to writers like like Neil LaBute, David Mamet, Martin Crimp, Tom Stoppard, Tony Kushner or Lars Noren, among many others⁵.

The international impact of these Catalan playwrights is unparalleled. According to the platform Catalan Drama, dedicated to translating Catalan theatre and to promoting it around the world, from January 2015 to July 2016, a total of fifty-three Catalan plays from seventeen different authors were premiered outside of Catalonia, in countries as diverse as Japan, Argentina, Chile, Germany, France, Turkey and the United States of America.

The blossoming of this generation overlapped with a historical context in which the very definition of what is Catalonia and what is Catalan had been debated and questioned, both socially and politically. Needless to say, such unstable milieu has slipped through the texts in different ways. Helena Buffery observes that at the beginning of the 21st century, Catalan drama experienced a shift “towards a theater that engages more explicitly with the

⁵ I am well aware of how fraught the word “generation” can be, especially regarding literary grouping in Spain. I argue that playwrights born in the 1970s and early 1980s who studied writing in Barcelona in theatre schools such as L’Obrador de la Sala Becket, Eòlia or the Institut del Teatre, belong to a compact group, even if their range of interests, voices, themes, and styles is evidently diverse. Esteve Miralles addresses this generational issues in his prologue for the two-volume anthology of contemporary Catalan plays translated into Spanish and co-published by the Institut del Teatre and the Mexican print Paso de Gato: “this generation ... addresses, in a literary fashion, the adventure to self-portrait them through the self-portrait of their unresolvable contradictions, their inconsistencies. Their fears”, he writes (“Prólogo: Paradojas” 21).

society and the territory within which it is staged, often experienced as a contested site, marked by competing languages and differentiation discourses” (“Les altres” 266). Buffery, alongside Sharon Feldman and Jennifer Duprey, has approached a history of how the Catalan scenic arts evolved from the companies that emerged around the time of Franco’s death in 1975, like Els Joglars, Comediants, Companyia Adrià Gual, and La Fura dels Baus. The apparent paradox, according to Duprey, was that “the change of paradigm generated by the creation of independent theater suffers from a limitation: there existed an independent theater, critical of Francoism, with the aim of recovering Catalan culture, but this theater did not consist of written drama” (61). Duprey claims that these companies employed non-verbal resources in order to avoid censorship by the government, and argues that text theatre regained momentum in Catalonia after democracy, in the mid 1980s. I would suggest that seeds for this emergence were planted by the foundation of Teatre Lliure in 1976, less than one year after the dictator’s death. Sala Beckett –founded by José Sanchís Sinisterra in 1988 to provide a physical space for his Teatro Fronterizo, as well as to bolster contemporary writing in Catalonia– and the inauguration, in 1996, of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, are major turning points in this trajectory.

The wave of Catalan playwrights who produced texts in the first two decades of the new democratic era could not seem to escape a problematic bond with the language and the territory. Sharon Feldman noticed that, in these texts, explicit mentions to Barcelona and the Catalan landscapes are absent. “The traditional geographic place markers of a Catalan imaginary have all but vanished from the settings for contemporary drama”, she writes. “Catalonia, it would seem, is seldom even referenced in a metaphoric or allegorical sense, as was often the case in the politically committed theatre.” (“Catalunya invisible” 272). Núria Perpinyà argues that this abstraction is also related to an avant-garde laic and sacrilegious approach in which the death of God and nihilism inform a discourse that ascribes to

metaphysical paradigms: “instead of a costumbrist portrait of the reality, we find strange worlds that operate as pseudo-realities. The action takes place in imprecise spaces and times, without coordinates to locate it in a country or a time. Spaces are often abstract, of the mind.” (21) This tendency to the abstraction (which Feldman defines as the *Catalunya invisible*) can be found in many of the plays that Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, Sergi Belbel and Lluïsa Cunillé, among others, wrote in the 1990s⁶.

Catalonia, nonetheless, started to become theatrically visible after the 2000s, and the turn was explicitly orchestrated from Sala Beckett. The central event in Sala Beckett’s 2003-2004 season was the series “L’acció té lloc a Barcelona”, designed by artistic director Toni Casares. Two texts premiered in the cycle, Pau Miró’s *Plou a Barcelona* and Lluïsa Cunillé’s *Barcelona, mapa d’ombres*, represent a fundamental turning point in contemporary Catalan dramaturgy⁷. In the presentation to the volume with the two plays edited by the Sala Beckett, Casares stated that, until that moment, Catalan theatre had been criticized for its disconnection with contemporary issues: “Theatre avoids specificity in its references to space, time, and to the social circumstances of the situations it lays out”, he claims (“Una temporada” 5). Art, he argues, should not decline its civic and social commitment, and needs to find its place as a site of debate. This is why, he writes, “[w]e want to find Barcelona on stage. See her, rediscover her, reinvent her, laugh at her, or cry for her... To be able to speak about our own city may suggest we have learned to understand the world” (6). As Anton Pujol argues regarding Cunillé’s play, “Barcelona is constantly discussed, criticized, maligned, and, most of all, feared. Their references to it demarcate a double space: a physical

⁶ This tension between appearance and disappearance of an idea of Barcelona is also copiously described in Julià Guillamon’s *La ciutat interrompuda*. Guillamon’s book, originally published in 2001, was reedited in 2019 with a new essay, “El gran novel·loide sobre Barcelona”, that covered the complex and problematic representations of Barcelona that took place after the publication of his monograph. Even if the essay is more centered about novelistic forms, Guillamon addresses different plays and theatrical initiatives, including Sala Beckett’s Barcelona cycle (“Novel·loide” 342-52).

⁷ Sergi Belbel’s *Forasters*, premiered at TNC’s Sala Gran under the auspice of Barcelona’s 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures, is another critical play in this turn towards visibility.

map, where the city's periodic mutations take center stage; and an emotional map, almost bathymetric, where the characters' stories construct a very different narrative of stasis and despair" ("Map of Shadows" 476-77). The relationship with the landscape has, definitely, changed.

The way Catalan plays approach their spatial and temporal references after 2004 varies. As we will see throughout this dissertation, space and time can still operate in an allegorical level, as it is the case of the transgender works that I comment on section two. Guillem Clua, whose work I will address in sections one and three, rewrites some of his texts to adapt them to the specific locations where they are performed (it is the case, for instance, of *Smiley* and *The Swallow / L'oreneta*, two pieces that have enjoyed a noteworthy international run). Other plays maintain specific locations, whether international (as it happens in Clua's global drama *Marburg*) or more localized in Barcelona or Catalonia (Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*). All these landscapes generate a map that is unstable and complex, one that exudes, in its queer physicality, discourses about difference, otherness, gender, and desire⁸.

The Queer Perspective

What is queerness, anyway? Where is the queer element found in the works? Can queerness be captured? The notion of queerness encapsulates within itself several paradoxes – and a myriad of challenges. To begin with: while fiercely resisting fixation, queerness has been constantly conceptualized, and therefore fixated, in the academic (and activist) sphere. Queer Theory has often been criticized and considered an oxymoron, and even a committed Spanish queer theorist (and activist) like Paco Vidarte has concurrently written against its

⁸ In her article "Els paisatges del teatre català contemporani: de Benet i Jornet a Cunillé", Sharon Feldman reads the urban space in Lluïsa Cunillé's *Barcelona, mapa d'ombres* through this feminist lens. Her article dialogues with Lawrence Knopp's "Sexuality and Urban Space: A Framework for Analysis".

transformational potential while directing the course “Introduction to Queer Theory” at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED).

From the moment Teresa de Lauretis –widely considered the first one to apply the term “queer” to “theory”– gave her talk “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities” (University of Santa Cruz, California, 1990), an inevitable paradox emerged: Queer Theory positioned itself at the margins but it articulated this positioning from the central, privileged spaces of the academic sphere. Consequently, from its very inception, queer theory had to navigate its inner contradictions. This could be the reason why it has mutated, evolved and rearticulated itself in order to incorporate other voices and other dialogues: it has found a (sometimes problematic) niche in different cultures and in different times, as the dynamics (and locations) of the margins have also varied. Queer Theory was declared dead merely a few years after being born, yet has always managed to survive, incorporating new debates in its ongoing mutation⁹. In their groundbreaking 2008 essay “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?”, David Eng, Jack Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz state that “queerness remains open to a continuing critique of its privileged assumptions”, and that “[t]he reinvention of the term is contingent to its potential obsolescence” (3).

In its first wave, queer theory articulated its discourse around the sociocultural outpouring of desire and sexuality and its radical potential. Quoting Alexander Doty in his precocious 1993 monograph *Making Things Perfectly Queer*: “By using ‘queer’, I want to recapture and reassert a militant sense of difference that views the erotically ‘marginal’ as both ... a consciously chosen ‘site of resistance’ and of ‘location of radical openness and possibility’.” (3). Doty’s initial idea of queerness is directly related to this transformative potential of sexuality:

⁹ In his work *After Queer Theory* (2014), James Penney develops an argument for the obsolescence of Queer Theory. Penney argues for a return to the psychoanalytic approach, of which, he writes, Queer Theory has dramatically distanced. I will address the complex connection between Queer Theory and psychoanalysis further in this introduction.

Queer positions, queer readings, and queer pleasures are part of a reception space that stands simultaneously beside and within that created by heterosexual and straight positions. These positions, readings, and pleasures also suggest that what happens in cultural reception goes beyond the traditional opposition of homo and hetero, as queer reception is often a place beyond the audience's conscious "real-life" definition of their sexual identities and cultural positions. (15)

However, as gay and lesbian rights progressed in the Western countries (mainly through the achievement of egalitarian marriage), this desire-centered paradigm lost part of its radical potential. Tolerance of homosexuality has even been used to justify wars, invasions and other military operations. Jasbir K. Puar, who had argued that it was "imperative to rearticulate what queer theory and studies of sexuality have to say about the metatheories and the 'realpolitik' of Empire" ("Queer Times" 121), speaks of this construction of an imperialist image of tolerance confronting the so-called backward, homophobic other, in terms of homonationalism:

National recognition and inclusion, here signaled as the annexation of homosexual jargon, is contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary. At work in this dynamic is a form of sexual exceptionalism –the emergence of national homosexuality, what I term "homonationalism"– that corresponds with the coming out of the exceptionalism of American empire. Further, this brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects. There is a commitment to the

global dominant ascendancy of whiteness that is implicated in the propagation of the United States as empire as well as the alliance between this propagation and this brand of homosexuality. (*Terrorist Assemblages* 2)

Puar underscores a critical fact: through identity politics, gay and lesbian rights are being appropriated by reactionary, neoliberal ideals, on a global scale. Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz also highlight, albeit in a different approach, that in the current “historical juncture” queer studies have served as a theoretical (and ethical) background to examine questions that expand beyond gender and sexuality. Therefore, it is critical to reclaim the discipline in its constructive capacity “to mobilize a broad social critique of race, gender, class, nationality, and religion, as well as sexuality” (“What’s Queer” 4). They also acknowledge how critical it is for queer epistemologies to embrace other debates and other voices from Queer Studies, the ones that are formulated beyond the Anglo-American (and, in a minor scale, French) academia, mostly by white masculine subjects (6).

The intersection of queerness with other formulations of identities (like gender expressions, race and ethnicity, or cultural hybridization) has produced noteworthy results. In the last decades, a considerable number of Hispanic and Latinx intellectuals and activists have generated a compelling corpus, from Gloria Anzaldúa’s and Cherríe Moraga’s *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) and Anzaldúa’s hybrid masterpiece *Borderlands / La Frontera* (1987) to more recent work by scholars such as Ramón Rivera-Servera, Juana María Rodríguez, David Román, and Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez. They have paved the way for different forms of rearticulating queer paradigms through the intersection of latinidades: their heterogeneous discourses range from how music and kinesthetic connections shape the Latinx queer communities to the consequences of *machismo* or HIV/AIDS.

So far, the impact of queer studies in the sub-field of Peninsular Studies has been, as David Vilaseca signaled, more questionable, despite a number of remarkable end-of-the-century efforts (coming, mostly, from the Anglo-American academia), such as the anthologies *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, edited by Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith (1995); *Hispanisms & Homosexualities*, edited by Sylvia Molloy and Robert McKee Irwin (1998); and *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, edited by Gregory S. Hutcheson and Josiah Blackmore (1999). As Fouz-Hernández accurately observes, in 2004 “much of the current Spanish ‘queer’ criticism is based on the classic Anglo-American debates” (“Identity” 65).

Furthermore, in Spain, incipient work on queer theory merged, in a confusing way, with ontological approaches more related to gay and lesbian studies and identity politics. However, several notable monographs on the field were published between 1998 and 2004, when the left wing Spanish government led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero passed the law that granted marriage and adoption rights to lesbians and gays. Most of these works took a sociological approach: *La sociedad rosa* (1995), by Óscar Guasch; the collective volume *ConCiencia de un singular deseo* (1997), edited by Xosé M. Buxán; Alberto Mira’s dictionary of gay and lesbian culture *Para entendernos* (1998), as well as his remarkable cultural history of homosexuality in 20th century Spain *De Sodoma a Chueca* (2004); two volumes by Ricardo Llamas and Francisco Javier Vidarte, who later signed his works as Paco Vidarte: *Homografías* (1999) and *Extravíos* (2001); and the early work by anthropologist Olga Viñuales: *Identidades lésbicas* (2000), *Lesbofobia* (2000) and *Sexualidades* (2002).

Ricardo Llamas is the first scholar who tries to observe an idea of queerness from the Spanish academia. In *Teoría torcida* (1998), Llamas attempts to trace an itinerary of the new challenges within the LGBT collective:

In the late 1980s, the gay and lesbian movement seems to have reached a certain stability. The revolutionary whims from its beginning have given room to certain levels of integration and accommodation. Nonetheless, the sexual regime and its exclusions, now brutally considered within the context of the AIDS pandemic and the traditional brutality of lesbian exclusion [as well as, it should be added, transgender and other non-normative folks], doesn't seem to have been defied decisively. The *queer* discourse of dikes and fags in the 1990s is a political replacement of the protests, and poses a new challenge; to the "heterosexual" institutions, to the established "sexes", and to the gay and lesbian movement. (372, author's emphasis)

Llamas, who ascribes to the antisocial turn in queer theory (following Bersani and Edelman)¹⁰, questions the notion of community as it had emerged from the late 1960s, attempts to translate the term queer for "torcido" ("bent"), coming from the Latin *torquere*, arguing that the term has homophonic resonances with "queer", and that it has similar oppositional connotations. However, being more euphemistic than pejorative, "torcido" lacked the provocative potential of "queer", and the word had seldom been used in reference to subaltern desires, and Llamas's translation proposal never fully crystallized¹¹. In 2005, David Córdoba, Javier Sáez and Paco Vidarte proposed a plurality of translations for "queer

¹⁰ In *Homos* (1995), Leo Bersani questions "the compatibility of homosexuality with civic service" (113), arguing that homosexual desire was built in opposition to the normative conception of the community. Bersani's thesis were the point of departure of the antisocial turn in Queer Theory, which revolved in the idea of unbelonging. In *No Future* (2004), Lee Edelman elaborates a criticism of the normative ideas of the (American) family as an institution that substitutes religion's promises and grants communal eternity through lineage. According to Edelman, queer subjects have built their discourses against this institution, and are therefore more ready to face mortality. Edelman, alongside Robert L. Caserio, Jack Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and Tim Dean, participated in a controversial debate about the Antisocial turn at the 2005 MLA Annual Convention, which took place in Washington, DC. The debate, published in *PMLA*, provides a comprehensive landscape of the polemics around negativity in Queer Theory, as well as issues like the precariousness of queer archives, raised by Halberstam.

¹¹ It is worth mentioning, however, that both the Spanish group Dúo Dinámico's song "Resistiré" (1988, featured in 1990 at the end of Pedro Almodóvar's film *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* to become a sort of anthem for the social and romantic outcasts), and Eduardo Mendicutti's mildly homosexual novel *El palomo cojo* (1991), play with euphemisms that might echo the idea of "torcido".

theory”: “teoría maricona”, “teoría bollera” or “teoría maribollo” (*Teoría Queer* 22), but they still chose to name their compilation *Teoría queer*, which seemed, in the end, the most synthetic option of all¹².

In a broader sense, the (ongoing) debates on the translation of the term “queer” seem to signal the hegemonic position of the Anglo-American perspectives and enunciation spaces (as well as of white, cisgender masculine subjects) in queer theory. As Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz aptly acknowledge, “[s]cholars writing in other languages and from other political and cultural perspectives read [Anglo-American queer theory] but are not, in turn, read. These uneven exchanges replicate in uncomfortable ways the rise and consolidation of U.S. empire, as well as the insistent positing of a U.S. nationalist identity and political agenda globally”. It is critical to have a certain “epistemological humility”, they claim, “as one form of knowledge production that recognizes these dangers” (15). As I have argued elsewhere¹³, I believe that, at this point, the term queer does not need translation in the Iberian cultures. Just like it has happened with many other Anglicisms, the word has inserted itself in our contemporary discourses and debates. Also, the estrangement that the word still generates in the Iberian context (when mentioned in texts, it is generally highlighted in italics) suggests a problematic fitting that rightfully refers to the global hegemonic dynamics that Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz articulate: by using the word “queer”, a tension is created that relates to global fluxes of domination and resistance. David Córdoba argues that using the word “queer” within the Iberian discourses also reinforces the bonds between the diverse queer communities worldwide: “using the word queer in English puts us in a position of acknowledging a community that, in spite of lacking a land or a place . . . , has been, and still is, a specific force

¹² However, in their introduction to the 2004 anthology *Sexualidades*, Guasch and Viñuales reject Queer Theory, arguing that it is a decontextualized discipline that scholars outside of the Anglo-Saxon academia have employed acritically. According to them, Queer Theory tries to “define, colonize and occupy new intellectual spaces” outside the saturated Anglo intellectual market (14).

¹³ See my articles “A favor de la paraula (i el pensament) ‘queer’” (*Nívol, el digital de cultura*, 27 Dec 2018) or “Lo queer como respuesta” (*Revista Contexto*, 19 Jan 2019).

in the Anglo-Saxon field; it also places us in a position of estrangement regarding our national culture” (21). Córdoba’s approach, albeit apparently disregarding the multiple nuances of queerness (as resistance to normative paradigms) depending on its geopolitical context, as well as simplifying the complex negotiation of national identities within the Iberian context, addresses a fundamental debate: it is necessary to consider queer epistemologies not only framed within their local sociopolitical contexts, but also inserted in complex and unequal global debates.

Queerness, as a fluid category that incorporates those who could not (or did not want to) fit in the new homonormative reality in which (some) gays and lesbians were inscribed, appeared mentioned explicitly for the first time in Spanish in 1993, and it did so in the magazine *De un plumazo*, published by Madrid’s Radical Gai’s association, which started defining itself as a queerzine (mentioned in Llamas and Vila, “Passion for Life” 223). According to Argentinian queer activist and poet Gustavo Pecoraro, Radical Gai was born in 1991 in Lavapiés, a neighborhood in Madrid “where the poorest immigrants lived, those years, in houses that had not been renovated, in dark streets full of precariousness and abandonment. That neighborhood cradled the emergence of anarchist movements, ... unofficial LGBTI organizations and all kind of immigrant associations” (Pecoraro). I find it crucial to acknowledge that Radical Gai, as an association that emerged from a working-class and immigrant social ecosystem (a collective that Pecoraro emotionally links with HIV activist group Act-Up), employed the word queer in Spain for the first time.

Queer thinking first emerged as an epistemological system that challenged binaries – male / female; heterosexual / homosexual; natural / deviant– by stressing in-between-nesses and liminalities, thus opening up a space of cultural, social, and political promise. With the consolidation of neoliberal policies, queer studies embraced the ethical obligation to expand its critical scope to tackle other debates, such as migrations and the refugee crisis, the

collapsing of systems and climates, and the redefinition of notions such as *family* or *community*. In the scenic arts, as specular artistic forms that have historically maintained a direct connection to contemporary debates, these new wave of queer approaches, which go beyond desire and gender identity to question normative paradigms through the performative act, have produced interesting crevices in the hegemonic structures. By this, I don't want to imply that theatre merely (or always) reflects reality: as theorists such as Sue-Ellen Case, Lynda Hart, David Román, or Jill Dolan have suggested, a queer approach to theatre can question the notion of the real through a complex articulation of discourse and embodiment onstage. In the words of Dolan, "even in plays written by gay men or lesbians, realism constrains the power and self-determination of LGBTQ people" (*Theater* 15). This is why these theorists, as well as the already mentioned Ramón Rivera-Servera or José Esteban Muñoz, speak of the performance of queerness in terms of a utopian envision of futurity. The text plays and performances I will study in this dissertation elaborate queerness by breaking with normative conventions of space and time (*Marburg, Smiley, Gang Bang*) and by the disruption of the performative genres (*Limbo, A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams, The Touching Community*). If queerness should not be regarded as a static category or an essential quality, but a way of looking and reading, then there are not "queer plays" per se, but queer moments, queer crevices that emerge counterintuitively and trouble narrative conventions, like small earthquakes that temporarily shake a city that has been built following normative rules and regulations. I disagree slightly with Dolan when she asserts that it is the reader, the critic, or the spectator who queers the plays in an exercise of re-reading (*Theater* 17). I believe that the queering process is complex and problematic, and involves a constant negotiation between every agent involved in the theatrical event: author, director, performers, artistic team, spectators, and even critics.

The Queerest Art? Theatre and Queer Theory

In *Theatre & Sexuality*, Jill Dolan affirms that “Theatre and sexuality have always been productive spheres of overlapping influence, especially in contemporary Western performance” (3). But is theatre, as Alisa Solomon categorically affirms, “the queerest art” (9)? I believe a degree of skepticism is needed when stumbling upon these apriorisms. However, as I already mentioned, I believed that theatre can create the conditions for the emergence of queerness. Theatregoers perceive that there is something that happens the moment the lights dim and the curtain rises – some kind of revelation that might even be magnified in non-conventional performance spaces¹⁴, when someone steps on an improvised stage or manages to convey a message to the audience: one that announces something unique, something different from the reality that surrounds us, is about to happen.

Purchasing a ticket unleashes a series of expectations and possibilities. Going to a theatre becomes, also, a ritual in itself – something that sometimes can’t be detached from the performance. The experience varies, for instance, depending on the venue. The majestic, diaphanous hall of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya that precedes the 966-seat Sala Gran has an overwhelming effect on the theatregoers who have previously climbed the elegant (and steep) staircase that unfolds from the main façade of the modern temple designed by Ricardo Bofill. This marks a journey designed to send a message to the spectators: something unique and majestic is going to take place in the Sala Gran, the largest venue of the institution (and one of the largest performance stages in Europe). Everything is created to suggest grandeur, elegance and spectacularity – a message that works well with the kind of productions that tend to be staged at the Sala Gran.

¹⁴ As I will argue in the second section of this dissertation, the emergence of alternative theatre spaces in Catalonia, most especially after the 2008 crisis and the raise of the VAT of cultural events up to 21% (2012-2017), provided not only a way out for cultural initiatives that could not fit in traditional institutions, but also a discourse that questioned the traditional performative spaces.

By contrast, in a recent theatrical experience, I went to see one of the most recent creations by the performance and dance company La Veronal at FiraTàrrega, the international performing arts and street arts festival that takes place in the small town of Tàrrega (50 kilometers from Lleida) in September, 2019. The event took place in an old warehouse in the outskirts of the city, a 30-minute walk from downtown. The journey to the performance space took the audience through parking lots, orchards and factories. The tour suggested that spectators were going to witness something secret and remote, a special event of an almost clandestine nature. *Bologna: Pasolini*, the performance that we would see minutes later in that warehouse, began with a man and a woman running away after stealing a box that contained everything that Pasolini, the great Italian writer and filmmaker, was carrying and wearing on the day he was brutally murdered on the beach. As spectators who had been walking for thirty minutes in the twilight through industrial, unwelcoming landscapes in search of culture, we could relate to the performers (we were also explorers, we were runaways) as well to the peripheral, eccentric aesthetics of the art by Pasolini.

Both cases indicate that, for theatregoers, the theatrical experience starts before the event itself. It begins with the act of “going”. Some critics have claimed that *going to a theatre and performing arts space* also implies *departing from* our daily lives to go somewhere else. Some, like the theatre historian Marvin Carlson, state that theatre is the space for epiphany: the place when, sometimes, a rare moment of intense revelation impossible to describe happens. “Such moments of apotheosis are not everyday occurrences, of course”, he says (211), but when they happen you remember what are you seeking every time you step on a performance space. Jill Dolan, in her indispensable book *Utopia in Performance*, talks about the idea of *communitas*, described as “the moments in a theater event or a ritual in which audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic,

nearly spiritual way”, something that brings together “civic participation and emotional belonging” (11).

For both Carlson and Dolan, the theatre is a place that takes us, as spectators, *somewhere else*. Theatre can achieve its alchemic metamorphosis the moment the show begins, and in spite of the present-ness of the theatrical event (which makes it challenging to write about live performances and the experience of spectatorship), it elevates itself to a different time by opening the stage to the before mentioned potentialities. Dolan refers to these episodes of revelation as “utopian performatives”, and defines them as “small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present” (5). They connect them to a better acceptance of the complexities of the past and they project themselves to the promises that unfold a better future—hence the recurrent idea of the utopia.

José Esteban Muñoz redefines the temporality of queerness by twisting Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s “Queer and now” and turning it to a “Queer and then”. “Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility of another world”, he says¹⁵ (1). Getting back to the theatrical representation, these potentialities translate, according to both Dolan and Muñoz, into utopias. Utopias project themselves towards a horizon, or to use Muñoz’s expression, become a *not-yet-here* fraught with possibilities. “Thinking of utopia as processual, as an index to the possible, to the ‘what

¹⁵ Sedgwick’s essay “Queer and Now”, published in 1993, still in the aftermath of the first wave of the AIDS pandemic, claims that the emergence of a new wave of conservative homophobia since the appearance of the virus, and the constant fear of HIV transmission, especially by gay adolescents, needed to be approached in a dramatic sense of present-ness. There was a feeling of urgency about what Sedgwick denominates “queer survival” – “a matter of surviving into threat, stigma, the spiraling violence of gay – and lesbian-bashing, and (in the AIDS emergency) the omnipresence of somatic fear and wrenching loss” (3). According to Sedgwick, future should not be an issue because the present is too impregnated with death (and silence), although she, too, thinks about queerness as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances” that Muñoz echoes in his utopic engagement with the queer future (*Cruising Utopia* 8). Sedgwick’s presentness is further articulated in the Antisocial Debates and relates to the urgencies overflowing in Leo Bersani’s influential essay “Is the Rectum a Grave?”, an essay written under the pressure to raise the voice to denounce the passivity with which governmental forces in the USA dealt with the AIDS pandemic, the lack of attention over cruel and silenced deaths, and the need to raise concerns about it in different sectors.

if”, writes Dolan, “allows performance a hopeful cast, one that can experiment with the possibilities of the future” (13). Muñoz, like Dolan, seems to reject the pre-established narratives of the psychoanalytic discourse, which thirty years before had been crucial to build Queer Theory, and to which both Antisocial Theorists and current critical voices with Queer Theory still share.

Queer Theory and Psychoanalysis

In 2000, Josep-Anton Fernández affirmed that “[a]ny theory of sexuality must make reference to Freudian psychoanalysis; but ... there is a lever of tension between the relevance of psychoanalysis and its negative effects with regard to the discursive construction of homosexual identity” (*Another Country* 3). Does this, however, stand pertinent as queer approaches have evolved to embrace a more unstable social critique?

In his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault claims that “During the years 1945-1965 ... there was a certain way of thinking correctly, a certain style of political discourse, a certain ethics of the intellectual. One had to be on familiar terms with Marx, not let one’s dreams stray too far from Freud” (xi). From its emergence in the early 1990s, queer theory has maintained a consistent critical link with the psychoanalytic concepts and narratives. However, many scholars have recently argued against the inevitability of this connection.

In an attempt to decriminalize homosexuality, Freud labeled it as a “perversion” – a term that didn’t necessarily have a negative meaning or a moral judgement, but the concept was reinterpreted and negativized by Lacan¹⁶. As Geoffroy Huard de la Marre comments, “psychoanalytic discourse pathologizes homosexuality from the very moment it questions it without questioning heterosexuality, and imposes a determined interpretation frame over it”

¹⁶ The philosopher Didier Eribon explains it more precisely in his book *Une moral du minoritaire. Variations sur un thème de Jean Genet* (from page 231 on).

(“Introducción” 14-15). This attempt to create fixed structures that organize the “symbolic Order” places psychoanalysis in the antipodes of contemporary queer thinking, understood, precisely, as the interrogation of every epistemological system that tries to generate a social order that has ultimately created a moral hierarchy in which homosexuals, and other non-normative subjects, have been reduced to the pathological. Didier Eribon quotes Lacan who, in the fifth volume of *Le séminaire*, states that “We talk about homosexuals. We take care of homosexuals. We don’t cure homosexuals. But the most amazing formidable thing is that we don’t cure them even if they are absolutely curable” (*Une morale* 235). By stating that it can be “curable”, Lacan treats homosexuality as a dysfunction.

The most recent essays by Didier Eribon have maintained a critical position towards the bonds that often exist between queer theory and psychoanalysis¹⁷. His monograph *Échapper à la psychanalyse* (2005) dwells on the contradictions and paradoxes of psychoanalytic-based queer theory, which builds its discourse on the foundations of a heterosexist structure, and that thinks of the normative familiar, masculine order as *what is natural*. By generating a field of interpretation and a set of theories committed to preserve this order, psychoanalysis becomes prescriptive of these norms: instead of observing the world and trying to reflect upon these observations, the psychoanalytic discourse tries to fit its objects of study in a conceptual web that has been previously created, in order to reaffirm the validity of its theories. Quoting Eribon:

the lived practices and experiences unfold, evidently, outside from what
psychoanalysis thinks ... however, it insists in taking them into its spider web, whose

¹⁷ It is true, though, that in previous studies, such as *Réflexions sur la question gay*, Eribon maintains a more ambiguous position towards psychoanalysis, borrowing, for instance, notions as “melancholy” in order to interpret the loss gay subjects experience when they leave (many times by obligation) their traditional families (36). However, holding a skeptical positioning with psychoanalysis does not imply assuming that every notion coined or developed by this epistemological system is incorrect: I will also write about melancholic attachments in section three of this work.

mesh has been tirelessly weaved time and again ... [on a] heteronormative ideological machinery that presents itself as science, and whose conceptual apparatus, fraught with mechanisms with capital letters –Phallus, Castration, Father’s Law, Symbolic Function, Significant Order, etc. ... – articulate themselves in the oedipal structure in order to organize a cosmology of the sexual difference and a hierarchy of sexualities, in which each aspect of the mythic-ideological construction holds others and confers them the looks of an ineluctable necessity and unquestionable truth.” (36)

A conservative construction that captures and models every form of desire to fit them into the apparatus, that creates a system of hierarchies and infuses moral values to it. Isn’t this, precisely, what queer theory tries to avoid at all cost?

Huard de la Marre claims that, in order to resist the heteronormative order imposed by psychoanalysis, it is necessary to “generate ways of living, spaces of freedom, a gay world open to the Other that is marginalized” (22). “We have to transform this order imposed by an outer force, an order that objectifies, to freedom produced by the subject itself”, he adds (23). Besides the distinction between gay and queer (not entirely clear in Huard de la Marre’s words, probably because his text was written years before egalitarian marriage in France), it could be argued that queer thinking helps questioning preexistent norms and not assuming them as natural: critical thinking over the system that organizes social structures does not necessarily imply completely shattering those structures, but raising questions on the way they work, on whose benefit they serve to, and on how they have been structured.

Didier Eribon links the attempt to achieve a political and theoretical emancipation from psychoanalysis that, according to him, Foucault proposes in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, with Roland Barthes’ considerations about love and desire in his book *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*. Both were written and published at the same time (between

the ending of 1976 and the beginning of 1977), when both were professors at the Collège de France. Both Barthes and Foucault inquire about the social construction of the structures of desire, and both propose a notion of love that has to do with subjectivity instead of order. And both works, Eribon claims, are built “against the psychoanalytic transcendence” (72). Love and desire, for Barthes and Foucault, are immanent and lay the singularity of the individual – their systems are not, though, anti-intellectual, but skeptical: “a suspension of the interpretative, conceptual logic, to give room to the ‘sensitive’, to the becoming, to singularity, to multiplicity” (73).

Eribon is not the only theorist who encouraged skepticism when reflecting upon the bonds between psychoanalysis and queer thinking. Even Monique Wittig, when famously claiming that “lesbians are not women”, questioned the social implications of the artificial construct of the category “woman”, built in relation, and therefore dependent, to the category “man”. In *The Straight Mind*, she makes a critique to Lacan and psychoanalysis, as a system that reinforces the heteronormative social contract.

According to Eribon, the fact that queer theory has been so intimately linked with psychoanalysis has been “an obstacle for a more radical theoretical renovation than the one [most queer theorists] have allowed to emerge” (30). He senses the contradictions between queer thinking and following the rigid, prescriptive symbolic constructs psychoanalysis proposes, and claims:

Is there not ... a fundamental incompatibility between them –in spite of everything that some of the biggest authors in queer theory owe to psychoanalysis (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Teresa de Laurentis, Michael Warner, Lee Edelman, etc.) or thinkers that place themselves outside of psychoanalysis but are also trying to elaborate a critical theory (for instance, Leo Bersani)? Wouldn't the urgency be, in

order to create a critical or radical system of thought, the opposite: to aim to turn our backs, once and for all, to psychoanalysis? To ignore it? And, definitely, to fight it? (91).

Holding a critical position vis à vis the symbolic order imposed by psychoanalytical thinking does not mean, however, to reject everything that the school has proposed. As a system that works with the *laws of desire*, some terminology and some ideas will inevitably emerge through this dissertation, reformulated under the critical perspective that queer thinking provides, to organize these pages. Eribon states that even Barthes, in *A Lover's Discourse*, employs psychoanalytical terminology –as Eribon himself does in other works¹⁸. Psychoanalysis may provide a vocabulary, a network of concepts and ideas, but not an order or a series of hierarchies. This apparent contradiction should not be feared. Queer theory is constantly navigating contradictions. Judith Butler, one of the foundational queer scholars, holds this double gesture by attacking the heterosexist premises of psychoanalysis¹⁹, and at the same time employing concepts that come from Lacanian structures.

Working with the Family

Speaking of contradictions: in the course of this research, I have found a need to negotiate the critical distance that every scholar needs to maintain regarding their object of study, and my proximity with the same object of study –as a scholar as well as a cultural promoter. I believe, nonetheless, that queer critics have the intellectual muscle to challenge not only the traditional ordination of the system but its means of power and control.

¹⁸ Just to mention an example, when he speaks about a homosexual melancholia regarding the gay experience of symbolic loss they have to leave their families in their journey to personal freedom (from page 59 on).

¹⁹ See, for instance, chapter three of *The Psychic Life of Power*: “Subjection, Resistance, Resignification. Between Freud and Foucault” (83-105).

Consequently, in a meta-literary way, they can offer a revision of some of the vices and virtues of academic writing and its traditional separation from creative writing.

Scholars who choose to focus their research on contemporary works have the potential to contact and collaborate with the artists who have created the work they are tackling. This, of course, offers the possibility of a more personal approach to their work, via direct interviews, exchange of impressions, and witnessing, sometimes, their *modus operandi*, the way they work –which could be especially productive in scenic arts, when researchers have the possibility to attend rehearsals or live performances of the plays they are working on. At the same time, this contemporaneity might create a certain lack of perspective, which could possibly be considered as a valid obstacle for the so-called *objectivity* required in academia.

In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz claims that “[w]riting about living artists helps one further debunk the false principle of the critic’s objectivity. Queer intimacies underwrite much of the critical work I do. Yet I reject the phrase ‘advocacy criticism’ and instead embrace the idea of the performative collaboration between artist and writer” (101). Indeed, many queer theorists, from Lauren Berlant to Jack Halberstam, have worked with artists with whom they were engaged in relationships of any kind. That is also the case of this research: I have a personal connection with each and every one of the playwrights, performers and choreographers I will address in this dissertation. Furthermore, one of them (Marc Rosich) and I have been sharing our lives together with me since 2008. I am blessed to have him as my husband. Therefore, some of the sources I will employ throughout these pages come from personal interviews and conversations with these artists.

I believe that not only creative works can influence academic research, but that these relationships can also function the other way round. The exchange of impressions between researchers and creators can be of a mutual profit –scholars can offer perspectives and approaches that artists had not thought about previously, and can provide an intellectual point

of view that is prone to influence their further writing. In *Sei passeggiate nei boschi narrativi* (1994), Umberto Eco claimed that some readers had sent him letters offering interpretations of his acclaimed best-seller *The Name of the Rose* that he had not even imagined. Furthermore, he stated that those interpretations were absolutely licit and valid, since once the book was published, it ceased to belong to him.

Queer critics and queer artists can challenge the traditional gap between academia and the creative world. As I argue in my prologue for Marc Rosich's queer and trans plays anthology, I believe it would be useless –and, in this particular case, ethically dubious– “to resist the suppurations between theory, critical reading, personal experience, and the experience of community” (“Supervivència” 10). In the words of José Esteban Muñoz: “Attempting to imagine a convergence between artistic production and critical praxis is, in and of itself, a utopian act in relation to the alienation that often separates theory from practice, a sort of cultural division of labor” (*Cruising Utopia* 101). As theater and performance queer writers working with living artists, I believe we need not only to consider the pros and cons of working with the subjective experience as spectators and of dealing with work that sometimes is in progress, but we have to take full advantage of the gaps, the crevices and the almost infinite range of intellectual possibilities that this situation offers.

Queer Methodologies

Working with contemporary materials also allows me to approach the authors and their work from different standpoints. Theatre and performance are arts of the ephemeral: as a complete creative form that involves a multitude of agents and disciplines (from acting to set design and lighting) and that sustains itself on the physical presence of these elements on a stage, scenic arts are inevitably attached to the live performance.

However, there are several ways (all of them partial) to access the scenic archive. The first one is the text, especially useful when dealing with theatre plays. In the last decades, several houses have made a remarkable effort to generate a published library of contemporary plays in Catalonia. Two of the most dynamic independent venues in Barcelona, Sala Beckett and Sala FlyHard, have succeeded in publishing most of the texts they have produced. And, since 1998, the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya has established a very productive collaboration with Proa Edicions, firstly, and with Arola Editors since 2009, to publish their own productions, as well as the complete works of a remarkable number of contemporary Catalan playwrights: Marta Buchaca, Guillem Clua, Lluïsa Cunillé, Josep Maria Miró, Victoria Szpunberg, and Helena Tornero, among others. More recently, Editorial Comanegra has also published several volumes of theatre plays. Thanks to these initiatives, most of the plays I have worked with in this research have been released in print, sometimes more than once. In these particular cases, I have consulted with the authors to determine which they considered the definitive version. In the cases of the plays that have remained unpublished, I have asked the authors to send me the final draft of their texts.

I have also consulted different archives (mainly, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, and Barcelona Televisió) to watch recorded versions of the plays and the performances, whenever they existed. The visual records of the stagings allow me to consider the theatrical event in a more complete manner, as an amalgam of different elements combined. It is worth noting, however, that the recorded image also generates an inevitable distance with the theatrical event: the immediacy of the performance, the physical presence of the actors, the random observation of different elements onstage, are lost on the screen alongside the third dimension.

This is why, last (but definitely not least), I have also dealt with an archive of affects. In the last ten years, I have been able to attend live performances of each and every one of the

scenic works I have studied in these pages. Memory –my subjective memory– is thus an important factor. Also, as a cultural agent in Catalonia, I have been directly involved in the productions of some of these plays. This has given me first-hand knowledge of authors, texts, and performative events –which I often recall throughout this work. Therefore, part of my research has consisted in recovering this precarious archive and fixing it in text through the description of memories, as well as dialectical exchanges with all of the authors I have studied, whether through meetings and conversations, or through emails and phone messages.

Regarding the publication of theatre texts: one essential question (*essential* in more than one way) in Catalan theatre is its connection with the idea of the canon. By publishing the complete works of Catalan playwrights –and thus fixing the ephemerality of the theatrical event on paper– the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, under artistic director Xavier Albertí, has argued for the responsibility of public institutions to generate a canon that would bolster a collective identity of what Catalan culture is²⁰. My research, however, works with an intersectional idea of queer crevices that might emerge through the fluctuation of affects between every subject involved in the theatrical event (from the performers to the spectators) in an array of texts and performances²¹. I find the notion of the canon problematic in different ways. First, when dealing with contemporary pieces, we often lack the critical distance to foresee which work is going to make it through the filter of time –and intuition, in this regard,

²⁰ Bernat Puigtobella underscores this in his article about the first year of Xavier Albertí as the artistic director of the TNC, published in *Nívol, el digital de cultura* (14 Nov 2012). This formulation of identity as a single, static category, though, responds to a nation-center hermeneutics that obliterates other intersections in its discourses.

²¹ It is important to dedicate a few words to the idea of spectatorship. As Barbara Ozieblo comments, “[o]ur knowledge of how an audience is affected by a given performance is, to say the least, inadequate. Reviews barely address this issue and most theater theory concentrates on the text or the performance, leaving the spectator out of the equation” (267). The notion of the “spectator”, problematic as it is (it is, for starters, not a single or compact entity), occupies a similar space to the notion of the “reader” in the theories of reception. In this approach, the reader is, as Umberto Eco writes, the “operator” of a text that is, by nature, incomplete because “it needs to be actualized” (*Lector* 73). Eco coins the notion of the “Model Reader”, the ideal concept of a reader who is competent and “capable to cooperate” in order to decipher the text the way the author intended (*Lector* 80). Conversely, we could argue for a “Model Spectator” who has the capacity to respond to the theatrical event the way everyone involved in a theatrical production would expect them to. In this dissertation, I will consider this Model Spectator when discussing reactions to the scenic events, based, also, on my personal recollection of the performances I attended.

can often fail us. It would be the case of *Gang Bang* (*Obert fins a l'hora de l'Angelus*), until recently considered a minor work by Josep Maria Miró compared to other of his texts such as *El principi d'Arquímedes* (2010) or *Fum* (2013), which have received more critical attention and have been premiered internationally. After the controversy that preceded the play (which I fully address in the third section of my dissertation), *Gang Bang* was poorly received by critics, probably because the play, far from being the provocative and explicitly sexual piece that everyone expected it to be, ended up being a poetic exploration of affects and subjectivities in the neo-liberal era. More than a decade after its premiere, the play can be read from a more serene perspective, and Josep Maria Miró now considers *Gang Bang* one of his fundamental plays, as important as *El principi* or *Temps salvatge*, premiered at Teatre Nacional de Catalunya's Sala Gran (2018).

Enric Sullà, in a quite affirmative manner, describes the canon as a “list or line-up of works that are considered valuable and therefore worth being studied and commented”, which also serves as a “cultural and ideological mirror of the national identity” (11). According to Sullà, canons determine the works that should be studied in the teaching institutions, and that poses the question of who decides what deserves to survive. As a list of privilege, the canon usually informs the way works deal with power and hegemonic structures – and homophobia, just like machismo, has traditionally been legitimized in the heteropatriarchal systems. Conservative views in academia have taught the canon as a natural and immanent construction, leaving aside that through the centuries, poetry books, novels and plays have been forced away from these lists in spite of their literary value: they were erased because they were written by women, or because they addressed sensible issues such as religion or sexuality²². Censorship has played an important part on the way history of (normative) literature has articulated its discourses. Castro's Cuba censored the works of Reinaldo Arenas,

²² In this regard, see Lillian S. Robinson's “Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon”, a noteworthy criticism of the conservative views of the canon by feminist scholars.

José Lezama Lima and Virgilio Piñera because they were deemed as *immoral*; the letters of Colombian writer Andrés Caicedo or works by Federico García Lorca such as the *Sonnets of Dark Love* were censored by the families of the authors because they were afraid that those works, who explicitly addressed queer desire, would *damage* the image of the writers. Harold Bloom denounces, in *The Western Canon*, that cultural studies (what he *resentfully* calls “the School of Resentment”) have pushed the idea of the canon away from the realm of the aesthetic. According to him, the critical approach that cultural studies offers (and which precludes queer theory) “reduces the aesthetic to ideology, or at best to metaphysics. A poem cannot be read as a poem, because it is primarily a social document or, rarely yet possibly, an attempt to overcome philosophy. Against this approach I urge a stubborn resistance whose single aim is to preserve poetry as *fully* and *purely* as possible” (18, my emphasis). Bloom, nevertheless, conveniently dismisses the connection between literature and politics –and, in a conservative yet predictable note, he advocates for a non-critical idea of “purity” that has historical been determined by the hegemonic subjects and institutions. In other words: erasing subaltern voices from the canon (women, queers, racialized subjects) is *also* ideology²³.

In this dissertation, I connect the idea of the canon to the archive, as a space (not necessarily physical) where these ideological debates about presence and absence, center and periphery, are perpetually unfolding. In these pages I argue that queer scholars must research in what I call an *archive of the obscene*, that is, to explore the precarious traces of what has been left in the dark (*ob-scene* literally means “out of the stage”). As Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell suggest, this queer research is fraught with an ethical commitment: “LGBT archival

²³ In a speech given at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at The City University of New York Graduate Center in November 1993, queer novelist Edmund White also argued against the idea of canon and linked the notion with Bloom’s claims of “purity” as an archive of the sacred: “I myself am in favor of desacralizing literature, of dismantling the idea of a few essential books, of retiring the whole concept of a canon”, White claims. “A canon is for people who don’t like to read, people who want to know the bare minimum of titles they must consume in order to be considered polished, well rounded, civilized. Any real reader seeks the names of more and more books, not fewer and fewer” (“The Personal”, 375).

research becomes queer when it becomes part of a process of recovery and justice for a queer past and present – shifting the presence of LGBT lives and histories within archival scholarship from margin to center”, they write (3). Since Jacques Derrida’s influential *Archive Fever*, scholars across different disciplines have explored how archives, as sites of active production of knowledge, are often in service to maintain the power of the state²⁴. I think that the marginalization or, in many cases, obliteration of LGBT and queer traces in the archive replicates the social order of heteronormativity²⁵. As a response, queer scholars have had the need to “dig deeper” or to create, again following Stone and Cantrell, “counterarchives or community-based archives that operate outside of government or academic institutions” (7): part of this dissertation exists thanks to the remarkable efforts of the archivists in SidaStudi or in Casal Lambda’s Fons Armand de Fluvià.

Even if I coincide with scholars like Javier Aparicio Maydeu when they write about the need to not overlook tradition –which he ambitiously defines as a “[s]ystem of conventions and codes as well as exemplary heritage in constant renovation ... and in a constant process of contingent alternation between continuity and rupture” (*Tradición* 35-36)–, I also believe in the responsibility to consider the canon as a consequence of sociopolitical dynamics –something that is neither *neutral* nor *pure*. Consequently, many queer scholars have often questioned the hierarchies of a traditional approach to the arts. Jack Halberstam departs from Gramsci’s notion of counterhegemony, understood as “the production and circulation of another, competing set of ideas which could join in an active struggle to change society” (Halberstam, *Failure* 17), to propose what he denominates “low theory”: “a mode of accessibility ... that flies below the radar, that is assembled from eccentric texts and examples and that refuses to confirm the hierarchies of knowing that

²⁴ See, for instance, Marlene Manoff’s “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines.” I will explore the queering of the archive more in depth in the first section of this dissertation.

²⁵ Similarly, the LGBT presence in the archive also tends to replicate homonormative paradigms, with an overwhelming representation of white, middle-class and upper class, gay men.

maintain the *high* in high theory” (16, author’s emphasis). In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam chooses cartoon characters like SpongeBob as his object of study. Some of the plays and performances I have selected for my study have premiered in traditional public institutions. By contrast, others have circulated in small museums or performance spaces, in eccentric venues, on rooftops or even underneath bridges. My selection aspires to put into question the geonormative tensions between center and periphery.

The theoretical approach of this research departs, mainly, from the work of a multitude of queer scholars and activists. As I previously argued, I understand queerness as a dynamic affective epistemology that unfolds in local communities while operating within a globalized world. The queer experience in Catalonia is different from the queer experience in Chile, or in the United States of America; and yet, I believe the nuances of a thinker like Paul B. Preciado can’t be fully grasped without being familiar with Pedro Lemebel’s essays or Michael Warren’s discourses on “the normal”. Therefore, I want to insert this dissertation into a dialogue with (queer) theorists who work in the subfield of Hispanism –such as Brad Epps, Josep-Anton Fernández, Alberto Mira, Miquel Missé, Paul Julian Smith, David Vilaseca, and Olga Viñuales– but also in a broader, global dialogue with figures that have shaped eccentric thinking from the Anglo-Saxon (and Latinx) academic sphere, such as Sara Ahmed, Gloria Anzaldúa, Lauren Berlant, Jill Dolan, Jack Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, Alberto Sandoval, and Susan Stryker. I believe that queer ideas can entangle universal resonances, although they need to be articulated from a perspective that takes into account the particular nuances of their sites of enunciation.

As a study that tackles Catalan scenic arts, I also intend to converse with scholars and thinkers who have written about the dramatic tradition in Catalonia. This work nurtures from conversations with and readings of the work by Carles Batlle, Helena Buffery, Sharon Feldman, Núria Perpinyà, Oriol Puig Taulé and Jaume Subirana, among others. Lastly, in

order to address current sociopolitical and cultural events in Catalonia, I have consulted sources from different strata of intellectual production, from scholarly reviews such as *Catalan Review* or (*Pausa.*) to journals and more mainstream publications like *L'Avenç*, or internet portals such as *Nívol, el digital de cultura*. The intention is to provide a multi-layered, complex and promiscuous canvas of the cultural dialogues currently taking place in Catalonia.

Section Outlines

The structure of this dissertation tries to parallel the exploration of a theatre play. It is divided in three sections, which I call “acts”. I am well aware of the Aristotelian flair of the three-act structure: at the end of the day, queerness gladly feeds from these kind of contradictions.

Act One, “Ghosts in the Archive: *Marburg*, *The Touching Community*, and The Theatre of HIV/AIDS in Catalonia”, addresses the precariousness of dramatic representations of HIV/AIDS, through the exploration of what I define as an archive of invisibilities. As a point of departure for this section, I consider why Catalan scenic arts have provided such a startling scarcity of performative references of HIV/AIDS, an epidemic whose impact has been, and still is, far from minor in Spain. In the first section, I argue that the historical circumstances in which the epidemic hit Spain –particularly, the short time from the death of dictator Franco in 1975 to the first AIDS-related death in Barcelona in 1981– are key to understanding why queer activism could not fully embrace the fight against social discrimination caused by the HIV/AIDS stigma. Subsequently, I analyze the lack of representations of HIV/AIDS in the Spanish cultural sphere, most specially in the scenic arts. I consider the ethical implications of such absence, and I advocate for the recovery of an archive of ghosts –an affective map of testimonies by writers like Jaime Gil de Biedma and

Rafael Chirbes, whose posthumous work addresses AIDS-related topics. Finally, I analyze the only mainstream Catalan theatre play that tackles HIV/AIDS as a central issue, Guillem Clua's *Marburg* (2010), as well as Aimar Pérez Galí's *The Touching Community* (2016), a recent performative work that embraces this ephemeral archive through contact improvisation.

In Act Two, "TransCatalonia: Onstage Proposals of Political Fluidity", I argue that the Catalan political debates about self-determination have organically overlapped with the emergence of a considerable amount of trans narratives. In the theatrical scene—as a privileged space where ideas, fictions, ideologies, and myths are produced, displayed, embodied, and contested—, these narratives operate both in the realm of the literal and the metaphoric. In Catalan theatre, trans plays generate an archive of complex transitionings in which the individual and the sociopolitical bodies engage in a dialogue that is not exempt of contradictions. Many of these trans narratives and performances don't succeed in escaping binary regimes in both structural forms and narrative schemes, thus generating contradictory readings. In this chapter, I address four of these theatrical pieces premiered in the Catalan stages in order to unfold the aforementioned contradictions.

Lastly, Act Three studies the challenging of normative spatialities and temporalities through the queering of genre standards and the emergence of alternative utopias. The chapter starts with an event that took place in the recent history of Catalan drama: the sabotage, by a radical Christian group, of one of the performances of Josep Maria Miró's queer and anti-Catholic play *Gang Bang* (2011), while it was performed at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. I argue that this homophobic violation of the fourth wall functions as a metaphor of the anxieties of heteronormative thinking, and also, that it symbolically and violently shatters the idea of the queer club—where the plot unfolds—as a safe space. The chapter explores two other representations of queer socializing spaces in Catalan drama—Guillem Clua's *Smiley*

(2011) and *The Swallow / L'oreneta* (2017)– and argues for the potential capacity of utopian performative, regarding the questioning of chrononormativity through what José Esteban Muñoz, Ramón Rivera-Servera and Jill Dolan claim as queer utopias.

The three sections can be read separately, albeit they also offer a complementary narrative. Act One addresses invisibility and disappearance, and focuses on a revision of the recent past by looking toward a criticism of the queer archive. Act Two –the pivotal chapter of this dissertation– tackles transformations and transitionings, and shatters what could have been a binary organization of my research; this section deals with the idea of an ongoing and mutable present-ness, which is where the continuous flowing of non-binary paradigms unfold. Lastly, in its utopian approach, Act Three projects itself towards a queer futurity, with the intention of finishing up my research in a hopeful note.

By the description of the plays, as well as my personal experience of those plays as a scholar, a cultural agent, and as an avid theatre-goer, I intend to share with readers a spectatorial experience that is, at the same time, emotional, political, and intellectual. The narration also allows me to recreate, in a partial manner, the affects generated by the theatrical events. In other words: to capture on the page a glimpse of magic before it vanishes. The performance does not end with the curtain call. It is in the after-show conversations, or in the private or shared memories of an experience, where the theatrical experience is re-created and expands itself towards an interesting, a queer futurity.

ACT ONE

GHOSTS IN THE ARCHIVE: *MARBURG, THE TOUCHING COMMUNITY*, AND THE THEATRE OF HIV/AIDS IN CATALONIA

*When I was told that I'd contracted this virus
it didn't take me long to realize that I'd contracted
a diseased society as well.*

David Wojnarowicz

The emergence of the AIDS pandemic in the last decades of the 20th Century turned out to be a medical crisis of extraordinary, and still ongoing, dimensions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the virus has claimed more than 35 million lives since its eruption. However, the implications and manifestations of AIDS and the virus that generates it (HIV) have not only been medical. From its very beginning, the pandemic was closely linked to the male homosexual population. Consequently, this led to a new wave of homophobia, one that stigmatized same-sex and the gay *lifestyle* –a way of life that the post-Stonewall liberation had rendered more visible than ever. HIV/AIDS can be (and has certainly been) read as a shift of paradigm. It can be regarded as a seismic event that shed a different light on the way we observe life, death, welfare, health, immigration, demography, or the economy, within the context of a globalized world and the emergence of neoliberal policies.

In cities like New York or San Francisco, two urban conglomerations with a strong and organized gay community and where the epidemic hit with special virulence, the AIDS crisis and the social homophobia that resulted found a response in the arts and academia. Leo Bersani, in his influential 1988 essay “Is the Rectum a Grave?”, departs from Simon Watney’s book *Policing Desire* and takes it further as he stresses how AIDS was being

exploited to crucify non-normative sex and to legitimize hate toward homosexuals¹, while it underscores the importance of an immediate response to the crisis and its effects, both medical (people dying) and social (people suffering outrageous levels of discrimination and homophobia). Forcing the government to take action, showing up for those who suffered from the disease while facing social and medical discrimination, providing visibility as a call for action, became critical. Texts, paintings, performances and urban installations emerged to provide the sexual education that the US government was reluctant to offer, and to stand by those who were suffering the terrible consequences of the epidemic. There was a sense of urgency in the air that eventually found expression in artistic works². Michael Warner, in “Fear of a Queer Planet” (written and published in 1991, and now considered one of queer theory’s foundational texts), manifests the “urge that lesbian and gay intellectuals find a new engagement with various traditions of social theory in order to articulate their aims.” There was a need, he writes, for “a new style of ‘queer’ politics that, no longer content to carve out a buffer zone for a minoritized and protected subculture, has begun to challenge the pervasive and often invisible heteronormativity of modern societies” (3).

From David Wojnarowicz to Larry Kramer, from Nan Goldin to Keith Haring, a committed and heterogeneous community of queer artists emerged to force visibility in a society that felt more comfortable looking aside. They also denounce the new wave of homophobia and racism, as well as the injustices committed against those who were suffering from the plague –including the silence coming from the Reagan administration, the

¹ Bersani actually compares the extreme homophobia that emerges from the governmental reactions to the AIDS epidemic with the Nazi holocaust in Germany: “At the very least, such things as the justice department’s near recommendation that people with AIDS be thrown out of their jobs suggest that ... Edwin Meese [Attorney General of the United States of America under the Reagan administration] ... might not find the murder of a gay man with AIDS (or without AIDS?) intolerable and unbearable. And this is precisely”, he adds, “what can be said of millions of fine Germans who never participated in the murder of Jews (and of homosexuals), but who failed to find the idea of the holocaust unbearable” (7, his emphasis).

² Bersani himself refers to that feeling in the preface of *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*, when he states that he felt the need to “address issues that have been discussed with considerable originality (and a sense of urgency) since the advent of the AIDS epidemic and the birth of queer theory” (ix).

precariousness of the American health system, and the greed of the pharmaceutical companies that seemed to reveal that economic speculation was far more important than saving lives. They did so through interventions, murals, photography (visible on the streets and reaching pedestrians even if they would not visit museums or attend meetings), and plays. These artists tried to raise concern in both the alternative and mainstream venues. The works that they produced constituted, additionally, a powerful response to the hegemonic archive.

In *Archive Fever* (1995), Jacques Derrida elaborates a reconceptualization of the archive as a concept. According to Derrida, during the end of the millennium humanity experienced an “archive fever” (*mal d’archive* in the original) that also coincided with an “archive of evil” (*archive du mal*, playing with the polysemy of the French word “mal”, both illness and evil). The archive –as well as, I already argued in the introduction, the canon– selects, decides what is pertinent, and therefore discriminates and excludes. Who, wonders Derrida, is behind those selections? Who is responsible for the official archives? In order for the archive to be possible, it requires an exercise of violent appropriation. During the emergence of modern state-nations in the 19th century, the archive gets inevitably connected to the official history, as the material and symbolic haven where the teleological narratives of the national territories are reinforced. As Julia Morandeira Arrizabalaga comments in her short essay about the archive published under the framework of *Anarchivo SIDA*, a collective ongoing exhibition of an alternative (counter)archive of the AIDS narratives in non-hegemonic territories (mostly the Iberian Peninsula and Chile), the epistemological order of the official archive is based on the false foundation of it having a recollection of universal and neutral knowledge. “The modern archive is thus structured in three types of violence: extractive violence, which expropriates documents and memories; epistemological violence, which orders the archive (and the world); and state violence, which retains the documents beyond the reach of citizens, releasing them only decades later, when their disruptive

potential has been erased”, she argues (6). Artistic responses to the official *sanitized* narrative of HIV/AIDS constitute, consequently, a counter-archive (that forms an archive in itself). This counter-archive does not provide answers or certainties, and definitely does not support the triumphant storyline of divine punishments, the risks of promiscuity, and a final victory of moral, healthy heroes over the epidemic. The counter-archive of AIDS should be transversal, queer in its aim, and would provide physical, affective memory, and a non-normative relation with fossilized concepts such as health and biography³. It should also have the potential to neutralize the “gay amnesia” that, according to Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, wiped out “memories not only of everything that came before but of the remarkably vibrant and imaginative ways that gay communities responded to the catastrophe of illness and death and sought to memorialize our losses” beyond ACT UP (3), from the Memorial Quilts that remembers those lost to AIDS (one of which, created by Projecte dels Noms, was created in Barcelona and, in 2019, was donated to the Museu d’Història de Catalunya) to smaller virtual initiatives like the community-focused Instagram account “The AIDS Memorial”, which compiles personal witnesses about people who died of the plague. As Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell point out, “[t]he archival experience is not merely intellectual but also emotional, erotic, and embodied” (9), and exceeds the boundaries of scholarly research.

³ Counter-archives do not get rid of paradoxes or contradictions. The same exhibition *Anarchivo SIDA* has been shown throughout Spain in spaces that receive public subsidy (therefore, with the complicity of cultural institutions), such as San Sebastián’s La Tabakalera (where the exhibition opened in 2016), or Barcelona’s MACBA (Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona), in November 2018. Another relevant show that has been taking place simultaneously with *Anarchivo SIDA* is *ARTAIDS America*, an itinerant exposition curated by historian Jonathan Katz that visited cities like New York or Chicago in 2016 and 2017. The show included more than 100 works that, according to the promotional brochure of the show, offered “a story of resilience and beauty revealed through the visual arts, and the communities that gathered to bring hope and change in the face of the devastating epidemic” – again, the emphasis on response and communities. In an article for *The New York Times*, Holland Cotter says that “it seems inexplicable that no mainstream museum ever attempted a historical survey [on AIDS artistic responses]. No one has”. Is it so “inexplicable”, taking into account that AIDS has generated a debate that openly questioned concepts and dynamics that the hegemonic paradigms wanted to establish by default?

One last trace of the AIDS counter-archive within institutional domain: the Whitney Museum in New York City holds a gallery dedicated to AIDS activism in their permanent collection.

The early archival memory of AIDS has not only been threatened by the aforementioned mirroring of heteronormative paradigms in the archive, but also by the fragility of human lives exposed to the plague. This becomes more evident in a discipline as ephemeral as theatre and performance. As David Román states in his extraordinary and prescient monograph about performance and AIDS *Acts of Intervention*,

the fact that many of the early playwrights and performers whose work dealt in one form or another with AIDS are now dead, and that so many of the artistic collaborators, producers, theatre staff, and spectators who participated in these productions and performances are also dead and therefore may leave no record of the events, already points to the futility of constructing an accurate or total AIDS theatre history. Many early performances around AIDS were simply that, performances without opening nights, world premieres, or the critical review process that facilitates their official registration into theatre history. (xxii)

To face this precarious dilemma, it is critical for these archives to be articulated in a transnational manner, in order to generate a complex dialogue that brings together the voices of those who have survived the devastation. Moreover, the impact of AIDS demands to be rethought beyond the Anglo-Saxon context, as a worldwide phenomenon that erupted, precisely, in the beginning of the era of globalization. In the 1990s, in the middle of the AIDS era, George Chauncey and Elizabeth Povinelly observed that “Recently, there has been a small but discernible ‘transnational turn’ in lesbian and gay studies and queer theory” (439). This turn took place alongside the increasing globalization of the Western world: “Some scholars seek to understand how the density and speed of global linkages and movements affect local, regional, national, public, and state practices, embodiments, identities, and

imaginaries” (441)⁴. However, the advent of a globalized network demands an alternative kind of thinking, beyond the traditional binary framework of the national and the local, affecting subjects and bodies, creating an alteration of the traditional developing of space-time communication (as if, we could say, globalization generated its own normativity):

globalization assaults more than the self-evident nature of the local and national. It queries the commonsense referent of the proximate and the intimate, the subject and her space and time of being, and thus, her forms and practices of desire. Globalization studies ask a fundamental question: where are the intimate and proximate spaces in which persons become subjects of embodied practices and times of desire? (443)

As an epidemic whose emergence coincided with that of the concepts of globalization, HIV/AIDS traveled, physically and culturally, with the high-speed flows of the Age of Information –through communication and technology in cultural terms, spreading through the Western urban territories that became poles of interconnectivity and of exchange, like cells in a living organism⁵. The scope of the epidemic, then, intersects and escapes geographical boundaries (or at least works by interrogating its political implications), and does not

⁴ In the introduction I have already addressed the complexities and inequalities of these global queer dialogues.

⁵ The Information Age is a conceptualization of the globalization era coined and developed by Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells in his celebrated trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (1996-1998, although Castells substantially revised the three volumes in latter editions). According to Castells, the end of the second millennium saw a number of events that “transformed the social landscape of human life. A technological revolution, centered around information technologies, is reshaping, at accelerated pace, the material basis of society. Economies throughout the world have become globally interdependent, introducing a new form of relationship between economy, state, and society” (*The Rise* 1). This revolution led to “a fundamental process of restructuring of the capitalist system from the 1980s onwards” (13) that affected the macroeconomics as much as the microeconomics of the bodies and their interactions (15). In the second volume of the trilogy, Castells writes about “The Crisis of the Patriarchal Family” (*The Power* 138) how interpersonal relationships, including sexuality, change during The Information Age. Even if Castells’ view of the lesbian and gay liberation might be labeled as reductionist (he treats them as identity politics and he leaves aside queer and trans disruptions), the chapter provides an insight (albeit superficial) to the impact of AIDS in San Francisco, and mentions “the cultural battle to demystify AIDS, to remove the stigma”, even if he, like several gay activists of the time, also recalls that it was needed “to convince the world that [AIDS] was not produced by homosexuality” (*The Power* 218). I will deal with the intentional (and fraught with homophobia) dissociation of AIDS and gay men further on this chapter.

discriminate between other vectors such as class or race. Nonetheless, the numbers and consequences draw a very complex map of infected population, fatalities and quality of life that spreads differently depending on every territory and community: the African countries are (according to the WHO) the ones that have suffered more cruelly from the epidemic: more than 25 million people living in Africa currently carry the HIV virus or are living with AIDS (compared to 3.4 million in America or 2.3 million in Europe). Also, the newer generations of medicines, which increase effectiveness and reduce secondary effects, are harder to obtain in many African countries, sometimes only available for those who can afford them (in countries like the United States), or available only for legal citizens (as is the case of Spain).

Very early on, Catalonia started suffering the consequences of the epidemic. In October 1981, Barcelona's Hospital de la Vall d'Hebron reported the first case related to AIDS in Spain –even before the virus was identified as such. Already in that early stage of the research on the virus, the doctors at the hospital warned that “[r]eports of other European cases of opportunist infections in male homosexuals with or without Kaposi's sarcoma [one of the most common manifestations of AIDS] suggest that the international homosexual community as a whole is at risk.” (Arnau et al., “Kaposi's Sarcoma” 572). However, in spite of its early and continuous presence within Catalan society⁶, the arts remained, and continue to remain, mostly silent –and the virus, undetectable in the artistic cells.

Thus, it is, I believe, imperative to underscore the precarious presence of HIV/AIDS in the archive of Catalan drama, and of Catalan culture in general – and also to work on another (counter)archive of AIDS that questions, nurtures and interacts with the hegemonic scenic archive. If, as the classic and well-known motto by ACT UP goes, silence equals death, researchers, artists and academics have the moral obligation to ask why the arts in Catalonia, as well as in the rest of Spain, have mainly ignored the impact of the plague in the country.

⁶ Reports say that there are more than 33,000 people living with HIV in Catalonia. See *Diari Ara*'s special report “VIH i sida: 10 xifres que recorden la gravetat de la pandèmia.”

Considering what is *not* there demands an exercise of imagination and critical thinking, but, in an era in which people are still getting infected and stigmatized, and the country is suffering from a serious health and sexual education deficit, this exercise becomes fraught with ethical implications. There is a need to create a discourse that brings visibility, to interpellate society about such a critical issue, as well as to rescue the almost invisible, phantasmatic traces of AIDS in the outskirts of the mainstream archive. It entails an ethical responsibility to present onstage what has been left out, to put together a history of the plague in Catalonia and Spain: one that raises awareness among the audience; one that provides visibility to those who have been forced to hide (as I will argue, the emergence of AIDS generates the need for other closets); and one that creates narratives, stories that might help understand why it is so important to fight against silence. Artists and scholars can (and have the responsibility to) work together to fill these voids, as I mentioned earlier in the introduction of this dissertation by quoting José Esteban Muñoz's work alongside with queer performers. The extensive conversation with Guillem Clua (the only Catalan playwright who has written about AIDS in the mainstream), which was published in the 40th issue of (*Pausa*.) magazine, constitutes a personal attempt to join forces and to assume this commitment.

This is why, referring to the need to generate an archive as well as new plays that cover the presence and the consequences of AIDS and the HIV virus in Spain, I coined somewhere else the notion of *ética de lo obsceno* (ethics of the obscene), which purposely resonates with Paco Vidarte's urgent manifesto *Ética marica*, as well as Brad Epps' celebrated analysis of Argentinian writer and activist Néstor Perlongher's poetry called "Ética de la promiscuidad", which I will address in the third section of this dissertation⁷. This idea of queer ethics, in all three reformulations, implies, in Epps' words, "a heterogenization of the moral, of democracy, and of the moral democracy that is nurtured by a great diversity of

⁷ See my book chapter "Ética de lo obsceno: la gentrificación del sida en las artes escénicas" (2019).

practices, experiences and ideas, persons and parts” (146). It is, as Vidarte writes, an urgent cry: “Reading this book could be like a ‘click’, a spark that breaks a shitty cadence, a fall of tension in the LGBTQ movement that needs to end as soon as possible. And that would bring a different light on how we do things and how we behave like fags, lesbians and trans facing the society and the involutionist tendencies that are nesting among us” (*Ética* 3). Queer ethics are plural because they reject fixations that would eventually become new normativities (as it has already happened with homonormativity and how it has embraced a part of the LGBTQ community): they question and interrogate, and don’t take anything for granted. Through queering, they claim concepts and moral ideas that the societies of control have cast to the margins, thus problematizing the traditional, binary division of center (power) and periphery (marginal) in the social and political maps. In their book about Shakespeare, Xavier Pérez and Jordi Balló state that, in the classic Greece, “the expression *ob skena* (obscene) was employed to point at all that had to be left ‘out of the stage’, far from the audience, which needed to be protected from the disturbing vision of the most basic instincts” (174). In Latin, *obscenus* refers to what is considered execratory, indecent, lewd, repulsive. But repulsive to whom? Who decides what is indecent, what needs to be left off the stage, what can’t be shown? An ethics of the obscene demands rethinking and visibilizing what the power has disallowed, in order to manifest how the dynamics of domination reject the paradigms that question well-established ideas such as health, hygiene and moral.

AIDS works as a paradigmatic example of the need for an ethics of the obscene, because the virus is fraught with the stigma of defying those practices that oppose the more traditional forms of belonging, of identification, of kinship and association: promiscuity, unlimited circulation of fluids, interaction of bodies that defy latex borderlines. It’s what Michael Warner defines, when talking about the ethics of AIDS activism, as “the pseudo-ethics that consisted in a willingness to stigmatize those who had sex, to blame them for the

virus that was killing them, to use their sex as an excuse to let them die, to prevent at all cost any further talk of sex even if it could be shown . . . that safer sex was the best and healthiest and most ethical solution to the crisis of prevention” (*Trouble*, 51). These bodies and these practices question by their mere inter-existence notions as basic for the good functioning of the dominant paradigms as the traditional family, the reproduction and the normative lineage, the strive to live for as long as possible whatever the circumstances can be. This ethics distorts what society traditionally thinks about time, and claims a non-normative, promiscuous reading of the space –there is a substantial work, for instance, about the queer implications of cruising as a way to redefine, re-claim and question space⁸. According to Jack Halberstam:

“Queer time” is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance. “Queer space” refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpolitics. (*In a Queer Time*, 6)

Since, as Steve Pile states regarding his idea of geography as a (battle)field where hegemonies try to corner dissidences, “the map of resistance is not simply the underside of the map of domination” (6), the ethics of resistance aims to problematize, and not to mimic in reverse, this status quo, this ordering of things. Applied to HIV/AIDS in the Catalan theatre,

⁸ To just mention a few: Leo Bersani’s essay “Sociability and Cruising” included in the volume *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*; George Chauncey analysis of city life and queer migration in *Gay New York*; Dave Gove’s volume *Cruising Culture. Promiscuity, Desire and American Gay Literature*; or Molly McGarry’s and Fred Wasserman’s monograph *Becoming Visible. An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America*.

the ethics of the obscene raise a fundamental question: what happened to the cultural manifestations of the plague? How can we see what is not shown, how can we remember what had been forgotten? How can we provide a light that is critical in order to see the shadows that cannot be projected in the dark?

To stretch the imagination is mandatory here. To attempt a utopian gesture.

And to imagine is, precisely, what theatre queer theorist Alberto Sandoval proposes in the beginning of his research on Latino and Black AIDS theatre in the USA. Imagination as a way to stress absent inequalities:

By the year 2050, when there will be a cure for AIDS (I hope) and the cultural archives of the plague are reviewed, the researchers will recover an archipelago of cultural constructions that registers who was infected and affected by AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. The record will show that mainly white gay middle-class males contracted, experienced, suffered, and died of the virus. (“Staging AIDS”, 49)

Echoing Sandoval, I would like to imagine what would happen, by the same hypothetical year, when the archive of cultural representations of AIDS created in Catalonia – and all of Spain– is recovered. What traces of AIDS would these researches unearth in Spanish culture? The answer to this question might be unfortunately simple: it seems safe enough to state that, with a few scarce exceptions, those researchers would not be able to find a substantial amount of cultural representations of AIDS in Spain. Given this archival void, the researchers could reach the conclusion that the impact of HIV and AIDS in the Spanish society was utterly irrelevant: a residual chapter, undeserving of attention from the artists. However, the numbers show otherwise. Already in 1997, Paul Julian Smith argued that “Spain is the European country where the transmission of AIDS has had the highest increase,

and it's the second country in Europe in number of infected with the virus", and in spite of these statistics, he added, "the plague has remained, so far, in the shadows" ("La representación" 303). In 1994, over 7,000 cases of AIDS were diagnosed in Spain, and the death rate increased from 2,000 in 1990 to 5,857 in 1995. During the first half of the 1990s, AIDS was the leading cause of mortality in men and women ages 25 to 44 (Amo Valero et al., *VIH* 68).

The statistics nowadays are no more encouraging. According to the report "Living with HIV: Challenges in Spain's HIV Management", elaborated by The Economist Intelligence Unit with the support of the biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences (the firm that holds the patents for HIV antivirals)⁹, in recent years there has not been a decrease of HIV diagnosis in Spain, with the number of people living with HIV estimated at 141,000, and approximately 1,200 people dying of AIDS-related diseases within the Spanish borders. And this is in 2015¹⁰. Writing more specifically about the Catalan context, Josep-Anton Fernández states that "Catalonia is one of the European societies more affected by the epidemic, with indexes of prevalence of HIV infections persistently higher than the rest of Europe" ("No vengo" 229).

Smith lamented, more than twenty years ago, that Spanish AIDS culture was still "in the shadows". In 2018, it could be stated that the presence and visibility of HIV and AIDS in the Spanish culture has manifested since 1981 (the year when the first case of AIDS was identified in the Peninsula) in a number of individual initiatives, such as the performance *Carrying*, executed by Pepe Espaliú in San Sebastián and Madrid in 1992; the dramatic comedy about the bear community *Cachorro (Bear Cub)*, directed by Miguel Albadalejo in

⁹ Foucault's notion of biopolitics and its derivate tanatopolitics, as well as Paul Preciado's elaboration of the pharmacopornographic capitalism and biosocieties, will need to emerge during these pages as I delve into the ethic consequences of monopolizing the cost of the medicines to keep the HIV virus under control.

¹⁰ A comprehensive statistic study of VIH and AIDS in Spain can be found in Jaume Vila's essay "VIH y sida sin metáforas".

2004; or the recent autobiographical volume *El invitado amargo* (2014), in which Luis Cremades and Vicente Molina Foix describe their relationship, the consequences of their break-up, and the emergence of the bitter guest the title refers to: the AIDS virus. Remarkable oasis in a desert of silence, nonetheless: the absence of debate and visibility of the plague and its consequences on the society and its individuals embraces every cultural discipline. It is an unprecedented crisis of discourse, of presences, that brings back the notion of representational crisis.

Focusing on scenic arts in Catalonia, it is shocking that such a vibrant and productive discipline, about which exists a certain consensus of having been through a “golden age” (taking into account the fecundity and creative quality as well as influence and premieres both in Catalonia and the rest of Spain, Europe and Latin America¹¹), has mainly ignored the issue. If every dramaturgic, and literary, tradition is forged in a tacit negotiation between what is shown and what is hidden, it feels pertinent to wonder which ethic consequences these ghosts of the unspoken carry: bodies and affects absent onstage. If the monstrous etymologically suggests that which it’s worth showing (the word comes from the Latin “monstrare” –to show), the obscene demands to be hidden, left out of the stage, for it is considered abject, and therefore unworthy of representation, by the normative context dictated by institutions and individuals in power. I believe that to represent the obscene, then, is an act of symbolic and performative resistance loaded with a profound ethical dimension. It dignifies and embraces those who have been silenced and stigmatized. Providing visibility means to claim those individuals who have been relegated to the abject when they lived, and who have not been able to be mourned when they died: second-class citizens, ungrievable subjects¹².

It is critical to specify what we talk about when we talk about HIV/AIDS. There is, to begin with, the medical definition. According to Paula Treichler, “The name AIDS was

¹¹ See the introduction of this dissertation.

¹² I take the idea of the “ungrievable subjects” from Judith Butler in *Frames of War*.

selected at a 1982 conference in Washington (GRID [gay-related immunodeficiency] was no longer applicable now that nongays were also getting sick)” (53). The virus that causes AIDS was named HIV in 1986 by a subcommittee dependent on the International Committee on the Taxonomy of Viruses (57). The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides, through the portal hiv.org, a standard description for both HIV and AIDS: “HIV stands for *human immunodeficiency virus*. It is the virus that can lead to *acquired immunodeficiency syndrome*, or AIDS, if not treated” (their emphasis). This very same paragraph, however, continues as it follows: “Unlike some other viruses, the human body can’t get rid of HIV completely, even with treatment. So once you get HIV, you have it for life.” As plenty of academics have stated since the emergence of the epidemic, HIV/AIDS is not only a health crisis: it’s also a crisis of representation¹³. In his introduction to one of the first compilations of the cultural depictions of AIDS, Douglas Crimp says that “AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it” (3). This idea suggests that writing about the disease does not constitute a mere neutral act –and so is, as I argue in this chapter, *not* to write about it. What you say, how you say it, implies a subjective positioning. In their definition of HIV/AIDS, the HHS provide a *soi-disant* neutral first sentence. Nonetheless, immediately afterwards the sentence resonates with aiming for prevention, and arguably with threat (“once you get HIV, you have it for life [so beware of what you do, I would add]”). Susan Sontag sums up very well the subjective flows of the metaphoric power of illnesses such as AIDS: “The metaphor implements the way particular dreaded diseases are envisaged as an alien ‘other’, as enemies are in modern war: and the

¹³ Actually, Alberto Sandoval starts the aforementioned article by stating this idea. For other elaborations of the representational crisis, see Paula Treichler in “AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification”, in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, p. 32. Lee Edelman reformulates the idea and writes about a “plague of discourse” in “The Plague of Discourse: Politics, Literary Theory, and AIDS”, and David Román develops it in his introduction to *Acts of Intervention* (xxiii). In the Spanish context, see Juan Vicente Aliaga’s “El lenguaje es un virus”, published in *De amor y rabia*, a volume compiled by Aliaga alongside with José Miguel G. Cortés, that constituted, back in 1993, a remarkable first attempt to develop an academic analysis of AIDS in the country.

move from the demonization of the illness to the attribution of fault to the patient is an inevitable one, no matter if patients are thought of as victims.” (*AIDS* 11). Later on, she adds: “It seems that societies need to have one illness which becomes identified with evil, and attaches blame to its ‘victims’” (16)¹⁴. AIDS seems to have occupied that space in the last decades. As a pandemic event linked with eccentric practices of intimacy (sharing needles, sharing fluids) that particularly affected certain communities, and also as a cultural representation, AIDS has been given a huge symbolic power, in the way it has been theorized, the way it has been socially and culturally represented, in its presences and its absences, in the visibility and the silence that has festered, and affected through shame and guilt, the communities that suffer it. This symbolic power transcends the pandemic and demands, following Douglas Crimp, “a vastly expanded view of culture in relation to crisis. But the full extent to which this view would have to be expanded only became clear through further engagement with the issues. *AIDS intersects with and requires a critical rethinking of all of culture*” (1989 15, my emphasis). Paula Treichler echoes Saussure’s notion that language organizes the way we experience the world and bifurcates the infectious nature of the disease: “AIDS ... is simultaneously an epidemic of a transmissible lethal disease and an epidemic of meaning and signification. Both epidemics are equally crucial for us to understand, for, try as we may to treat AIDS as ‘an infectious disease’ and nothing more, meanings continue to multiply wildly and at an extraordinary rate.” (32)

It might be productive to question whether AIDS can be seen, addressed, felt or touched these days in a neutral manner. I would certainly assert that it is not possible: being so attached to fluids, to sexuality, AIDS becomes inevitably subjective (i.e. ascribed to the subjects). I would also agree with Paul B. Preciado’s statement that, at the end of the 20th

¹⁴ Richard Poirier takes over Sontag’s argument on the metaphorical power of the epidemic and claims that “AIDS has become the metaphor for the *sin* of homosexuality and, more generally I think, the *sin* of sexual pleasure” (464).

century, sex became a central piston for the omnipresent, global capitalist engine. So central, in fact, that it turned out to be crucial to control sexuality in order to preserve the perpetuation of a system of values that ensured power. Preciado would label it as technocapitalism, one that relies on science seen as a religion, because “it has the capacity to create, and not simply to describe, reality. The success of contemporary technoscience is to transform ... our AIDS in triple therapy. Unable to discern what comes before ... if triple therapy or AIDS” (*Testo* 35). To control HIV-positive subjects, to regulate what happens inside their bodies, to determine who lives healthy and who gets sick, has become just another one of the tentacles of how biopolitics work in the society of vigilance. The panoptics, the towers of control, have been progressively substituted by pills: the state controls the body from within, the system has become more sophisticated and infallible.

Alongside the regulations comes a system of values that manifests in discourses, metaphors, and rejections, and that tinges AIDS with guilt and shame – the virus being the embodiment of fluid exchange through an abject intercourse. It reveals what belongs to the realm of privacy and prudence, and thus it creates a short-circuit of discomfort: something that a normative system simply can't allow.

However, not all *AIDSes* are equal. When addressing the representations of AIDS in the theatrical scene in the United States of America, Alberto Sandoval claims that theatre triggers its own hierarchies about what can and what can't be represented, and about who can and who can't appear onstage. The degree of *obscenity* is variable, and he is concerned about the absence of Latino and colored characters in the AIDS theatre, which provides a complex interjection of homophobia, racism and class discrimination. Sarah Schulman (in *Stagestruck* and *The Gentrification of the Mind*), Samuel Delany (in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*) or Michael Warner (in *The Trouble with Normal*) have raised their voices and denounced what would be called the sanitization of LGBT politics, by the society in general

and by part of the same gay and lesbian community –needless to say, the part that has been allowed to adjust to the paradigm of normativity.

Those voices, critical with what homonormativity represents¹⁵, state that after the so-called gay liberation (symbolically born during the Stonewall riots in New York City, in June 1969) and, especially, after the achievement of egalitarian marriage in many Western countries, the gay and lesbian culture, or at least a substantial part of it, has become more docile¹⁶. The access to the mainstream, to an official narrative, has subsequently led to a renounce to certain cultural representations. It has implied to leave behind, in the margins, the more anti-normative, queer ideas and actions, as well as those subjects excluded from the aural narratives of normalization. The tension between this new discursive centrality and the peripheries above which it is sustained has left out most trans folks (those who problematize through their gender identities and their bodies the binary social order), those who don't ascribe to the mirroring of heteronormative habits that comes along with egalitarian marriage (open relationships, promiscuity, intergenerational bonds), and HIV-positive individuals as well as people living with AIDS (those who question, by being alive and interacting with the community, the hierarchies established by the pharmacopornographic regime). If the race and class vectors and introduced, the demographics of this periphery would expand significantly.

In “*Ética de lo obsceno*”, I argue why Catalan culture is moving within this archive of absences and invisibilities. It is essential, I believe, to consider how the dynamics of the emergence LGBT movement in Spain and the outcome of historic events overlap. It can be stated that the gay community in Spain went from breathlessly celebrating the liberties

¹⁵ There is a certain consensus in quoting Lisa Duggan's definition of what she calls *the new homonormativity*. According to Duggan, it can be defined as “A politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (179). It brings together, she states later on, neoliberalism and the gay community that aspires to benefit from it.

¹⁶ The gay liberation movement of the last 100 years has often been explained in a triumphalist narrative arc that goes from medicalization and criminalization to normality and complete integration. This underscores an erroneous and deeply problematic idea of progress that leaves out the subjects who can't accommodate to the paradigms of homonormativity.

brought by the new democratic regime to sink in the tragedy of AIDS. With a newly-born activism, trying to follow-up with the liberation movement that had erupted in the American gay community nearly one decade earlier (the first Gay Pride demonstration in Spain was held in Barcelona in 1977, eight years after the Stonewall riots), the AIDS pandemic impacted the community when it was still developing. As Paul Julian Smith comments, by the end of the 20th century, “the weakness of identity politics in Spain has rendered the Spanish people more vulnerable to transmission, since a sense of responsibility and of solidarity with the others could not emerge” (“La representación” 309).

Gay American theatre had time (not too much, but at least it had some) to forge a tradition solid enough to de-spectacularize gay plots and characters. “In the 1950s and 1960s stages”, claims Alberto Mira in an essay on American theatre, “the homosexual was, above all, a spectacle. Spectacle with regard to an image that was constructed to be seen as something exceptional and remote, feeding scopophilia. The spectacle of the pathology, the spectacle of a mythological being, abject, distant and extravagant” (“De lo patológico” 227). The premiere of *Boys in the Band*, the pioneer play by Mart Crowley on Broadway, in April 1968, just as the revolutionary waters were reaching a boiling point, is considered the point of departure to what will be defined as *gay theatre*: a tradition that represents the problems of gays instead of representing the “gay problem”¹⁷. In the fourteen years between the premiere of *Boys in the Band* and the landing of *Torch Song Trilogy* on Broadway in 1982 (after its stunning success as separate monologues in the underground, queer stage of LaMama) some playwrights, embedded with the activism that had emerged, started to write gay characters loaded with humanity and empathy, characters that live stories of love and pain. Arnold

¹⁷ Jesse Green’s article “A Brief History of Gay Theatre, in Three Acts”, published in *The New York Times* on February 26, 2018, addresses the history of gay theatre in the United States while celebrating the revival on Broadway of three quintessential plays in the history of queer dramatic tradition: Mart Crowley’s *Boys in the Band*, Harvey Fierstein’s *Torch Song* (previously known as *Torch Song Trilogy*) and Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*.

Beckhoff, the protagonist of *Torch Song Trilogy*, serves as an example of the humanity in homosexual characters who are sons of the gay liberation movements. He evolves from disenchantment in love to parenthood and to revealing a personal tragedy involving the homophobic murder of his former lover, in an unfolding of emotions through several events of his life; from loneliness to the problematic relationship with his mother.

The ground, therefore, was planted so that, when the AIDS tragedy unexpectedly erupted, gay theatre had reached a sufficiently consistent degree of maturity and of respectability. Larry Kramer, Tony Kushner or Terrence McNally could create, and premiere on the mainstream circuit, plays that dealt with AIDS through the activist denunciation (*The Normal Heart*, 1985), the intimate empathy (*Love! Valour! Compassion!*, 1994) or the epic allegory (*Angels in America* 1993 and 1994). Other plays succeeded in intersecting queer / AIDS narratives and variations over latinidad. That is the case, among others, of Pedro Monge Ráfuls's *Noche de Ronda* (1991) and Cherríe Moraga's *Heroes and Saints* (1992).

Meanwhile, in Spain, the gay and lesbian community was just beginning to wonder what the idea of "freedom" implied and how it might unfold. It appears exhaustively thematized in the novel *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera*, by Eduardo Mendicutti (published in 1981): it is the constant word that La Madelón (who has claimed La Catarsis as her new *mot de guerre*) ceaselessly shouts in the demonstration that takes place in the last section of the book. It might not be an overstatement to affirm that the gay community, still fighting to recover from the dictatorship and ardent to enjoy the first glimpses of freedom, was an exhausted social body, not strong enough to cope with the arrival of a plague that would punish them violently and that they could not figure out how to manage¹⁸. Too much for a plague that, as Ricardo Llamas and Fefa Vila observe, raised "unprecedented political

¹⁸ Exhaustion plays, in my opinion, an important role here. In 1987, Michael Bronski wrote that "It is impossible to be a gay male today and not think of AIDS all the time." (60) In a way, the gay community tried to stop thinking about death, even if this meant to look away and, probably in an unintentional way, to abandon those who suffered the epidemic in first person.

questions, such as the construction or promotion of alienated bodies, immunodefficient bodies, sick bodies”. We would have to wait until the 1990s to see the first organized reactions to the plague, when “the new lesbian and gay activism by groups like LSD and La Radical Gai established a critical approximation to the mechanisms through which a homophobic system determines the physical and social life and death of those who embody dissidence.” (215)

Discrimination is, indeed, exhausting. As Michael Warner states, most people aspire to be normal –“And who can blame them, if the alternative is being abnormal, or deviant, or not being one of the rest of us?”, he adds (*The Trouble*, 53). Society is constantly testing its members about their supposed adscription to normality (*okay, you are normal at the moment, but will you still be normal later?*). The pressure of being normal is particularly weighty within the gay and lesbian community, because gays and lesbians have, until recently, been included in the group of the deviants. Warner, in a queer discursive turn, wonders why the alternative to deviation has to be normalcy: “it is ironic, to say the least, when we are now told that our aspiration should be to see ourselves as normal. No doubt gay people regard this as the ultimate answer to the common implication that being gay is pathological ... normal and pathological are not the only options” (*The Trouble* 59). The pressure to appear as normal is constant and the society is especially vigilant with the lesbian and gay individuals. This translates into a certain anxiety to be *normalest*: even more normal than the so-called normal¹⁹. This social anxiety might lead to what has been called “internalized homophobia”:

¹⁹ In *Cruel Optimism* (2008), Lauren Berlant recalls the downside of adjusting to the expectations of normalcy and elaborates how the pressure to enjoy (and show off) what she names “the good-life” tends to, paradoxically, generate anxiety between those subjects who feel that they could never fully achieve the goal of an abstract (but ongoing) *happiness*, especially in a time of economic and social crisis: “the dissolution of optimistic objects/scenarios that had once held the space open for the good-life fantasy”, she claims, generate other answers and transformations that result into “those binding kinds of optimistic relation we call ‘cruel’” (3), since the desired object/scenario ultimately becomes an obstacle that interposes between the subject and an impossible happiness. Chapter two of Berlant’s monograph (“Intuitionist”) intertwines her ideas on cruel optimism with HIV and its status of “chronic illness”, which problematizes the idea of durability and the reformulates the notion of crisis as an ongoing event instead of as a particular situation that has a limited impact in time (55-63).

the hostility, from within the gay community, towards those members of the community who continue to problematize the access to normalcy. Therefore, it's not strange that a substantial amount of the LGBT community (the Q for "queer" should be excluded because of its peripheral nature and its active opposition to the idea of normalcy) minimized the impact of AIDS, rejected those who directly suffered the illness or decided to look away –both at the beginning of the pandemic and nowadays, when it has reached the status of a chronic condition. In a Foucaultian way, Alberto Mira underscores that with AIDS, "the institutional homophobic discourse had found new ways to connect homosexuality with pathology, and while AIDS was taking human lives, some who considered themselves decent people started an illness of discourse, one that resulted into discrimination, pain, and injustice" ("De lo patológico" 253).

In *Lo nuestro sí que es mundial* (published in 2017), gay activist and historian Ramón Martínez aims to trace a genealogy of the LGBT movement in Spain, from the end of dictatorship to the present days. This book, from the "Lo nuestro" ("Our thing") to the affirmative "sí" in the title, is a tribute to the identity politics of forty years of activism, from the fight for the de-criminalization of homosexuality to the achievement of egalitarian marriage, which always works as a happy ending in the narratives of gay activism²⁰. However, what happens with what is left out, what needs to be claimed and defended? Out of the 341 pages of Martínez's book, barely fifteen address the AIDS epidemic in Spain: the chapter ironically named "'Teníamos que implicarnos': la aparición del sida" ("We Had to Commit': The Emergence of AIDS", 171-181); AIDS also appears in pages 277-279; and it is also briefly mentioned in the conclusions (301). Martínez opens the short chapter dedicated to the emergence of AIDS in Spain stating that part of the activism tried to separate HIV/AIDS from the gay community, claiming that "HIV and sexual and gender diversity have nothing to

²⁰ To mention only two examples, Luisge Martín's successful autobiography *El amor del revés* (2016) or the remarkable TV series *Nosotros Somos* (RTVE, 2018), which nonetheless elaborate an evolution from the dark times of illegality and trauma to the golden age of marriage equality – actually, *El amor del revés* ends with the author's wedding.

do with each other” (172). Afterwards, the author quotes a sentence that might be symptomatic of the attitude by part of the community towards the epidemic: “It was necessary to *dissociate* homosexuality from the emergence of the syndrome, in order to keep working on the *tolerance* towards homosexuality” (173, my emphasis). Here, the author refers to an essential debate, one that I believe could, at least partially, explain why HIV and AIDS have been absent almost totally from Catalan (as well as Spanish) drama. In the fight to access the privileges of equality, a substantial part of the gay movement considered it important to project a *healthy* image of homosexuals, and they could only achieve so by rendering invisible those members of the community they thought did not project that image. Llamas and Vila add: “anxious to escape from anatomical-medical determinisms without facing them, the gay movement looked away when, in the early 1980s, the first news about ‘a gay cancer’ arrived” (“Spain” 215)²¹.

In 2005, when the law that allowed same-sex couples to get married and adopt children was finally passed, part of the movement fell into a triumphant feeling of self-satisfaction being the third country in the world that incorporated gay and lesbian couples (or at least some of them) to that normality that Warren mentions: “marriage ... is designed both to reward those inside it and to discipline those outside it; adulterers, prostitutes, divorcees, the promiscuous, single people, unwed parents, those below the age of consent – in short, all those who become, for the purposes of marriage law, queer” (*The Trouble* 89)²². Excluded from that normality, as collateral damage, other more uncomfortable fights were left out:

²¹ As a matter of fact, the first time COGAM, one of the main LGBT associations of the time in Spain, does not publish in their magazine a single article or report about AIDS until 1989.

²² It is true that the HIV positive or people living with AIDS are not banned from getting married. However, their condition and the erroneous idea of HIV being a venereal disease problematizes pillars of the Western society such as monogamy, health, or hygiene. The connections of HIV with the idea of normalcy are, to say the least, complex.

those who could put at risk the good image that, in the eyes of the society, the community started to project²³.

It could be said, then, that a representative part of the gay culture, in its meteoric progress from the abject (represented by the *Ley de vagos y maleantes* and the *Ley sobre peligrosidad y rehabilitación social*, the laws that penalized homosexual acts in Spain until 1995) to the normative (represented by the law that allowed same-sex marriages, approved in Spain only ten years later, in 2005), tip-toed through the phase where the North-American or French activism had to get their hands dirty: the fierce fight to claim people living with HIV or AIDS to the narrative, to the history of the LGBTQ community.

²³ On August 7, 2018, Ramón Martínez asked a question via Twitter: what are the problems and the challenges that the LGTBQ currently need to face? Among the myriad of issues that came up in the more than fifty answers to Martínez's post, only one person mentioned HIV integration and visibility as a challenge that the gay community still had to face. That person was me.

1. Globalization, Gentrification, and the Epidemic in the Antipodes: Guillem Clua's

Marburg

The concept of gentrification in neoliberal times has disseminated into a productive set of polysemic variations. What we talk about when we talk about gentrification? First, we talk about an urban phenomenon that originated in the mid-20th century in the central areas of many Western cities, and that consists in the progressive substitution of subaltern communities (rich and diverse in ethnicities, sexualities, languages, etc.) for a more homogeneous group from higher social and economic classes. Gentrification takes place under the promise of bringing more security, better hygiene and prosperity to those urban areas; all this, while generating a urban network that rewrites the narrative of the gentrified area²⁴. However, there's also, as Sarah Schulman claims in *The Gentrification of the Mind*, a "spiritual gentrification" that comes with its urban analogous. One that is linked with the notion of *sanitization* and that, in Schulman's words, affects "people who did not have rights, who were not represented, who did not have power or even consciousness about the reality of their own condition". A procedure that "alienated people from the concrete process of social and artistic change" (14). Thinking more specifically about Spain, the gentrification and ecocide of the neighborhood of Chueca, in Madrid, seems to go hand in hand with the process of *homonormativization* within the gay community²⁵.

²⁴ The concept of gentrification is inevitably linked to Jane Jacobs and her indispensable *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). However, it's in a latter book, *Dark Age Ahead* (2004), written after the effective gentrification of several areas of Manhattan such as the Village or Times Square, when Jacobs warns in a more explicit way about the dangers of gentrification, which, according to her, ends up benefitting the higher class to the expense of the lower classes, while suppressing the diversity, and therefore the identity, of the gentrified areas. "Gentrification benefited neighborhoods, but so much less than it could have if the displaced people had been recognized as community assets worth retaining. Sometimes when they were gone their loss was mourned by gentrifiers who complained that the community into which they had bought had become less lively and interesting", she claims, for instance (214).

²⁵ The other great gay neighborhood in Spain, Barcelona's Gaixample, brings together another kind of socioeconomic and urban characteristics that minimize the impact of the dynamics of gentrification – probably because it was already born under the umbrella of *pinkwashing*. Gaixample emerged in the mid 1990s, when several gay entrepreneurs decided to open up a series of bars for the LGBTQ community (Este Bar, Satanassa, and Punto BCN) in the bourgeois neighborhood of the Eixample. Designed by Ildefons Cerdà, following the

One of the first effects of this gentrification of the narratives would be an acritical acceptance of welfare and the comfortability of being able to adjust to a *normalcy* which implies at least two oversights: one, that every center generates peripheries and that our comfortability is based upon other discriminations; and two, that certain narratives are formulated from a position that has an interest in washing history up. That would help understand the (quite generalized) concern about ignoring the impact of AIDS in the history of the gay community in Spain, and in silencing, by not insisting in a sexual education and cultural representation, those who nowadays live with HIV (which is not a small number, according to the statistics already mentioned). That would also explain why so many artists, philosophers, and people who had a voice and suffered firsthand the consequences of the epidemic, decided to remain silent and not face (and fight against) the stigma. The consequence of all this is a cultural and historic archive that can be described, at the very least, as inconsistent.

The fact that Catalan drama has ignored, except for the few exceptions that I am going to comment on in this chapter, AIDS, can be contemplated as a supposedly involuntary adscription to a contemporary manifestation of homophobia: the one that tolerates the existence of gays and lesbians only if they conform to a benign homonormativity. One that, in consequence, condemns to the invisibility and silences those people and those relational modalities that question this new hierarchal system.

utopian views of the 19th century cities, the modern orography of the Eixample is a layout of straight, wide and open streets, with plenty of space for the circulation of vehicles, pedestrians, and air. Aladino Nespral and the other businessmen thought that the time had come to move away from the dark, secluded and insalubrious little spaces in el Raval, the former outskirts of Barcelona, where most of the bars for the subaltern communities were found (such as La Concha, Pastís, Marsella, and others), and bet on wider spaces and gay visibility. Alberto Mira addresses the emergence of the gay neighborhoods in Madrid and Barcelona in the last section of *De Sodoma a Chueca* (604-15).

Marburg, by Guillem Clua (2010) is the only Catalan play that has thematized HIV or AIDS in the mainstream theatre circuit in Catalonia. In my conversation with the author published at (*Pausa*.) theatre journal in 2018, Clua recalls getting the inspiration to write the play as he was living in New York City, shortly after the discreet premiere of his most recent play *La pell en flames* (*The Skin in Flames*). “There [in NYC] I saw that relatively young playwrights are writing ambitious, big plays... and that they managed to premiere them off-Broadway! Then I thought: why can’t I write, as well, a big play? I did it thinking that, probably, I would never be able to see *Marburg* on stage.” Unexpectedly, the play ended up becoming a turning point for Guillem Clua’s career. Back in Barcelona, the playwright is selected as one of the members of the newer generation of young playwrights for the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (TNC) T6 Project to support new Catalan dramaturgy. However, when Sergi Belbel, TNC’s artistic director at the time, read *Marburg*, he offered Clua to premiere his play in TNC’s second stage, the Sala Petita.

Marburg’s premiere finally occurred on May 19th, 2010, in Sala Petita, under Rafel Duran’s direction. As Sharon Feldman stated in an article for *Visat*, the digital magazine of the Catalan section of the Pen Club in 2015, this first staging of the play “still holds a privileged position in the collective theatre memory of the city”. After the Barcelona premiere, the play has been presented, as a complete production or as a stage reading, in Venezuela, Italy, the United States, and France. Marion Peter Holt, *Marburg*’s translator into English, comments that the play, besides marking a turning point in Guillem Clua’s career as a playwright²⁶, also indicated the emergence of an exceptional voice in Catalan drama both in scope and in influences: one that was not based in the ellipsis in the plot and the dialogue that mimic David Mamet or Neil LaBute (notable influences in the new Catalan playwrights), but

²⁶ After *Marburg*, Clua became more decidedly committed to dealing with gay issues: his following plays were a romantic gay comedy, *Smiley*, that was premiered extendedly in Spain, Europe and Latin America, and a drama à la Terrence McNally, *L’oreneta / The Swallow*, about a survivor of a terrorist attack in a gay bar, based on the tragedy in Orlando’s *Pulse*. I will address both *Smiley* and *The Swallow* in the third section of this dissertation.

in a more epic and global vision of the theatre and of the world, clearly inspired in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (68). This global vision manifests itself, also according to Feldman, in the "blurring of the lines that demarcate space and time, creating a sort of continuity between imagination and reality", and, as Marcos Ordóñez suggested in his laudatory review of the play for *El País*, "between the living and the dead" (22)²⁷.

Marburg is, indeed, an ambitious play regarding the different intersections of four plots, which demands a complex scenic structure. The play begins recalling a true event that happened in August, 1967 in the German town of Marburg, when an unknown virus breaks through with a colossal virulence and kills 23 people after days of torture and pain. In a science lab in Marburg, Germany, Tom and Helga, two medical researchers, find out that one of their co-workers has been infected and is dying by the virus. They begin to wonder whether they might be infected as well. Through the nexus of sickness, which, as Martin Sherman states in the prologue of the Catalan edition, is "one of the greatest networks that connect modern life" (11), the play takes the spectators to four different places that share the same name, in four different, significant moments of the last fifty years. Clua sets the second plot of the action in a country house in Lake Marburg (near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in the United States) in March 1981: Walter and Nancy, an upper-middle class older couple, have just lost their son, Walter Junior, who presumably drowned in the lake. Meanwhile, Nancy's sister, Claire, is starting to suffer the effects of Alzheimer's, as the TV screen announces that President Ronald Reagan has been shot. The third plot is set in Marburg, a small village in

²⁷ In spite of immediately attracting the interest of scholars and writers such as Sharon Feldman, Marion Peter Holt, Núria Perpinyà, and Martin Sherman, *Marburg* got irregular reviews when it was premiered in 2010. Joaquim Armengol, in *El Punt*, described it as an "enticing reflection on the human condition" that makes the audience "recover the faith in theatre" (31). Francesc Massip, in *Diari Avui*, celebrates that "[a]t last Catalan dramaturgy generates a contemporary canvas with universal vocation" (35). César López Rosell, in his laudatory review for *El Periódico*, writes that Clua "does not hesitate to address our connections with illness and death", and that, overall, the play "deserves the ovation that the audience during the final bows" (15). In contrast, Begoña Barrera wrote in *El País* that it was "well structured, but irregular" (49). And, in *La Vanguardia*, Joan-Anton Benach labels it as "entertaining" although he admits having felt a certain uneasiness with some of the plots, mainly the one in Australia (41).

South Africa, in December 1999, right before the end of the millennium (in another evident Kushnerian resonance), when Father Gabriel, a catholic priest who specializes in exorcisms and struggles with his own faith, visits a chapel to investigate a miracle. According to the parishioners and to Acanit, the protestant nun who is in charge of the chapel, the figure of Jesus Christ in the crucifix has been crying blood.

The last plot, the one that takes place in Marburg, Australia, in the present times (June 2010) is the one that revolves around HIV. In this plot, two different generations of gay men, with almost starkly dissimilar ideas regarding the virus, come into play. Dundy, a 46-year-old HIV positive meteorologist, contacts Buck, a 17-year-old student through a dating website. They decide to meet in the observatory where Dundy works. As a survivor from the years when the virus was lethal, Dundy still lives with the trauma of all the human losses he experienced. He is a wounded soul, and needs to take his time before having any kind of physical intercourse with Buck –at least, enough time to tell his future lover about his HIV status. Buck, on the other hand, does not want to wait to have sex (*Marburg* 61). What the audience does not know is that Buck not only knows Dundy's serostatus through a common friend, but that he secretly desires Dundy to pass the virus on to him.

Guillem Clua lays out several subjects through Buck and Dundy's Australian plot. Firstly, he employs the age gap between both characters to show how the connections with AIDS have changed from Dundy's to Buck's generation. Dundy, 46, is a survivor and carries the legacy of a generation that had to live with the fear of a contagion that, in the first years of the epidemic, practically meant a death sentence. In spite of medical advances that have turned the virus from a death sentence to a chronic condition, the trauma of living the years when AIDS hit harder can't be erased. Dundy represents that generation that had to figure out what the idea of not having a future for granted meant. as Gregory Woods states, history of homosexuality, built upon the punishments and the consequences of homophobia, has too

often been bonded with the notion of death. This is why the emergence of the AIDS epidemic, in the beginning of the 1980s, “has returned many of us –particularly those of older generations– to a place where we once felt, if not happiest, most at home. It is where so many of us were brought up, a place we call the ‘closet’, a lonely space where nothing is (in the ‘old’ sense) gay” (*History* 361). Dundy embodies the negativity of a present without future – a negativity of absolute isolation and individualism that would relate to the antirelational turn that Leo Bersani or Lee Edelman promulgate²⁸. This is why, Woods claims, “desire itself, fixed on the future, becomes prematurely elegiac, morbidly anticipating a time when the encounter desired will be in the past and the desirer will have died of its effects” (363).

On the other hand, Buck, the teenager lover, represents the privileged new generation (in the Western countries) that has reached sexual maturity alongside the last advances in treatment for HIV positive patients. Consequently, this generation does not inevitably link the virus with death –and, as a consequence, undermine the current effects of the virus and relegate to oblivion the victims of the preceding generation. The same idea of “chronic

²⁸ Besides the MLA panel previously mentioned on the introduction, Jack Halberstam offers another lucid synthesis of the antirelational turn in his text “The Politics of Negativity in Recent Queer Theory”:

Bersani’s book *Homos* proposed a counterintuitive but crucial shift in thinking away from projects of redemption, reconstruction, restoration, and reclamation and toward what can only be called an antisocial, negative, and antirelational theory of sexuality. The sexual instinct, then, in this formulation, nestles up against the death drive and constitutes a force opposing what Bersani terms “the tyranny of the self”. Rather than a life force that connects pleasure to life, survival, and futurity, sex, and particularly homo-sex and receptive sex, is a death drive that undoes the self, releases the self from the drive for mastery, coherence, and resolution” (823).

In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz states that “the antirelational turn in queer studies was a partial response to critical approaches to a mode of queer studies that argued for the relational and contingent value of sexuality as a category” (11). Muñoz confronts Edelman’s thesis in the aforementioned monograph *No Future*, by affirming that there’s an ethic need to insist in the social and collective component of the queer community. Halberstam also states that Edelman’s negative vision is built on a very traditional, homonormative canonical archive: he uses Tennessee Williams, Henry James, Jean Genet, Oscar Wilde, and others to create his critique; Halberstam argues that this narrow and conservative archive undermines the power of Edelman’s thesis, and that it’s necessary “to turn away from the comfort zone of polite exchange to embrace a truly political negativity, one that promises, this time, to fail, to make a mess, to fuck shit up” (824), in order to build something constructive – for instance, Halberstam’s notion of queer failure, fully developed in his essay *The Queer Art of Failure*. Personally, I would add that Edelman’s antirelational theory, as it happens with most oppositional theories, is built on an opposing (and symmetric) vision of the social structures and values – which prevents it to get rid of the symmetry on which the theory is built. Following Halberstam, I would say that queer relationality would be more productive if it’s thought in creative terms (by proposing new affects and different forms of lineage) than by merely opposing heteronormative constructions such as “the future”.

condition” implies a different kind of bonding with temporality (with *chronos*): future is back on the table as a possibility, but formulated in a different way. As Jack Halberstam mentions in *In A Queer Time and Place*, HIV modifies how people are connected with normativity, not only linked to negativity, but also because all the questions that HIV raises imply “the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing.”

(2). Buck identifies with what it is known as a *bug chaser*: someone who is looking forward to consciously incorporating the human immunodeficiency virus –euphemistically named “the bug” – in his body. By using a terminology linked with the idea of fertilization (“to breed”), this rite stops being seen as a mortal ritual to become something positive, as a way to generate a sort of new form of life.

Tim Dean argues that bareback intercourse (sexual interaction without protection), which has become a trend within the gay community, can be considered as a subculture²⁹: “After two decades of safe-sex education, erotic risk among gay men has become organized and deliberate, not just accidental. The principled abandonment of condoms has led to scenarios of purposeful HIV transmission and, on that basis, to the creation of new sexual identities and communities.” (ix) This is, according to Dean, “not only an unprecedented situation in the history of AIDS but also a new chapter in the history of sexuality” (ix). Moreover, organized bareback subculture constitutes, Dean argues, a response to the sanitization of normative partnership achieved through egalitarian marriage (according to Michel Foucault, the institutionalization of affects implied its de-sexualization³⁰) and that has unsurprisingly received a big number of criticism as a “pathological” and “irresponsible” attitude – a criticism that sometimes originated within the LGBT collective³¹. Dean also

²⁹ The study of subcultures revolves around how these subcultures relate to the hegemonic culture – generally by opposition. A good introduction to subcultural studies would be Ken Gelder and Sarah Thorton’s preface study for *The Subcultures Reader*.

³⁰ The first volume of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, especially Chapter IV, develops this topic.

³¹ Tim Dean argues that the pathologization of the queer is not new, although it had originally come from outside the community: “For decades we have battled stereotypes of queers as homicidal or suicidal, only to have

rejects the antirelational turn in Edelman's claim of futurelessness, since barebackers defy the erasure of temporality AIDS traditionally implied³², and states that this subculture, contrary to other traditional subcultures studied by the Birmingham School, is not necessarily associated to a working class (in the United States, where access to the last generation of retroviral treatments also depends on your income): "bareback subculture involves modes of aesthetic self-fashioning that, as Foucault has shown, are traditionally available only to social elites. Although barebackers cultivate an image of democratic, rough-and-ready sexuality ... often they also understand themselves as sexual elites, in a manner akin to some professional athletes" (*Unlimited* 39). The class axis, here, plays an important role: the immunity of barebackers would only be granted in certain countries (the ones with universal healthcare) or to those members of the upper class, who can afford the expensive therapies to control the virus: it would certainly constitute an unattainable luxury for poor and undocumented immigrants, or for those citizens who don't have full access to the welfare system. I will get back to this further on this chapter.

In *Marburg*, Clua thematizes the clash between these two opposed attitudes facing AIDS: Dundy's, pessimistic, stigmatized, surrounded by the ghosts of all the people he has seen die; and Buck's, tired of preventive repressions, see(k)ing contagion as a relief:

BUCK: You're too afraid.

articulate proponents of deliberate HIV transmission emerge from within our ranks. We have argued that homosexuals are not doomed, not unproductive, not serial killers, and no more violent than heterosexuals." (*Unlimited* 19) The bareback subculture, according to Dean, shows images of gay men that do not correspond with the ones more conservative organizations such as Freedom to Marry or Human Rights Campaign aim to promote in order to gain respectability – hence, always according to Dean, the conflict and the gap between homonormative gays and queers: "homosexuality's social acceptance is being won by the sanitizing of queer people's image. And what sanitizes better than desexualizing gayness, downplaying kinkiness, and pathologizing the sexual subcultures, including barebacking, that queers have invented?" (19)

³² In his article "The Antisocial Homosexual", Dean claims that "the antisocial thesis originates not in queer theory but in right-wing fantasies about how 'the homosexual agenda' undermines the social fabric" (826). Therefore, according to him, Edelman's thesis embrace "the homophobic alignment of queerness with the death drive" in order to critique reproductive futurism, and thus he "furnishes a too narrow convention of the social" and he "paints an unimaginative picture of the future" (827).

DUNDY: Afraid of what?

BUCK: Of the virus. And you shouldn't be.

DUNDY: Fear is what keeps me alive.

BUCK: But it's not necessary now, it's already a part of you. You talk as if it's something bad.

DUNDY: It is.

BUCK: It has its positive side too.

DUNDY: Aside from the name?

BUCK: You don't realize the power you have. The people you hook up with trust you completely. ... you could pass on the virus in a thousand different ways and they wouldn't notice. ... You could have turned them into something completely different. You could have changed their lives. Isn't it exciting? (96)

By linking the capacity to pass the virus on with power and domination, Buck invests physical intimacy with an extra ritualistic charge: the added idea of (sero)conversion takes bareback to the semantic field of the ceremonial – you *convert* to Judaism, or to Islam, and you *convert* to positivity. As Dean states, “Barebackers’ abandonment of condoms is motivated not only by a lust for enhanced physical sensation but also by a desire for certain emotional sensations, particularly the symbolic significance attached to experiences of vulnerability or risk.” (*Unlimited* 45) Buck makes this idea of power noticeable to Dundy when he tells him that “You could have turned them into something completely different”. The concept of “turning” (“*convertir*” in Catalan) symbolically links AIDS to the idea of creative transformation of a new life: seroconverters *create* their own kind, establishing with them a genealogy of possession, in a sort of modern vampirism³³.

³³ In *El amor de los muchachos*, Adrián Melo claims that the traditional “equation vampire = homosexual seems to have gotten stronger with the irruption of AIDS” (154), and gives the example of Anne Rice’s series *The*

As I stated earlier, the conflict in the Australian plot emerges when Buck asks Dundy to infect him with the virus: “I want you to fuck me without a condom. I want to have the virus in my body and I want you to be the one to put it there”, Buck confesses during the climax that leads to the end of *Marburg*’s first act (96). For Buck, the conscious search of seroconversion is, on one hand, a way to give up the pressure and the constant stress to think about strategies of protection and the neurosis generated by the risks he undertakes in every erotic meeting. On the other hand, it’s a way to generate a familial bond with Dundy through toxicity:

BUCK: When I started going with guys, it scared me, like everyone. I was afraid I’d catch it, but the more sex I had ... I realized that it would happen someday ... it’s inevitable.

...

And you know what it means to suddenly be free of the bogey of catching it? You can only do it if you assume it’ll happen to you, like it or not. You do it if you understand that you’ll end up positive. It’s the only way to stop doing artificial sex, with condoms, afraid. It’s the only way we have of becoming human again. (104)

Afterwards, he adds:

Vampire Chronicles, plus the film adaptation of *Interview with the Vampire* (1994, directed by Neil Jordan), where four Hollywood sex-symbols (Antonio Banderas, Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt and Christian Slater) “face the phantom of homosexuality and AIDS. ... those who come out at night dress in a tight black leather, they look for sex and they can transmit with their blood and semen the mortal poison” (155-6). Melo also gives another filmic example: the comedy *La verdadera naturaleza del amor* (1994, directed by Denys Arcand). There are other examples of this metaphoric connection in theatre. To name just two of them, the (quite homophobic) monologue *El conde Drácula tiene sida*, by Carlos Sáez Echevarría, and *Dorian*, by Carlos Be, a sophisticated rewriting of Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* performed in Madrid’s alternative venue La pensión de las pulgas, in which AIDS operates in a silent but evident way: Be portrays a young, attractive boy who nurtures from men and kills them by having sexual intercourse with them.

BUCK: ... I do love you ... And if I were positive, I'd love you even more. I'd be like you. We'd be bound together, and that bond would be stronger than love. (106)

A “bond ... stronger than love” in the era that destroyed the romantic convention of the *happily ever after*³⁴. As Tim Dean states, bareback subculture (which he links to the free circulation of the virus) marks a radical change in “the social organization of kinship and relationality. The AIDS epidemic has given gay men new opportunities for kinship because sharing viruses has come to be understood as a mechanism of alliance, a way of forming consanguinity with strangers or friends.” (6) Dean brings back here the queer idea of community that Michel Foucault suggested in his *History of Sexuality* and stressed in a well-known interview he conceded to the queer magazine *Le Gai Pied* in 1981, where the philosopher states that, in the eyes of the homophobic, the most troublesome element of a homosexual relationship would not lie in the sexual acts that could take place in that relationship, but what he denominates “the way of life” that unfolds from a relational system conceived through non-normative desire. This way of life, always according to Foucault, intersects race, class and age difference (the three pillars of normativity), and “can yield intense relations not resembling those that are institutionalized” (“Friendship” 138). Foucault sees homosexuality as a “historic occasion to reopen affective and relational virtualities” through “pleasure”: a network of relationships that, in being excluded from the norm, generate their own, transversal community (one where class, race and age intersect), without the need to adjust to the paradigms that organize the dominant society. Naturally, this kind of kinship generates resistance from the heteronormative institutions. Aliaga and Cortés, writing about subversive spaces in Spanish and Latin American art, argue that “every relationship that is nonmonogamous or that is not consecrated inside the [paradigms of] straight marriage ...

³⁴ In section three of this dissertation, I will further explore this subject.

will be denigrated in offensive terms such as chaotic, promiscuous, infectious relationships, especially the acts between men (and specifically, anal intercourse)” (*De amor* 66).

In *Unlimited Intimacy*, Tim Dean works with a notion of kinship that relates to Foucault’s and to what Buck seems to ask from Dundy. A consequence to contagion “that is inventive rather than primarily reactive” (51). Again, a ritual (and again, it resonates with vampirism): “seroconversion is something that happens only once. It holds a unique status, somewhat akin to losing one’s virginity”, writes Dean (52). It is, precisely, the same image that Buck employs to try to convince Dundy:

BUCK: If you don’t do it, someone else will. And I want it to be you.

DUNDY: But why?

BUCK: Because I like you. No. More than that. I think I love you. And if it’s you... if you’re the one who does that... it’ll be... *it’ll be like losing my virginity* for the second time. (104, my emphasis)

In his straight-forward strategy, Buck also asks Dundy: “What’s the most important thing that has happened to you in life, Dundy? The most important thing that’s happened to you is finding out you’re positive. That’s the only thing that’s turned your life upside down. The only thing that’s changed you forever.” (104) At this point in the story, the Australian plot becomes a debate about HIV being something charged with negativity (Dundy’s departure position) or about it also being charged with affirmative outcomes (Buck’s point of view). In my conversation with Guillem Clua for (*Pausa.*), the playwright described Dundy as someone who “has not been capable to overcome the consequences of the epidemic: he’s isolated, he’s alone, he has not been able to rebuild his life after contagion and after the losses around him”. He is trapped in a negative presentness fraught with the threat of his own

condition and the potentiality of death, without a future to look forward to. Buck's discourse suddenly becomes appealing to him because in his lover's words he discovers the possibility of a future, unforeseen before in his life. Tim Dean proposes an idea of futurity that departs from Deleuze's "becoming" and of Guy Hocquenghem's reading of Freud in *Homosexual Desire*, which he places "neither on the side of death nor on the side of life", but somewhere else – Hocquenghem also states that homosexual desire "is the killer of civilized egos" (150)³⁵. It is a future that does not relate to what Elizabeth Freeman defines as chrononormativity (a normative conception of the biographical timeline, from birth to the age of getting married, having children, the time to ask for a mortgage, to retire, and to finally perish), but that relies on a queer conception of the idea of a good life. In this sense, having access to the retroviral therapy modifies the understanding of AIDS from the certainty of death to a prospective life, from the end to a new beginning, from a definitive and lethal stoppage of time to the optimistic possibility of a future. Ultimately, the retroviral therapy becomes a crucial personification of living: it becomes the embodiment of life itself. In *Testo Junkie*, Paul B. Preciado narrates his experience of his body becoming a *transdevice* as he explores a complex relationship with V.D. (Virginie Despentes, the novelist and filmmaker, famous for the novel *Baise-moi*, that she also adapted to a film, and for the radical feminist manifesto *Theorie King Kong*) and develops a theory about what he calls "the pharmacopornographic era", a new way to generate subjectivity by the capitalization of the pleasure and of the body that has become a "technobody": "the individual body works as an extension of the global technologies of communication" (41), he says, reformulating the American Feminist Donna Haraway notion of "technobiopower", which at the same time

³⁵ This idea of queer futurity works also as another critique to the antirelational turn postulated by Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman – which Dean, alongside with José Esteban Muñoz and partially with Jack Halberstam, fiercely opposes. In "The Antisocial Homosexual", Tim Dean sums up his intervention on a 2005 MLA panel on queer antirelationality, where he opposed Lee Edelman, who was also participating in the panel, by stating that the antirelational turn that Bersani and Edelman propose "originates not in queer theory but in right-wing fantasies about how 'the homosexual agenda' undermines the social fabric" (826).

reverses Michel Foucault's biopower: it's not about having power over life (and death) anymore, but having the power to control an interconnected living whole and to decide the nature of these connections. Preciado develops the notion of pharmacopornography primarily on the axis Viagra–Testosterone: drugs that can not only modify or fuel desire, but also problematize the connection between physical body and gender. However, even if the retroviral therapy only appears sporadically in Preciado's *Testo Junkie*, I believe it would operate as another strong argument for the pharmacopornographic regime: the access to the expensive medication is determined by race and class (it is, in global terms, a conflict between the so-called First World, whose pharmaceutical labs control the prices and the access to the medication, and the so-called Third World, whose population, in general terms, can't afford the elevated costs of the medicine). The pharmaceutical laboratories and the quality of the health service provided by the nations determine who has access to the drugs, therefore who gets to live. In Clua's *Marburg*, Buck fully and happily ascribes to this pharmacopornographic regime: he sees seroconversion as a way to become what Preciado defines as a technobody, a human body whose shape, durability, and viability, is defined by the ingestion of drugs, albeit not in a negative way, but as a superbody that rejects the old paradigms of life–death and natural–artificial.

Conversely, as a member of the generation that suffered the social and viral violences of the first years of AIDS, Dundy does not originally contemplate the epidemic as chronic or as something that could alter his connection to the notion of life in a non-negative way, but as a condition inevitably attached to mortality. Here we witness a collision of different temporalities: the time of fatality, represented by Dundy, and the time of chronicity, represented by Buck:

DUNDY: How can you be so frivolous about this? HIV is not a laughing matter, Buck,

it's not a game. It's a deadly virus. Do you know how many people have died from it?

Do you know how many friends I myself have lost?

BUCK: That was another time.

DUNDY: Every day people still die from it, and in a horrible way. Your immune system ceases to exist, for God's sake. It's as if you're starting to decay while you're still alive.

BUCK You shouldn't think of that.

DUNDY: How do you expect me not to think about it? Every time I have to take the fucking pills I think about it. Every day, without fail, every morning and every night, I open my little container and, like it or not, I remember that I'm sick, that there's a part of me that's poisoned and will always be. (104)

Dundy's daily pill works as a reminder that he still carries the virus in his body like a time bomb. It is also reminder that he is alive –the day after day of a perennial present that can't project itself to a future, that depends on the pharmaceuticals and on the state granting him access to therapy. In the first pages of his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault describes how the European society at the end of the 18th century witnessed the transition from a sovereign society to what he calls the “disciplinary society”: a form of power that holds dominion over life and death and carefully determines, according to demographic parameters and other kinds of national interest, who lives and who dies. This new kind of power is what Foucault denominates biopower: a system that does not only embrace the political or the juridical structures, but that manages to circulate inside the bodies, through fluids and blood and discipline; it is, to quote Preciado's words, “a force that penetrates and constitutes the body of the modern individual” (*Testo* 59). By acknowledging his perpetual (chronic) condition, reinforced daily by a pill, Dundy entangles himself in the system of pharmitologic

control. He becomes, to create one of Preciado's beloved neologisms, a *sexopolitical pharmacobody*, perpetually self-punished for being a homosexual that carelessly indulged in risky intimacy. Buck, on the other hand, provides the literal revelation that a pill is just a pill (other therapies, just as the pill to regulate cholesterol, the insulin shots to prevent diabetes, or the gastric protectors against stomach ulcers, are equally necessary for other human beings to live on and they are not fraught with guilt and defeat). Buck states that Dundy actually enjoys a perfectly healthy life, verbalizing the fact that he can be desired not in spite of being HIV positive but precisely because of that: carrying the virus gives him an extra appeal in Buck's eyes –“That virus makes you special, unique. And you should be proud of it”, he emphatically affirms (105)–. That is, precisely, what ultimately makes his offer appealing to Dundy.

This, and Buck's blackmail threats: “If you don't help me, I'll go to the police and I'll accuse you of forcing me to have sex with you.” (106).

It is after this threat, already in the second act of *Marburg*, that we discover that Dundy's character is connected to the Pennsylvania plot –in his description of a globalized world, Clua interconnects the four Marburgs in a manner that might remind the reader/spectator of the film *Babel* (2006), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu–: Dundy's former identity is Walter Jr., the boy that supposedly drowned in Lake Marburg in 1981, an event that ultimately destroyed the already precarious affective balance in his family. Through an intercontinental phone call that connects these two plots, we learn what really happened: Nancy, Dundy's mother, could not accept that her son was a homosexual (she caught him wearing a dress when he was a kid), and she threw him out of the family house after giving him a beating in front of his father: “I remember every blow you gave me while dad was striking his fists against the wall, helpless, and he was crying as if you were beating him”, he tells his mother (113). In 2010, Walter, Dundy's father, dies. Nancy, then, calls her son to apologize, and to tell him that his aunt, Claire, has Alzheimer's and has asked Nancy to kill

her. Dundy tells her it won't be difficult for her to kill her sister, since she already (metaphorically) killed her son. When he adds that "Sometimes the only way to make people happy is hurting them" (113), he realizes that these are the exact words Buck had said to him as he tried to seduce him. The words function as a true revelation, and, when Buck comes down to Dundy to apologize for the blackmailing that has not been consummated, Dundy forgives him.

DUNDY: I could love you, Buck. ... And if one day you hate me for what you want me to do to you...

BUCK: That will never happen. (113)

After being trapped in the futureless present of being pharmacologically dependent, Dundy finally talks about being abandoned by his family and caught in a perennial loneliness with the sole company of the human immunodeficiency virus³⁶, Dundy finds the opportunity to forge a queer kinship that would link him and Buck forever (through blood and sperm). Tim Dean comments that "By transforming relational affines (lovers) into consanguines (siblings) and by confusing relations of consanguinity with relations of descent, bareback 'breeding' irrevocably contaminates the elementary categories of kinship" (*Unlimited* 93). It is no coincidence that, immediately after learning that Dundy was rejected by his biological family, we discover that he has agreed to forge the kind of bond that Buck asks of him. In their last lines, Buck brings back the idea of the (vampirist) transformation / conversion, the

³⁶ The idea of the human immunodeficiency virus being a living organism of its own identity is central to part of the literature of AIDS. As Tim Dean comments, "They [people who have intercourse with HIV positive men] are having sex not only with other men but also with a virus" (17). This idea is also present in literary works, such as Jaime Manrique's poem "Turismo" ("Travel"), included in *Tarzan / My Body / Christopher Columbus*: "He is HIV / positive / and I have a relationship with him / and with his virus- / this millennium's triangle." (31). The same formulation can be found in works such as Fernando Molano's posthumous novel *Vista desde una acera* (2015).

rite of passage, while Dundy, finally convinced, infuses positivity, community and familial bonding in seroconversion:

BUCK: And *turn* me into someone new.

...

DUNDY: Someone who can be *born again*. (144, my emphasis)

Ultimately, Guillem Clua does not position himself morally. He allows the viewers to reach their own conclusions after listening what both characters have to say –something I consider an artistic improvement compared to plays like Larry Kramer’s aforementioned *The Normal Heart*, a play that had the ethical responsibility of incorporating certain didacticism. Actually, in our conversation for (*Pausa.*), Clua claimed that it was not “that necessary, nowadays, to write more or less pedagogic texts to teach the audience that they had to respect people living with HIV. It was time to take a step forward and to deal with other issues related to the epidemic. In this case, I wanted to write about the loss of respect towards the virus”. Like Tim Dean when he studies the bareback subculture, Clua rejects rendering a verdict or a personal opinion. He takes a critical distance from a debate with many ethical implications. This would cost him criticism such as Marcos Ordóñez’s, one of Spain’s more prominent theatre critics, in *El País*, who described Dundy’s narrative arch as a “step back” which goes from “erotic sanity” to a “nihilist embrace” (“Los virus” 22); In the Catholic-influenced journal *La Vanguardia*, Joan-Anton Benach praises the actor Ferran Vilajosana, who plays the character of Buck, in spite of the “nonsenses that the author makes him say” regarding seroconversion, and that brings the play to a “final mess” (“Viajes” 41). Lastly, in *El Punt*, Armengol inaccurately labels Dundy as “infected with AIDS” (“Marburg” 31). Employing expressions such as “erotic sanity” and “nonsense” to describe the debates that *Marburg*

fosters, and confusing HIV with AIDS, shows up to which point it is extremely difficult to maintain a neutral (and informed) gaze over the plot.

I believe this controversy partially originates from the precarious archive of AIDS theatre in Catalonia. Maybe, as Clua thought, it was time to talk about more complex issues such as the ethical dimension of bareback. But most of the spectators (and the critics) could not lean on any other staged precedent of a debate around AIDS, so the context was not ideal for an argument that did not provide moral relief by openly demonizing bug chasing. In our conversation, Clua admits that “I think I made a mistake by including the plot in such a complex play as *Marburg*, because it deserved a whole play where I could expand on it. Maybe in *Marburg* it got lost among so many epidemics”. The playwright felt disappointed that part of the audience and some critics would feel aghast by not understanding the plot: “I think it’s great that they [the audience] feel shocked because they are not ready to face a story; it’s not that great that they react this way because they did not understand it”. This points out the imbalance created between having scientifically advanced in knowledge and treatment to HIV, but not having created a cultural archive strong enough to affect and deconstruct social prejudices and stigmas. Again, we need to recall the idea of “crisis of signification”.

To end up with this analysis, I believe is worth noticing that *Marburg*, a global work in its geographical vision and its thematic scope (the play reflects upon the dynamics between the society of the individual and the immediacy of transnational interconnections in a global world), is not geolocalized in Catalonia. The most significant play to address HIV in Catalonia has situated the AIDS plot, literally, in its antipodes: in Australia. Clua confesses that this particular storyline “takes place in the antipodes by elimination rule. The Australian plot was the only one that did not have an assigned condition [all four *Marburgs* were each linked to a particular epidemic]. What happens in Australia could have taken place anywhere

else in the Western world. What matters to me, in this case, is *the temporal vector*: it is the history of the present, the one we are living nowadays” (my emphasis). It might also be constructive to think that, lacking a scenic archive that gives a voice to people living with AIDS and that exposes the history of the epidemic, Clua might have felt the need to bond with a sort of transnational scenic tradition that, due to its transversal construction, questions the normative order –i.e. to organize traditions by nations or languages. It’s a debate of unquestionable queer nature, since it problematizes the hierarchy of the national and therefore the idea of a different imagined community. After all, as Tim Dean states, through the dynamics of contagion (either involuntary or intended), through erotic contact (both in casual encounters and in other types or intensities of affective relationships), the plague has created a sort of alternative genealogy, that brings back the thoughts formulated by Foucault in his interview in *Le Gai Pied* and that does not take into account national, class or race division – instead, eroticism and affect prevail³⁷.

³⁷ It would not be just to end this section without mentioning another contemporary Catalan play that directly addressed AIDS, although in a different, non-queer context. *Discordants*, a piece created by actor and performer David Marín, was awarded a Desperta Grant to support new creations on stage in 2014, and was premiered at Teatre Eòlia in Barcelona (the venue of one of the city’s theatre schools), first, and afterwards at Barcelona’s Teatre Gaudí, in November and December, 2015. The play’s title, *Discordants*, points out to the idea of not agreeing or not being in harmony with someone else, as well as suggesting the notion of *serodiscordant*, which refers to a couple one member of which is HIV-positive and the other member is HIV-negative. *Discordants* tells the story of a serodiscordant straight couple, she being the HIV-positive member. The play, according to private conversations with Marín –a volunteer for BCN Checkpoint, a Barcelona organization that offers free HIV-AIDS tests and advice on sexual transmitted diseases (STDs)–, was written with the intention to provide answers and visibility around the virus – hence its undisguised didactic scope. Through the couple’s discussions, the play addressed different topics about HIV: how can the virus be transmitted (and how it can’t be transmitted)?; what does being undetectable exactly mean?; and which kind of treatments are available at the time? According to the press dossier, *Discordants* wants to “Eliminate the stigma of HIV/AIDS in many levels. We show a reality that hasn’t had much visibility, serodiscordance in a heterosexual couple, and therefore this allows us not to only focus on the problems of the victim, but on the problems that surround her. ... [The intention is] To undress the condition from its taboo and to take it to an earthlier sphere through how the relationship evolves. And to eradicate myths and show the true perils of this subject”. Despite being a text play, Marín commented that he did not write an actual text – only guidelines to raise certain subjects onstage. The play’s philosophy was based more in improvisations and in feeling what kind of debates they could develop according to the audience’s reactions. David Marín also co-created and directed *Grinder, el musical* (2016), a low-key, comic musical about the topics around Grindr, the popular gay hook-up smartphone app, and the gay community. In *Grinder*, Marín included a song about STDs where the HIV virus also played a part.

2. Aimar Pérez Galí's *The Touching Community: Kinships, Communities, and Affects Onstage*

The main controversy that emerged during the performances of *Marburg* in the TNC was caused by how the character of Buck contemplated seroconversion as something that held a constructive outcome as a generator of alternative familial bonds. According to those critics, to purposely search for seroconversion is morally condemnable. Does this moralistic approach suppurate, as well, when artists advocate for a positive regard of HIV/AIDS? In 1992, Jon Greenberg, an AIDS activist member of ACT UP New York, was invited to San Sebastián to participate in the workshop “La voluntad residual. Parábolas del desenlace” (“The Residual Will. Parables of the Outcome”), organized by the performance artist Pepe Espaliú. In the context of the San Sebastián workshop, Jon Greenberg read a paper about the lessons and affects of AIDS. His speech starts claiming that “We have a tendency in our lives and we are taught this in our society, to be afraid of what we don’t know” and to “create a very thick barrier”. “The only way”, he adds, “for that barrier to come down between two things that are completely different, or two things that we perceive as different, or something that we perceive as something to be afraid of, the only way we can get through that barrier is through understanding, and ultimately through love.” (“Conferencia” 221). Here, Greenberg is pointing at the fear of contagion from part of the population in the middle of the AIDS epidemic, mainly due to prejudice. “I also know a lot about what AIDS is about simply because I have AIDS”, he acknowledges, in a revolutionary coming-out statement.

Afterwards, he adds: “I know what this virus ... is doing in my body, and I know what it is doing in my mentality, ... and I know what it is doing sociologically, and I know what it’s doing politically, ... and I know what it’s doing racially and what it’s doing in the whole world” (222). The crescendo between the body (the individual) and race and politics (the

society) is, here, crucial to understand that Greenberg sees AIDS not as a problem that affects people individually, but something that has to do with communication, with community. And that happens in a global scale that transcends national borders: just like the Western (straight, white, male) societies, through “taxation”, “customs”, “borders and border guards”, through “defense systems” such as “the church, the government, the education system”, erect barriers to constrain and control the others (“The others being gays and lesbians, blacks, Arabs, I.V. drug users, women, etc.”), the body also tries to protect itself from the other that he perceives as dangerous (223).

Greenberg traces this analogy between the national body and the individual body in order to show that the only way to interact with those we regard as Others is through acceptance: to think that what we have pointed out as abject is just a subjective appreciation. But, speaking of AIDS, he wonders: what about it being a clinical condition? What about death as the ultimate consequence of AIDS? Greenberg read his paper 1992, and he died from AIDS-related complications months later, in 1993. Illness or death, he states, are not the exclusive monopoly of AIDS. It’s in the human nature to get sick and to eventually die: “people have always gotten sick, people have always ended up in the hospital ... We are not going to eliminate illness, ever.” (225). Further on, he adds: “we live in a society where for the most part ... we label dying people as the others. People who are living and people who are dying, and we’ve created this barrier between people who are living and dying ... we created all sorts of institutions to keep dying people away from us” (230). Greenberg claims that this rejection of the dying comes from our own fear to die. What AIDS has taught him, he says, is that “when you confront death you lose your fear of death, and when you lose your fear of death you start to live. Up until that time you are always living in reaction to death. When you lose your fear of death you can live ... and take some risks, take some chances. ... and the way that I do that is by learning to live in coexistence with the other.” (233)

This is, precisely, Greenberg's message: that AIDS, almost counterintuitively, can unveil a positive outcome, at least for some – and in a way, this claim of positivity relates to Buck's in Guillem Clua's *Marburg*. This leads us to what might be the central argument in Jon Greenberg's conference:

People with AIDS and people living with HIV, you can see that I have a really difficult time with judgements, with any sort of judgements, those that make me believe that I know what is good and what is bad. I know what is good for me and that's it, I can't go beyond that. So I can't say that AIDS is bad. And I know certainly for me, *AIDS has been the most wonderful thing in my life*. It has completely revolutionized my existence. It has changed me, it has broken down every barrier that I put up. (235, my emphasis)

According to his words, AIDS is about not about dying, but about living; and AIDS is also about caring:

AIDS has taught me that ... I have to ask for help, and ... that other people are really happy to give me that help, that they see it as a gift as well as I see it as a gift. It is my gift to the world to allow the world to take care of me ... because whoever it is who's taking care of me at that moment is learning something about taking care of another in the process. It's not just one or the other" (235-36).

It is no coincidence that the most memorable outcome of the three-month workshop in which this conference was read is the creation of The Carrying Society, an artistic collaboration created to organize Pepe Espaliú's notorious performance *Carrying*, the first

artist action about AIDS in Spain³⁸. It is also not a coincidence that, in an article published in *El País* on December 1st, 1992 (World AIDS Day, and also the day *Carrying* was performed in Madrid), Espaliú states not only that art has allowed him to denounce a homophobic society from within (“We homosexuals have cowardly accepted to live inside an imposed social scheme that excludes us”, he writes), but that AIDS has provided a helpful, productive lesson on life:

AIDS is the well that I try to climb, brick after brick. It tarnishes my body each time I touch its dark walls, it asphyxiates me with its dense and humid air... And nonetheless, it is this sordid tunnel that in a sudden and violent manner has helped me rise back to the surface. AIDS has radically forced me to be here. It has precipitated me to its being as pure emergency. I have to thank AIDS to bring me back, unexpectedly, to the surface, placing me in an action in terms of Reality. Maybe this time, and I don't really care if this is the last time, my work as an artist makes perfect sense, an absolute union with an existential boundary that I always loitered without really knowing it. Today, I know what is the true dimension of this boundary. Today I stopped imagining it. Today, I have become that boundary. (268)³⁹

³⁸ *Carrying, una acción en el sida* (better known as just *Carrying*) was performed for the first time on the streets of San Sebastián on September 26, 1992. The action consisted in several couples holding each other's arms in order to carry the barefoot body of a man with AIDS (Espaliú) for a short distance, and to pass the body from couple to couple. The idea of the performance was to give visibility (and therefore, existence) to the people who were directly suffering the pandemic in Spain, and also to show that these people needed care; the word “carrying” phonetically recalls the idea of “caring”: to mind about a problem that remained invisible, but also to take care of those who were suffering, to acknowledge them and not to ignore them. *Carrying* was also performed in Madrid, on December 1, 1992 (World AIDS Day), and reached a considerable notoriety because of the implication of celebrities such as awarded film director Pedro Almodóvar and actress Marisa Paredes, or Carmen Romero, who was Espaliú's teacher at school and who was, at that time, the wife of Felipe González, Spanish Prime Minister. A photograph of Romero carrying Espaliú appeared on the cover of December 2nd edition of *El País*, one of Spain's most prominent newspapers.

³⁹ The article is called “Retrato del artista desahuciado” (“Portrait of The Artist as Terminally Ill”), a title that echoes *Retrato del artista seriamente enfermo (Portrait of the Artist Seriously Ill)*, Jaime Gil de Biedma's memoir. Gil de Biedma had died two years earlier, as a consequence of AIDS. The article, originally published in *El País*, was included as an appendix in the pioneer volume about HIV and AIDS in Spain *De amor y de rabia*.

These productive outcomes of the San Sebastián AIDS workshop in 1992 serve as theoretical and affective framework for Aimar Pérez Galí's dance and performance piece *The Touching Community* (created in 2015), that included, among other texts, an offstage narration of Jon Greenberg's conference, and whose title pays tribute to, and aims to link the performance with, the collective The Carrying Society⁴⁰. Even if *Marburg* has been, until 2018, the only theatrical mainstream text created in Catalonia that openly addresses the epidemic, the counter-archive of AIDS becomes a little richer if we dabble in non-textual scenic arts.

The Touching Community is a transversal and transdisciplinary piece in which the idea of community is formulated from its very title and its complexities unfold through the piece. It is a work in progress, and it is (as of the date I'm completing this dissertation) in constant evolution. Pérez Galí initiated this personal project in the last months of 2015, with the intention to observe and give voice to the impact of the AIDS pandemic in the dance world, both within the Spanish and North American context. The first stages of *The Touching Community* can be traced in the previously mentioned exposition, and the website that nurtured from it, *Anarchivo SIDA*. As one of the activities around the exhibition that took place in San Sebastián's La Tabakalera, on June 10th, 2016, Aimar Pérez Galí presented the performance *A system in collapse is a system moving forward*. Pérez Galí's piece consisted on two dancers (Óscar Dasí and the same Aimar Pérez Galí) performing onstage while a voice was reading a Spanish translation of Jon Greenberg's conference. The piece served as a prologue, and also as a test, for *The Touching Community*⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Even if the beginnings of the project need to be traced in the Basque Country, *The Touching Community* can be labeled as a Catalan work: not only Aimar Pérez Galí was born in Barcelona, but the piece was produced mainly in Catalonia (with the support of Generalitat de Catalunya, El Graner, L'animal a l'esquena, and Espacio Práctico de Barcelona, amongst others) and premiered in Barcelona's Mercat de les Flors.

⁴¹ In a private conversation with Pérez Galí, he also mentioned that he and Óscar Dasí did an ephemeral performance about AIDS in La Caldera, a center for innovation, performance and research in the field of dance

The choreographies of both *A system in collapse* and *The Touching Community* are conceptualized on the grounds of Contact Improvisation, a dance technique created by John Paxton in the 1970s that questions, due to its emphasis on the physical contact, the strategies of affective and physic isolation of the bodies in contemporary dance. Aimar Pérez Galí linked this idea of bringing together the bodies of the dancers to the fight against how society isolated the infected bodies of those carrying the human immunodeficiency virus: “the body as an organ of information, but in this case to inform you about the external body; exactly the opposite as sarcoma [Kaposi’s sarcoma was traditionally the first symptom that physically appeared on the bodies of people living with AIDS]”, Pérez Galí argues, in an article published in the Mexican theatrical magazine *Paso de Gato* (“Manejar riesgos” 79). He also quotes Pepe Espaliú as he complained about the “cultural cowardice” of the arts in Spain regarding the epidemic: “being AIDS, in my opinion, the principal problem existing in the world of art, given the amount of victims we have in this field, no cultural intervention has taken place in a high level. I am referring to Spain: there have been reactions in other places. In this regard, *Carrying* is a sort of breakthrough, a kind of denounce” (79). Indeed, AIDS hit the gay collective, as well as the cultural community, harshly, in both Spain and Catalonia, especially in big cities such as Madrid and Barcelona⁴².

Poet Jaime Gil de Biedma was arguably the most acknowledged intellectual from Barcelona to die as a consequence of AIDS. Gil de Biedma’s last partner, and the executor of his literary works, was the Catalan actor Josep Madern, who also died of complications related to AIDS in January 1994. Following his partner’s last wishes, Madern decided to keep

and movement arts. In this performance, the two dancers moved around a set made of candles and images of friends that had perished from AIDS-related diseases. According to Pérez Galí, that performance serves as the affective matrix for *The Touching Community*.

⁴² As Didier Eribon rightly mentions in his *Réflexions sur la question gay*, the cities, which had become a space of freedom, safety and community for the gay subjects (George Chauncey covers extensively this issue in *Gay New York*), were also, especially during the most critical years of the AIDS crisis, the ecologic niche of sickness, and death: “The marvelous names that had figured in the dreams of generations of gay people (San Francisco, New York, Paris...) were darkened by the specter of death as well as by the infinite sadness of the repeated acts of mourning experienced by those who survived and yet lost so many friends” (41-42).

Gil de Biedma's unpublished writings in the shadows, because of the way the poet talked about some of the "merciless" allusions to people that were still alive (such as writers Juan Goytisolo, Jorge Guillén or Leopoldo María Panero) and because of the way he explicitly addressed both his homosexuality and, in the last years of his life, AIDS⁴³. Madern's obituary published in *El País* reproduced the actor's words on Gil de Biedma's unpublished diaries: "Regarding his diaries and his intimate and personal things, I think we need to give ourselves some time for the questions of homosexuality and AIDS to go under the radar. It will be better to let time go by and to talk about this in the future"⁴⁴. 25 years after Gil de Biedma's death, Lumen was able to publish both his diaries, carefully edited by Andreu Jaume, and his correspondence. The last part, "Diario de 1985", covers exclusively the days after he was diagnosed with Kaposi's sarcoma (and, consequently, AIDS), when he traveled to Paris in order to be interned in the Claude Bernard hospital. Sickness (and death as its expected consequence), a crucial theme in Gil de Biedma's poetry and prose⁴⁵, finds in these fragmentary pages a dark, albeit stoic, resolution.

When heading back to his hometown, Gil de Biedma decides to keep his condition in secret:

Y me preocupa, al regreso a Barcelona, la tensión nerviosa de aguantar constantemente el tipo, de hacer frente a los rumores durante meses y meses, esa tensión de la que me sentí tan aliviado al ingresar aquí. Mantener mi enfermedad en

⁴³ I'm taking this information from Josep Massot's article "El secreto de Gil de Biedma", published in the Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia* on October 31, 2015.

⁴⁴ The obituary was published on January 6, 1994.

⁴⁵ It triggers, for instance, the only volume of the diaries he would publish in his lifetime: *Diario del artista en 1956* (previously and partially published as *Diario del artista seriamente enfermo*).

secreto, salvo para unos pocos íntimos, me parece cada vez más difícil. En lo uno y en lo otro, si salgo adelante será por el canto de un duro. (629)⁴⁶

One of the keys to interpret this secrecy, as well as, I think, the almost total absence of AIDS in the spotlights of Catalan drama, is that the illness was (and still is) considered a social disgrace. Gil de Biedma, a member of Barcelona's left-wing *bourgeoisie* (and Barcelona's *Gauche Divine*⁴⁷), decided, as did many other upper-middle class men who had contracted the virus, to disguise his condition, because that would have also implied to come out as homosexuals –and even queer celebrities such as Gil de Biedma preferred not to be excessively explicit about their sexual preferences. Therefore, the lack of representation of HIV and AIDS in the arts (especially onstage) becomes also a class issue: whereas in other Hispanic countries cultural figures like Reinaldo Arenas (Cuba), Fernando Molano (Colombia), Néstor Perlongher (Argentina) or Pedro Lemebel (Chile), all of them coming from blue-collar strati, did not hide their condition and fiercely and visibly committed to the fight against AIDS (they were already subaltern, so they had much less to lose). In contrast,

⁴⁶ “And I am concerned, when I come back to Barcelona, about the nervous stress of having to constantly having to hold on, to cope with the rumors for months and months. The kind of stress I felt relieved of when I was hospitalized here. To keep my illness in secret, except for a few close ones, seems more difficult every time. If I manage to make it in both regards, it will be a lucky escape.”

⁴⁷ The *Gauche Divine* (literally, “Divine Left”) gathered together a group of left-wing, middle-upper class artists and intellectuals in the Barcelona of the 1960s and 1970s. Even if they produced their work under Franco's Dictatorship, they were socially privileged, they enjoyed the relative relaxation of Franco's last decades, and they could afford traveling abroad, mostly to cities like London and New York, but especially Paris – hence the French naming of the group. The group, baptized as *Gauche Divine* by writer and journalist Joan de Sagarra, socialized in bars and restaurants in the upper parts of Barcelona (such as the restaurants *Flash Flash*, *Il Giardinetto* and the well-known discotheque *Bocaccio*). Initiatives such as the film group known as *Escuela de Barcelona*, the literary agency *Carmen Balcells*, and publishing houses such as *Tusquets* or *Anagrama* emerged from this group. Some of the most renowned members of the *Gauche Divine* were writers like Jaime Gil de Biedma, Terenci and Ana Maria Moix, Rosa Regàs, Carlos Barral, Pere Gimferrer, José Agustín Goytisolo and Juan Marsé; editors like Jorge Herralde, Beatriz de Moura and Esther Tusquets; film directors like Gonzalo Suárez, Vicente Aranda, Joaquim Jordà, Gonzalo Herralde or Román Gubern; and photographers like Colita or Xavier Miserachs. Books like *24 horas con la gauche divine* (by Ana Maria Moix, 2004), *La escuela de Barcelona: el cine de la gauche divine* (by Esteve Rimbau and Mirito Torreiro, with a prologue by Enrique Vila-Matas, 1999) or Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's sarcastic and critical article in *Triunfo* “Informe subnormal para un fantasma cultural” (1971) address the *Gauche Divine* from different perspectives. See also “Especial la *Gauche Divine*”, a 30-minute TV documentary produced by TVE Catalunya.

Jaime Gil de Biedma, born and raised in a more privileged social stratus, felt the need to maintain appearances so as to not lose his social prestige.

Let's get back to Josep Madern. Even if he's mostly known for being Jaime Gil de Biedma's last partner (even the headline of his own obituary in *El País* highlights his relationship: "Fallece el actor Josep Madern, heredero de Jaime Gil de Biedma"), he was an accomplished actor himself, who decided, according to the obituary in *El País*, to "sacrifice his promising career after he began his friendship with Jaime Gil de Biedma, with whom he lived 13 years and whom he took care of, with true devotion, during the tough final stages of his sickness"⁴⁸. Before he died, Madern organized some staged readings, "some of them about AIDS", again according to *El País*. Where are those texts? Is there any archival trace of those readings? Have they been erased from the collective memory? Theatre and performance are ephemeral by definition, but there tend to be ways to retrace the faint remnants that they leave: from still images to published texts or theatre reviews, there are various ways in which this memory can condensate. However, taking into account the already mentioned precariousness of the counter-archive of AIDS, and the stigma that still accompanies everything that has to do with the pandemic, these traces are hard to find.

This precarious archive, this need to provide visibility, becomes one of the departure points of *The Touching Community*. In the piece, Pérez Galí pays tribute to the often forgotten or invisibilized victims of AIDS in the dance world, and to the ways the collective reconfigured itself and fought against isolation: it is "a piece about memory, about the dancers who stopped dancing too soon, about a community that became strong in a time of great weakness, and about touch and contact as tools for survival", he writes in the program of the

⁴⁸ In a footnote of his edition of Gil de Biedma's diaries, Andreu Jaume mentions that, when the poet got sick, the couple were not together anymore. However, Madern came back to his former lover to take care of him and keep him company during the last moments of his life (footnote 1, 626). This can be read as a true queer gesture (regarding the alternative kinships that were forged outside of heteronormativity and questioned its boundaries) that was not uncommon in the gay community during the AIDS pandemic.

piece in Mercat de les Flors –the main public space in Barcelona dedicated to dance and movement arts–, where the complete piece premiered within the Sàlmon Festival. The affective contact between the bodies of the dancers does not only claim for a more direct, physical contact with the bodies that still beat. It also short-circuits the standard (normative) understanding of life and death, and transgresses temporal bounds in order to invoke the ghosts of the deceased (a precarious, transversal, intergenerational community). Jaime Conde-Salazar, a professor and researcher on dance and scenic arts, as well as one of the dancers in *The Touching Community*, wonders: “How to honor the bodies that died (and still die) embodying the official narrative of what we still call ‘the AIDS epidemic’?; how to address those bodies that exist only as the memory of other bodies? ...; how to show love to those that are no longer here and to those about whom we don’t know anything, not even their names, not even the slightest reference of their existence?” (“El fulgor”, 7). In this sense, the art of performance seems to work as a pertinent discipline. As Peggy Phelan claims,

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it of does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance. (146)

Such a phantasmatic discipline conveniently translates onstage the bonding with the ghosts of the dead. Conde-Salazar speaks in terms of “touching those who disappeared” (through the temporary collapse of the conventions that performance provides) in order to incorporate them to our own bodies: “Again, the insistent reference to touching, to the

possibility of an encounter and of an interaction with what exceeds your own being.” (9) This encounter can only take place onstage:

Theatre is a machine that allows the dead to acquire a body in transit. Bodies summoned by love that, all of a sudden, can be touched. Theatre is that machine capable to produce displacements in time. Even if it is achieved through enticements, through objects that occupy transitorily places reserved for other objects. We will be others thanks to the contact with the others, with those that theatre convokes. (13)

The idea of physical interaction in *The Touching Community*, then, offers the utopian (and affective) possibility to summon the ghosts of those who perished during the epidemic; it brings onstage a sort of transhistorical embodiment, ephemeral as it is the nature of the performance; and through this embodiment, it generates a community of outcasts. This idea (of a community, of kinship) has been emphasized when writing, and talking, about AIDS. “AIDS itself creates a community of ghosts, linked through transmission”, claims Juana María Rodríguez (*Queer Latinidad*, 83). Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell state that some of the scholars who participate in their anthology of essays on queer archives described their research experience as “living with ghosts” or “being haunted by the queer past” (11). I am interested in the tension between the physical presence of the bodies on stage and the phantasmatic embodiment of queerness they entail. As Nan Boyd and Horacio Ramírez claim in their introduction to *Bodies of Evidence*, the bodies occupy a central position in queer history research, as part of the production of queer knowledge and affects.

The notion of “community” is also essential to understand how *The Touching Community*, from its very title, is extremely effective. Quoting the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, Pérez Galí explains, in the aforementioned article in *Paso de Gato*, that what

originally constituted the bond of a *communitas* was “sharing a load to carry”. Therefore, a community is created not around property, but around debt: “a group of people united, not by a ‘plus’, but by a ‘minus’, a shortage, a limit that is constituted as a burden”. Further on, he develops the analogy: “Same as HIV. The virus expanded worldwide, creating a pandemic, but also generating many affective communities, built on caring, on fighting against the institutional silence, on mourning the loss of family members, of friends, of partners” (80).

The load that seems to be shared in this precarious *communitas* of outcasts is the viral load. Being a subaltern community, it expands horizontally, organically, without a structured system of organization –not as a chain, but as a network of affects that attempts to eliminate the time that has passed since the emergence of the AIDS epidemic and to incorporate the missing bodies (and souls) to a sort of timeless, ongoing a-temporality. *The Touching Community* unfolds this idea of viral and temporary expansion through the improvisations on the stage, and the affective and physical interactions of the bodies. The piece doesn’t have a narrative storyline and develops essentially in two different levels. On stage, four dancers from four different generations execute several choreographies in which physical contact and exchange plays an essential part. Physical intimacy here is related to sensuality, as well as with the (very queer) idea of intergenerational caring. In several moments, for instance, one of the dancers adopts a fetal position while surrendering to the bodies of the other dancers. Concurrently, Pérez Galí’s voiceover reads out loud several letters that he addressed to dancers and intellectuals who disappeared in the age of AIDS, as well as documents that tell the audience about the effects of AIDS over persons and communities, and about the activism that they generate: interviews and manifestos, texts that operate as a dense and pertinent sound space for the routines of the affect-loaded bodies.

The outcome is transnational, because the messages are addressed to ghosts all over the globe, but with special attention to those voices that were harder to hear: in *The Touching*

Community, Pérez Galí tries to bring back lesser known fights against AIDS, mostly in less privileged geographical areas; fights that did not have the platform and the repercussion that, for instance, ACT UP had: what he calls, in a letter that he writes to the Chilean writer and activist Pedro Lemebel and that is heard onstage, the “Fights of the South that have never been hegemonic in the course of history” (*Lo tocante*).

In an affective level, the departure point of the piece is the concern by AIDS and to raise awareness of the stigmatization and the need of physical contact of the bodies that have already been tested positive, in the line formulated by Espaliú in *Carrying*— the similarities between the name of the performance and the title of Pérez Galí’s piece are quite evident and constantly resonate throughout *The Touching Community*.

The affective, intergenerational and multi-temporal community of those who live with the human immunodeficiency virus and who died of AIDS is critical in *The Touching Community*, albeit in a radically different way than *Marburg*. Throughout the piece, the spectators listen to a voice reading the letters that Pérez Galí has written to personal and collective ghosts, mostly belonging to the world of dance; amongst others, to the choreographer, dancer and dance researcher John Bernd (who was only 35 when he died of an AIDS-related disease in 1988) and the aforementioned Pedro Lemebel (who, after years of activism against the stigma of AIDS, died in 2015). Phantasmatic letters addressed, nonetheless, to the audience —the final receiver of the messages, and therefore affective participant of the affective community generated on and off-stage. In the beginning of *The Touching Community*, Aimar’s voiceover reads a letter to a man called John that serves as a foundational statement of the dynamics of the letters:

Querido John,

Asumo la rareza de esta carta. La asumo con toda honestidad y responsabilidad. Es raro escribirte, pero algún tipo de intuición rara me empuja a hacerlo, aún [sic] sabiendo que *ya no estás físicamente aquí. No acostumbro a escribir a fantasmas*, pero no eres el primero.

... [H]e decidido empezar este proyecto escribiéndote, aun sabiendo, o dudando, de tu, más que probable, *no respuesta*. No te preocupes, con saber que quizás sientas algún tipo de energía que intenta comunicarse contigo ya me basta. (*Lo tocante*, my emphasis)⁴⁹

The addressees in the letters appear only under their first names or even their diminutives (Monique, Pablito, John...), thus increasing the idea of familiarity. The same happens with those mentioned in the letters. In the first one of the epistles that Pérez Galí addressed to Jon Greenberg, he tells him that he writes “23 years after the Espaliú’s death, and 41 after the murder of Pasolini. Today it’s been almost a year since I knew about you, thanks to my namesake Aimar [Aimar Arriola, one of the curators of the exposition *Anarchivo SIDA*], when I read your letter to Carmen and the transcription of the talk you gave in Donosti, in September 1992, invited by Gabi [Gabriel Calparsoro] to the workshop Pepe [Espaliú] was giving in Arteleku”. Later on, he introduces himself as “Aimar, the other one, the dancer, like your brother Neil⁵⁰” (*Anarchivo* 119). The notions of community and of

⁴⁹ “Dear John,

I assume the queerness of this letter. I assume it with total honesty and responsibility. It’s weird to write to you, but some kind of queer intuition impulses me to do it, even knowing that you’re not physically here anymore. *I’m not used to writing to ghosts*, although you’re not the first one.

... I have decided to start this project by writing to you, even knowing, or being skeptical, about your more than likely *silence as an answer*. Don’t worry: just by knowing that you might feel some kind of energy trying to communicate with you is enough.”

⁵⁰ Neil Greenberg (born in 1959) is an American dancer and choreographer. After dancing with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the first half of the 1980s, he created his own company, Dance by Neil Greenberg (1986). Neil Greenberg is mainly acknowledged for his work *Not-About-AIDS-Dance* (1994), which payed tribute to his brother Jon and in which the dancer publicly disclosed his own serostatus. A thorough account and interpretation of Greenberg’s NAAD can be found in David Román’s “Not About AIDS” analysis, published in *Critical Theory and Performance*.

genealogy collide in this small paragraph, with the reference to the deaths of queer martyrs (Pier Paolo Pasolini, declared homosexual and politically rebellious, murdered under dubious circumstances, and the already mentioned Pepe Espaliú) and the familiar way to address artists and activists that connects Greenberg with Pérez Galí. It is a queer reformulation of the notion of kinship and of familial bond, one that interrogates several scholars within the discipline of gay and lesbian studies, such as Gregory Woods, and their intention to elaborate a homosexual canon that would replicate the structure –and the hierarchical organization– of (hetero)normative canons.

On the empty stage, the community that transcends temporalities and borders is embodied by the four performers, whose affects flow and intersect freely, without the normative dualities imposed by heteropatriarchy: the bodies spontaneously interact and intersect in solos, duets, trios and quartets. Through contact, the phantasmatic archive emerges. Sara Ahmed defines the archive as an “effect of multiple forms of contact”, including the emotions (*Cultural Politics* 14). Emotions, Ahmed argues, “work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies”, which, in return, “take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others” (*Cultural Politics* 1). In *The Touching Community*, Contact Improvisation helps the dancers free themselves from the restraints of the traditional choreographic work and generate this affective flows of kinship that exceed their own bodies, their temporalities, and the very spatiality of the stage. In the “Personal presentation” Pérez Galí writes for the performance at Barcelona’s Mercat de les Flors, he creates a narrative that links the biographies of the dancers that participate in the project:

Jesús is born in Puigcerdà in 1950. When he was 13, already in Madrid, he has a mystic-spiritual revelation and decides to become a priest. In 1964, Óscar is born in Alcoy, exactly when Jesús starts being fascinated by his brothers’ charms; he

abandoned faith the year after to trade charity for generosity. On February 23, 1974 (years before the coup d'état) Jaime is born in Madrid, the moment Jesús discovers Genet, Pasolini and Bowie. Already in 1982, when AIDS begins being heard, Aimar is born in Barcelona, the same city Óscar arrives to in order to study contemporary dance; meanwhile, Jesús comes back to Madrid after a few years in Tangiers; in Madrid he connects with the *movida* and works as an executive in a multinational firm.

Jesús, Óscar, Aimar and Jaime are linked by their first names to the other protagonists of *The Touching Community*: the ghosts of the deceased. They all have lost their family names, because many of them also lost their families. They faced rejection from their biological relatives when they came out as gay men, first, and again later when they came out as people with HIV or AIDS⁵¹. And, finally, they are entangled in a narrative mostly formulated in the present tense: as I have argued earlier, AIDS's temporality is a perpetual present-ness that problematizes the idea of a future. Also, Pérez Galí articulates the precarious and perishable present-ness of the stage performance, only fully alive as the event unfolds.

The new communities that emerge as a response to this normative familial rejection are forged through an alternative notion of kinship, nurtured by Foucault's idea of gay lifestyle. In a letter to a man named Humberto, Pérez Galí reads: "Él [Javier] formaba parte de una izquierda alternativa y con una relación con la ética transparente del deseo, experimentando el poliamor y seguramente con una práctica del movimiento feminista"⁵².

Desire works as a generator of community. Attached to homosexual desire comes AIDS, and

⁵¹ About the loss of biological families and generation of alternative ones within the queer community, see, for instance, Kath Weston's classic essay *Families We Choose. Gays, Lesbians, Kinship*, and the already mentioned *Gay New York*, by George Chauncey.

⁵² "He [Javier] belonged to an alternative left that was linked with the transparence of the ethics of desire, that experimented with polyamorous relationships and probably with a practice of the feminist movement."

thus, he adds, “se había instalado la muerte en el territorio de la intimidad”⁵³. Aimar Pérez Galí inserts himself in this community, as he writes and reads in a letter to a man called Ricardo: “Yo nací el año en el que entrasteis en el Ballet, era un niño cuando te fuiste y empecé a bailar justo antes de que se empezara a implementar la triple terapia. Pero ahora vivo otra realidad, que también me afecta muy de cerca, me toca y me atraviesa”⁵⁴. Later on, in a letter to a man called Jordi, he writes: “aquests amics que van estar amb tu fins al final, quan jo just tenia onze anys, ara també són amics meus”⁵⁵.

Towards the end of the piece, Pérez Galí departs from the introspection and the intimacy of the community construction, and decides to focus on the passivity of the Spanish state when the pandemic and its victims needed attention⁵⁶. During that section of *The Touching Community*, the audience listens to a remix of “El fallo positivo”, a tragic pop song about AIDS by Mecano, one of the 1980s and 1990s most prominent musical bands in Spain. The song, one of the few mainstream artistic expressions of AIDS in the early 1990s Spain, features a person that has been tested positive for AIDS (hence its title, “The Positive Verdict”), and ends up hanging himself in his house. The song condemns how society saw people with HIV/AIDS:

La ignorancia de los demás
vestida de puritana y de santa moral
hablaba de divino castigo

⁵³ “death has settled in the domains of intimacy.”

⁵⁴ “I was born the year you entered the Ballet; I was a boy when you left; and I started dancing not long before the triple therapy [a new generation of retroviral medicine] was implemented. Nowadays, though, I live another reality, one that also affects me directly, touches me, traverses me.”

⁵⁵ “these friends that were with you until the end, when I was only eleven, are now my friends too.”

⁵⁶ They constitute, ultimately, the two sides of the same story. The aforementioned performance *Carrying* by Pepe Espaliú also played with the tension between the attention that people with HIV/AIDS needed (embodied by carrying/caring about Espaliú’s body) and the critique to the social attitude towards the epidemic (by showing the performance on the streets of San Sebastián and Madrid, where any citizen could see it).

y la vergüenza al qué dirán⁵⁷.

The counter-archive of AIDS, here, constitutes also a criticism of capitalism. This denunciation departs from Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and Monique Wittig's *The Straight Mind*, and associates capitalism with the cultural construction of heteronormativity. Wittig's reading of heterosexuality as a socio-economic notion that creates a hierarchy of labor division of the (traditional) family is key to understanding how a sanitized heteronormativity has also served as the foundation for the legitimization of serophobia. Paul B. Preciado, author of *Testo Junkie*,^e elaborates the concept when writing in terms of *sexopolitics* as "one of the dominant forms of biopolitical actions in contemporary capitalism", where "sex (the so-called 'sexual' organs, sexual practices and also the codes of masculinity and femininity, and normal and deviated sexual identities) play a part in the configurations of power, making the discourses on sex and the technologies of normalization of sexual identities an agent of control over life" (*Manifiesto* 157). According to Preciado, the contemporary capitalist system is built over two pillars: the audiovisual sector (mainly, the pornography industry) and the pharmaceutical industry (*Testo* 46). Preciado mostly writes about the latter in reference on how the States regulate gender identity through the institutionalization and the control of the access to masculinity and through active sexuality (symbolized here by the access to Viagra and testosterone, "the currencies of this new molecular production of masculinity" (*Testo* 126). Preciado develops Foucault's theorization of the social panopticon based on Bentham's structures of vigilance and control:

The control tower has been now replaced by the eyes of the docile consumers of the pill [in this case, Viagra], that, without the need for external vigilance, regulates its

⁵⁷ "The ignorance of the others / Disguised as puritanism and as sacred moral / Spoke in terms of "divine punishment" / And of what other people say."

own administration following the spatial calendar proposed by the rectangular or circular pill box. The whip has been replaced by the comfortable system of oral administration. The cell is now the consumer's body on itself; it is modified biochemically, unable to determine its exact effects and its precedence once the hormonal compound has been ingested. (*Testo* 134)

Preciado only mentions AIDS briefly throughout the pages of his *Testo Junkie*, but he clears a theoretical pathway that makes it only logical to include the retroviral therapy as another one of the molecular mechanisms to regulate what he calls the pharmacopornographic society. The elevated costs of the retroviral control therapy due to pharmaceutical patents, as well as the virtual impossibility to have access to it if the patient does not have a record in the Spanish's Public Health System (and they are consequently outed as positive), makes the State, and the pharmaceutical companies, responsible, and therefore sovereign, for the life of people living with HIV/AIDS. They have had the authority to provide access to therapy (and, subsequently, they would also have the authority to deny access), and they regulate the cost of the pills, which implies that pharmaceuticals have the capacity to estimate the cost of keeping patients alive, and the power to decide if they are worth living or not, as collectives like ACT UP Barcelona, in Spain, denounced during their short presence. ACT UP blamed the pharmaceutical companies for the pace of medical research on AIDS, arguing that research was only developed as long as it was economically profitable. The group also spoke out against the government in Spain and Catalonia for not acting fast enough to launch campaigns to prevent AIDS, as well as for not pressuring the pharmaceutical labs to provide access to existing medications and not facing AIDS as a real problem in Spain⁵⁸. Aimar Pérez Galí

⁵⁸ As Juane Hernández says in an article about the history of ACT UP Barcelona, Jordi Pujol, the center-right Catalan President from 1980 to 2004, failed to mention the word "AIDS" in any of the more than 300 speeches that he gave in 1991 (67).

denounces this institutionalized vulnerability of HIV-positive subjects in several other moments of *The Touching Community*. In one of the letters read by voiceover, the one addressed to Monique Fon Gebert (a Chilean transvestite performer), he denounces that, in Chile, there were low-income HIV-positive patients who would sell their medicines in the black market so they could buy food. “La vida estaba en venta, los enfermos estaban vendidos”, he writes⁵⁹.

The bodies of the dancers in *The Touching Community* are a visual testimony to how the physical manifestations of the human immunodeficiency virus begin to vanish as medicine makes progress through the epidemic. The body of the most veteran dancer in the company, Jesús Bravo, shows the signs of lipodystrophy, a secondary effect associated with the early generations of retroviral medicine to treat HIV, such as AZT. Lipodystrophy acts on the body and modifies it through the redistribution of body fat (especially in the neck, the shoulders, the abdomen and the cheeks), so it renders the presence of the virus in the organism visible and thus exposes the patient to the stigma of serophobia and forces him through a sort of biological *outing* –a kind of visibility that is not manifested in the other dancers, whose serostatus, whichever it is, remains undetectable. The younger bodies show that the new retroviral therapy has minimized the physical impact of the secondary effects and make it possible to hide HIV-positivity in the closet (which eliminates potential exposure to serodiscrimination, but also has the negative side effect of invisibilizing the virus and its effects, and thus making it easier to ignore all the ongoing debates about health, stigma, and memory). Through the physical interaction of the dancers, *The Touching Community* includes Bravo in the circuit of the affects, and through a scenic manifestation of inclusivity, the piece criticizes the discrimination many HIV-positive men from the first generations suffer – both in and out of the gay community. In the very first sequence in *The Touching Community*,

⁵⁹ “Life was on sale, and sick people were sold.”

Bravo interacts with another dancer, who in a tender and joyful manner plays with the wrinkles that lipodystrophy has created in Bravo's face. Thanks to the technique of Contact Improvisation, Pérez Galí creates this new affective (and tactile, as the name of the piece suggests) community, a community that fights against the isolation of people living with HIV and AIDS, whose bodies acquire a disproportionate relevance within the serophobic discrimination. As Javier Sáez and Sejo Carrascosa state in *Por el culo*, their divulgative essay on what they define as anal politics, "the simplification to body of people who had AIDS, the *sidoso* and the *sidosa*, helped homophobia, which had been lethargic in the Western countries thanks to the conquests of the sexual liberation movements in the 1960s and the 1970s, rearm itself with a mercilessness that could only be compared to the Inquisition, the Hispanic genocide in America or the Shoa." (137)

AIDS representations onstage and in the arts in general – and also its absences and gentrifications – are inevitably fraught with ethical suppurations. Rob Baker meditates, in the early 1990s, about the ethical message that emanates from both scenic and ritual answers to AIDS (for instance, memorial services). He affirms that the "Red ribbons, tuxedos, hors d'oeuvres, and flower arrangements" that were worn and carried by those who attended the memorial services, especially in a time when the weekly victims of AIDS could be counted by the hundreds, have an ethic and symbolic value similar to "a dance made by a dying man or the sweeping onstage grief or his sister" (11). As symbols, they are as valid as any text that someone has written about the tragedy. "AIDS itself is not just about dying, not just about finding a cure, not just about its own demise", Baker claims (13). "Ultimately, AIDS is not even just about itself, but about how we are, what part of us is sick and what part is well, what part of us can be better, what part can care for ourselves, for others. It is no coincidence that AIDS, internationally, is a disease of the disenfranchised, of the outsider." (13) The latter medical advances that mitigate the physical manifestations of AIDS and that simplify the

periodicity of retroviral therapy to just one pill a day –holding the promise of a vaccine, as Jaume Vila comments (29)–, combined with the serophobia that still occupies a prominent position in our societies, have ultimately created the need of a “closet” to those who carry the virus. This phenomenon coincides with the evolution from fatal disease to chronic illness (here I am referring, again, to the Western, white narrative built from economic and social privilege) as well as with the gentrification of the officialist narratives: from the protests against the passivity of the Administrations and the economic interest that moves the pharmaceutical laboratories to the sanitized history of an overcoming: *years ago, AIDS was deadly, but now we can live peacefully with the virus, with only a pill a day; we won*. This Western narrative excludes, needless to say, those subjects who have difficulties accessing to medication or a public health system, as well as those whose bodies explicitly manifest the uncomfortable presence of the virus. The sanitization of the plague, the invisibilization of the ones who did not survive; devastation leaves its place in the narrative to a triumphalist tale with a happy ending –a tale that erases and negates millions who died.

This critique can also be extrapolated to the normative lesbian and gay subjects, as opposed to the queer subjects. Sarah Schulman states that after *Angels in America*, North American gay theatre fell into a certain narrative and moral decadence and found itself unable to manage the scenic presence of AIDS within the homosexual community –to the point that heterosexual authors have taken over the discourse and have manipulated it, thus creating a weaker image of both the gay collective and of AIDS, a sort of narrative that satisfied the liberal audience:

the existence of homosexuality is no longer being denied. Instead, a fake public homosexuality has been constructed to facilitate a double marketing strategy: selling products to gay consumers that address their emotional need to be accepted while

selling a palatable image of homosexuality to heterosexual consumers that meets their need to have their dominance obscured. Rather than elevating the centuries-old underground gay and lesbian culture to the level of mainstream visibility, straight people have invented their own homosexual culture and placed it front and center. (*Stagestruck* 146)

This idea of gentrification of the narrative relates to what Simon Watney calls “the spectacle of AIDS”, which can be defined as

a regime of massively overdetermined images, which are sensitive only to the values of the dominant familial ‘truth’ of AIDS and the projective ‘knowledge’ of its ideally interpellated spectator, who already ‘knows all he needs to know’ about homosexuality *and* AIDS”. Given that, he claims, “any possibility of positive sympathetic identification *with* actual people with AIDS is entirely expunged from the field of vision. (78, his emphasis)

The Touching Community fights, precisely, against this gentrification of the narrative. In his letter to Pedro Lemebel, Aimar Pérez Galí also makes a reference to voluntary HIV contagion, albeit not from the dynamic of barebacking and kinship as Tim Dean theorized them: he’s referring to a kind of bug chasing out of necessity, and closely attached to subalternity. “[I]t has been noticed”, he says, “a tremendous tendency among the refugees that arrive to France; there are two ways for them to get the legal papers for medical reasons: proving schizophrenia or being tested positive of HIV. Indeed, guys are being infected consciously in order to obtain asylum”⁶⁰. Aimar’s implicit critic is pronounced from his

⁶⁰ The triangle between refugees, queerness, and homophobia, is of critical importance and demands a deeper study. Lorenzo Bernini explores the traffic of human beings and what he denominates the “queercides” of LGBT

position as “privileged white man. Queer, yes, but privileged nonetheless”, a space where HIV has become a mere generator of community, a chronic condition thanks to the access to the last generation of retroviral therapies. However, for the refugees, HIV infection works as the lesser of two evils, the strategy to obtain a safe-conduct – with the difference that, because of his origins and his class, they will probably have more problems to access to the more advanced medications.

Both Guillem Clua and Aimar Pérez Galí ponder, from different positions and disciplines, about the community generated around HIV and AIDS. Maybe, by this emphasis on history and memory, on rescuing names and affects, there is the implicit intention of filling a void, of creating a counter-archive that questions the absences in the modern Catalan tradition –an ethics of the obscene that seeks an affective connection to what was left out of the stage, and that embraces the ghosts and the invisibilities of the traditional archive.

In November 1996, what was destined to be the biggest and most important public theatre institution in Catalonia, the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (TNC), inaugurated its first venue, the Sala Tallers, with a Catalan production of *Millenium Approaches*, the first part of Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*. It was an audacious initiative by its artistic director, Josep Maria Flotats, that openly defied the conservative ideology of the autonomous government of *Convergència i Unió*. The premiere, needless to say, took place under a big controversy. A large part of the audience did not understand that the first performance ever to take place in Catalonia’s National Theatre was not a Catalan classic, but a North American

refugees in Europe in his article “The Ordeal for Humanity”. A remarkable testimony of the journey of a queer refugee is *Selamlık* (2018), a novel in which Syrian writer and journalist Khaled Alesmael explores, through homoeroticism, how Middle-East refugees face a terrible combination of racism and homophobia, even within refugee camps and shelters. Alesmael is currently working on a book in which he has interviewed several refugees who currently live in Europe.

In Catalonia, playwright Albert Tola wrote, in 2018, *Las noches malas de Amir Shrinayan*, a play based on a true story about a refugee that is raped by a security guard in the border.

play inhabited by Mormons, Jews, homosexuals and people living with AIDS. Shortly after, and as a direct result of another polemic during the opening of the Sala Gran (the main stage of the TNC), Flotats was fired from his position. The new artistic director, Domènec Reixach, had a less rebellious profile and decided not to follow Flotats' plan, which included completing the diptych of *Angels in America* and premiering *Perestroika* in his second season as an artistic director of the TNC⁶¹. The big, epic work about AIDS was, thus, aborted in Catalonia. Theatregoers were deprived of seeing the celebrated final monologue in which Prior Walter, after becoming a survivor, throws an optimistic and activist chant in which he affirms that “we won't die secret deaths anymore”, foresees a community where “the dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with the living”, and ends up blessing the audience wishing them “more life” (*Angels* 148)⁶². Absent angels sent offstage: obscene creatures cornered in the offices of a public theatre during more than twenty years⁶³. This is an image that might illustrate the counter-archive of invisibilities in the theatre of AIDS in Catalonia. A precarious archive that demands visibility and to bring onstage the ethics of the

⁶¹ Sharon Feldman describes the turbulent beginning of the TNC in the extensive preface of her book *In the Eye of the Storm: Contemporary Theatre in Barcelona*.

⁶² Two of the most well-known scenes in *Angels* belong to the final moments of *Perestroika*. In the Scene 10, the last one before the memorable Epilogue, the character of Harper flies from New York to San Francisco. Up in the air, she recalls dreaming that the plane reached beyond the tropopause, to the ozone, at that time “ragged and torn”. But what she saw were souls rising, “souls of the dead, of people who had perished, from famine, from war, from the plague, and they floated up, like skydivers in reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling and spinning. And the souls of these departed joined hands, clasped ankles, and formed a web, a great net of souls, and the souls were three-atom oxygen molecules, of the stuff of ozone, and the outer rim absorbed them, and was repaired.” (144). French philosopher Michel Tournier establishes an analogy of AIDS and ozone (an “anal disease” and “the anal pole of the Earth”): “The bi-millennial syndrome that brings together AIDS and the ozone confers them a theological and erotic dimension that comforts and elevates them”, he writes (252).

Tony Kushner's metaphysical angels theory, formulated by Harper, finds an unwitting echo in *The Touching Community*. In his letter to a man called Jordi, he writes: “Just ahir llegia un article on deia que les cèl·lules abans de morir emeten una radiació cent cops més potent de l'habitual, igual que les supernoves quan col·lapsen. Us imagino a tots com una d'aquestes súper estrelles, que encara brillen.” (“Yesterday I was reading an article that said that, before they die, cells release a radiation that's one hundreds stronger than average, same as supernovas when they collapse. I imagine all of you like one of these super stars, still shining.”) Both fragments imagine the dead as phantasmatic energy that protects the living: a community that transcends the binary, normative division between life and death.

⁶³ It is another public institution in Barcelona, Teatre Lliure, who ended up filling this void. One of the productions of the 2018-2019 Teatre Lliure season was a new production of both parts of *Angels in America*, directed by David Selvas.

obscene. Taking into account that the index of contagion of HIV is still high in Spain⁶⁴, this archive needs to be rendered visible, to become a witness, albeit modest, of the history of an important part of the LGBTQ community; and to denounce its precariousness, so the researchers from the future don't misunderstand what happened.

As I stated in the beginning of the chapter and have argued throughout these pages, the AIDS crisis can be identified as a transcendental crisis of representation that transcends the medical field. In *Sexual Futures*, Juana María Rodríguez rightfully claims that the implications of the AIDS epidemic traverse a myriad of categories: not only gender or sexuality, but also national reformulations or hygiene: “How do national identity, city politics, migration patterns, and local drug culture impact risk factors and prevention strategies? How do these variables inform and transform our understanding of social categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality? How does AIDS itself redefine our understanding of the categories of race, gender and sexuality?”, she wonders (47). This inquiry distances Rodríguez from former claims made by Povinelly or Chauncey, more attached to a classic vision of gay and lesbian studies as identity politics, which, nevertheless, problematize a classic understanding of the nation-state (not by questioning its paradigms, but by mimicking them within LGTB culture): “The debates about the reconfiguration of nation-based government and citizenship have forced lesbian, gay, and queer studies to reconsider the self-evident nature of the national, the local, and the intimate in ways that have profound implications for the histories, ethnographies, and literary-critical theories of sexuality we write.” (442)

As an intersectional category, however, AIDS queers and problematizes the traditional identity politics –hence, as Ramón Martínez states in the few mentions of AIDS in *Lo nuestro sí que es mundial*, part of the gay collective looked aside and tried to separate the fight against

⁶⁴ According to the report “Living with HIV: Challenges in Spain’s HIV management”, there are about 141.000 HIV-positive individuals in Spain.

the plague from the strive for equality. “This is not our fight”, they claimed – and by claiming that, they were excluding from the community those who thought that it, indeed, was *their* fight.

Rodríguez argues that AIDS activism has the power to forge “a new type of identity project based on ideas, affiliation, and alignment rather than on static categories of race, gender, culture or sexuality” (*Sexual Futures* 48). In their introduction to a special issue of *Social Text* on the future of Queer Studies, David Eng, Jack Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz pondered about the new challenges that Queer Theory faced: “The contemporary mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity –a mass-mediated consumer lifestyle and embattled legal category– demands a renewed queer studies, ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional” (1). Even if AIDS was not explicitly considered a crucial part of this renovation (after all, when queer studies emerged as a discipline, in the early 1990s, AIDS *was* already there), the way it is regarded, as a complex intersection of different categories interacting in a global world, demands a renewed critical thinking –one that, indeed, considers class and race, but also one that considers the global fluxes, the migration patterns, how the complex digital network operates over the affects and the bodies, and how the archive was precariously constructed or directly deprived of existence. The idea of queer, according to Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, contains “its denaturalizing of various origin narratives, such as ‘home’ and ‘nation’” (7), and I would add “health”, “time” and “filiation/affiliation/kinship”: the grounds of the welfare society.

A queer gaze –one that interrogates what are the effects, and the affects, of HIV and AIDS– problematizes the sanitized image of lesbians and gays that seems to derive from homonormativity. A queer articulation of kinship, what Foucault described as “homosexual lifestyle”, also problematizes the hierarchical values of gay identity politics –where effeminate men, butch women, HIV-positive people or older people face exclusion and

invisibilization. According to Jasbir Puar, the progressive integration of (homonormative) gay and lesbian subjects in the networks of legal validity and in the narrative of the state-nations (most visibly and symbolically through marriage equality) has, in return, generated a moral geopolitical hierarchy that identifies the democratic quality and the maturity of the territories with the welfare of their LGBT community (or, again, the members of the community that could adapt to homonormativity). Puar coined the term “Homonationalism” to define these dynamics of measuring the quality of democracies through the legal wellbeing of gay and lesbian citizens – a trend that would, in return, offer a more ethical support to military interventions of countries labeled as homophobic, such as what happened in Afghanistan. Homonationalism, then, takes advantage of homophobia to maintain the perpetuation of neocolonialist policies. Agreeing with scholars like Núria Sadurní Balcells and Joan Pujol Tarrés, I would say that homonationalism emerges, too, as a differential factor in Catalonia – Balcells and Tarrés state that certain homonationalist discourses have helped support the pro-independence movement, especially through the passing of the Catalan law to guarantee of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersexual subjects, and to eradicate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, passed by the Parlament de Catalunya on October 2nd, 2014 (a law that, it is worth mentioning, has faced several challenges in its implementation). Their study reaches the conclusion that “certain forms of configuration of the Catalan nation follow homonationalist logics” that support the fight for the independence (1817), even if the fight for LGBTQ equality does not progress in a homogenous manner. The gay and lesbian optimism in Catalonia is the optimism of those who can be visible, but as Jordi Petit commented in a Conference about homophobia in Valencia in 2005, the accomplishments that brought egalitarian marriage served to relegate other demands to the closet, such as HIV/AIDS, which “nowadays has become a crisis that can’t be postponed” (“Reflexiones”). The way a territorial administration deals with AIDS and its victims indicates how they deal

with human life in other fields. The same Aimar Pérez Galí mentions, in another letter read in *The Touching Community*: “Hoy el mundo parece especialmente convulso. ... [E]n Catalunya, de donde soy, han entrado los tanques del gobierno central generando un estado de excepción a raíz del conflicto por la independencia. ... Parece que el mundo nos está hablando pero somos incapaces de cambiar el rumbo de los acontecimientos.”⁶⁵

As a specular discipline nurtured and enriched by a generation of authors who attempt to deal with local (and global) sociopolitical problematics, the scenic arts in Catalonia still face the responsibility of providing visibility to the pandemic of AIDS and its survivors. The impact of the epidemic on the Catalan society is not minor, and their victims have had to face not only the medical consequences of carrying the virus, but also the social outcome of being invisibilized and thus reduced to subalternity. Marta Buchaca, Jordi Casanovas, Guillem Clua, Josep Maria Miró, Pau Miró, Marilia Samper, Helena Tornero, Joan Yago constitute a small selection of young contemporary Catalan playwrights that have addressed, through dramatic or comedic conventions, questions that concern the Catalan society: precariousness, unemployment, social inequality and lack of opportunities, terrorism, etc. The ethics of the obscene attempt to force everyone involved in the theatrical event –spectators, directors, playwrights, artistic teams– to look offstage, to what has been considered too abject to be shown, and to ask themselves why that has happened, who decided what could not be onstage, why the theatre sector has tacitly accepted its rejection, and what can be done to repair the damage. To generate a precarious counter-archive of what already exists, and to create new pieces of work implies to dare to walk down a road whose final destination is not on sight. It is critical to start walking down that road, step by step, especially in a moment when sociopolitical paradigms and intersubjective relationships are at stake in Catalonia.

⁶⁵ “The world seems especially convulsed today ... In Catalonia, where I come from, the central government of Spain has sent their tanks has generated a state of emergency caused by the strive for independence ... It seems like the world is talking to us but we’re unable to change the course of events.”

ACT TWO

TRANS-CATALONIA: ONSTAGE PROPOSALS OF GEOPOLITICAL FLUIDITY

*To Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera,
transgender women,
mothers of the Gay Liberation Movement.
And to those brave transgender women who
stood for all of us in Barcelona, in June 1977*

The story is well-known, albeit it has been told and retold from the same vantage point: cisgender, masculine, and white.

New York City, June 28, 1969. The day a group of lesbian, gay men, drag queens and transgender folks said enough: enough of being beaten up by the police; enough of the violence, enough of living in the shadows. They stood up and redefined their destiny. This happened at Stonewall, a little bar run by the mafia in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. The uprising, which eventually launched the Gay Liberation Movement, was mainly bolstered by members of the trans community. Among them, two revolutionary transgender women: a black woman, Marsha P. Johnson (whose death, under mysterious circumstances, was dismissed by the New York City Police Department and has never been resolved), and a Latina, Sylvia Rivera. They sparkled the Stonewall uprising, literally throwing the first bricks, and yet they are remarkably unknown, even within the lesbian and gay community. They have been largely excluded from LGBT history, because LGBT history has been written, mostly, by gay men. Even minoritized communities have their own hierarchies¹.

¹ Even the appraised documentary *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson* (premiered on the Internet audiovisual portal Netflix on October 6th, 2017), which attempts to render visibility to Johnson and Rivera as well as to provide new light to the death of the former and the response of the New York City Police Department, has not been spared from these controversies: David France, director and co-writer of the feature, has been accused of theft of intellectual and creative property by grassroots activist, writer, and activist Reina Gosset. In an article published in *Teen Vogue* on October 11, 2017 (just five days after *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson* debuted on Netflix) Gosset, a black trans woman, claimed that France had capitalized on her own research and ideas. The controversy, in this case, is clear: according to Gosset, another cisgender, white male was able to tokenize a transgender narrative. "It is important now more than ever than trans and gender nonconforming people to be the architects of our own narratives", Gosset claimed. After giving up the idea of

Trans and non-binary people have been present at the frontline of every queer fight. Yet, they are routinely minimized right after –most recently after claims such as egalitarian marriage became the main focus of LGBT agendas in many Western countries. The story of Stonewall and the Gay Liberation Movement has rendered invisible those who don't conform to a normative paradigm; those who truly question the heteronormative, binary society that have systematically discriminated lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, intersex and queer-identified people. Now that the privileged members of this community (mainly middle-class, cisgender white gay men) have been granted access to the breadcrumbs of a certain normativity as long as they have *passing*, we're leaving part of our community behind. We see them as collateral damage, as debris.

Helping to bring visibility to the trans brothers and sisters is part of the activist mission of this work. Act Two is the pivotal chapter, and the longest one, of this dissertation. By giving the dissertation an *odd* number of chapters, it complicates its binary structure, as it should. This chapter is dedicated to trans narratives, because trans narratives have been at the core of LGBT activism, culture and philosophy from the very beginning. In the course of my research, and of my life in general, I have had the pleasure to have significant interaction with extraordinary transgender people: performers and activists such as Kate Bornstein, Susan Stryker, and David Harrison in the United States; Miquel Missé, Pol Galofré, and more recently, Elizabeth Duval, and Ian DelaRosa in Europe. Some of the most important, and in many occasions counterintuitive, lessons learned during the writing of these pages come from

filming a documentary for lack of the resources France had, Gosset decided to create, alongside filmmaker Sasha Wortzel, a short fictional tribute to Marsha P. Johnson, *Happy Birthday, Marsha!*, which premiered on Amazon in 2018. In the statement that Gosset and Wortzel published on the film's website, they respond to David France's documentary: "We truly believe how we tell the stories of our heroes matters, so we are drawing upon our community to make this film because we have an opportunity to make a movie written, directed and produced by people living Sylvia & Marsha's legacy through our own work. This is the first time trans women of color are on both sides of the camera."

them, and it's important to me that I express my gratitude before addressing trans narratives in Catalan scenic arts.

1. Transitionings

In recent years, queer scholars have been arguing that the socio-political context of the post-Franco transition to democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s shaped and created a fertile ground for the emergence of transgender narratives. Among these academics, we find names like Rafael M. Mérida Jiménez, Óscar Guasch and Jordi Mas. In their research, they attempt to show how the transgendered bodies that inhabit a consistent number of films, fiction, theatre plays or graphic novels serve as metaphors of the political change that was taking shape at the time. In a different and uneven scale, those bodies in transition reflected a country in transition.

This double process is illustrated, for example, by how the transition of the Spanish *political body* from a dictatorship to democracy found a literary echo in *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera* (1982), Eduardo Mendicutti's first published novel². The action in *Una mala noche* takes place in February 23, 1981, the night the Spanish coronel Antonio Tejero attempted a coup d'état in Madrid, during an ordinary session in the Spanish Congress. The novel is narrated by its main character, La Catarsis (previously known as La Madelón), an Andalusian transvestite. She is frightened because she fears that, just a few years after the end of the dictatorship regime in Spain, freedoms are going to be restricted once more. La Catarsis is the third and final name the narrator bears in the novel. Just as Spain transitions from dictatorship to transition to democracy, the main character and narrator goes from Manuel García Rebollo (his legal name) to La Madelón (his queer nickname before democracy) to La Catarsis (her liberated nickname once she no longer fears going back to totalitarianism, and the one employed as the narrator). I find it necessary to say something about queer

² However, it is fair to say that Mendicutti had written two previous novels, *Tatuaje* (1973), which won the Sésamo Award but was censored and therefore remained (and still remains) unpublished, and *Cenizas* (1974), which was published episodically in the *Garbo* magazine. *Una mala noche* would be, then, the first one published in the format of a book.

nicknames: during the dictatorship years –and well after democracy in the smaller towns–, it was very common for male gays to have a nickname, which paralleled the double life most of them led. They adjusted to the heteronormative society with their family given names, but their *noms de guerre* came out whenever they were in safe spaces with other homos³.

There are several *transiciones* at stake in *Una mala noche*, all of them running in parallel. The first one, operating in a contextual level, is the political framework within which the novel takes place: the events that occurred the night of February 23, 1981, and that threatened to cancel the Spanish Transition, *la Transición* –with a capital T. The second one has to do with the naming of some of the characters, mainly the protagonist, which has transitioned from Manuel to La Madelón and to La Catarsis, and it finds its echo in the pronouns that they are using (one of the questions at stake in the novel is if they will have to go back to identify themselves as “he”) and the dresses that the narrator and protagonist wears: from the dresses they are allowed to wear in a democratic Spain to the masculine suit that waits for their former identity in a suitcase hidden in the closet (again, the closet functions as a transnational image for the repression of homosexuals⁴), and that might have been necessary to survive, had Antonio Tejero’s coup d’état succeeded. Even if the characters of *Una mala noche* thought that –paraphrasing Prior Walter’s famous final monologue in *Angels in America*– history could only spin forward, the unfolding events show that there is a real threat of receding back to the closet – where the costumes that represented their former identities are hidden, covered in dust: “Abrir la maleta donde La Begum y yo guardamos, hacía ya casi cinco años, el último traje que nos pusimos antes del juramento de ser mujeres

³ Those nicknames were often given by other queer pals, sometimes in a hurtful manner. It was not uncommon, however, to claim them back, in a queering strategy that mirrored that of claiming insults as “maricón” and turning them into small victories in the battle for the language. Perhaps the novel published in Spain in which those nicknames play the most important part was the novel by Valencian writer Lluís Fernández *L’anarquista nu* (1979), today considered a queer classic of the Catalan language.

⁴ Needless to say, one of the most influential works in which the issue of the closet is explored is *Epistemology of the Closet*, by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), which is also considered one of the pioneer books in Queer Theory.

para siempre, que fue más que nada por guardar una reliquia ... Ni locas podíamos imaginarnos que lo fuéramos a necesitar otra vez” (111).

As Óscar Guasch and Jordi Mas wrote regarding the political situation of the country, “[a]fter Franco’s death, the Spain of the 1980s finally breathed the air of political freedom and began to understand the meaning of sexual freedom” (51). According to Guasch and Mas, it was at that moment that the “shift from the the transvestite to the transsexual” (and later to the *trans*, I would add, employing the broader term that in both Spanish and Catalan refers to every fluid identity that does not identify with a binary division of genders) began. La Madelón and her *sister* friend, La Begum, build their gender identities by rejecting the masculine and deciding “to be women forever”⁵. Following Butler, they decide to perform as women and therefore challenge the conventions that align gender with biological sexuality. They have also experienced a transition regarding their own identities. At the same time as Spain is flowing, not without difficulties, from an authoritarian regime to a democracy that puts a big emphasis on the notion of freedom⁶, their gender identity varies. The individual bodies experience a transition that is linked to the national body’s.

In *Transbarcelonas* (2016), Rafael M. Mérida Jiménez formulates this parallel process –albeit rather imprecisely– by stating that “[t]he 1970s were years of political, but also surgical, transition” (10). Mérida Jiménez decides to focus his analysis in what happened in Barcelona during those years:

⁵ It is important to notice that these characters preserve an old-fashioned, binary definition of masculinity and femininity, which is the most common one at the time the novel was written (think about Manuel Puig’s *El beso de la mujer araña*, to name just an example). The rupture, in this case, comes from performing a gender that differs from their biological sex. Guasch and Mas point out the evolution of the idea of the transgender in the aforementioned article.

⁶ The word “freedom” (*libertad*) is constantly used in the novel, and it becomes a leitmotiv in the narrative. La Madelón constantly wonders “¿...qué [va] a pasar ahora con la libertad?” (*Una mala noche* 16), and fears that if the coup d’état succeeds his freedom will be constrained within the walls of the apartment where they live: “A lo mejor, ya todo lo que me quedaba era aquello: cincuenta metros de libertad” (35). The final chapter of the novel takes place in a demonstration that celebrates democracy days after the coup failed. In those ten final pages, the word *libertad* appears more than ten times.

While in Madrid some metaphorical fathers agreed on the contents of our Constitution, in Barcelona, some of their lost children dressed in drag for pleasure or as an act of disobedience, as if freedom, imagined even before –but especially after– November 20, 1975 [The day General Franco died], had shattered the retaining walls that Francoist dictatorship had been building up through four decades of all kinds of repression – sexual repression included. (9)

In his book, Mérida Jiménez dissects three Spanish films, in Spanish and Catalan, released at the end of the 1970s that deal with transgender textualities: *Cambio de sexo* (1977, directed by Vicente Aranda), *Ocaña, retrat intermitent* (1978, Ventura Pons' first feature) and *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño* (1978, directed by Pedro Olea after a play by José María Rodríguez Méndez⁷). The protagonists of all these transgender stories written and contextualized during the Spanish transition, from *Una mala noche*'s La Madelón to *Flor de Otoño*'s Lluís de Serracant, reject the alignment between their gender and their sexuality but still can't imagine moving beyond a traditional, binary division –they don't want to be men, therefore they aspire to be women. Guasch and Mas state that “[t]he recent history of homosexuality in Spain can be organized into three periods with very different characteristics: a pre-gay period, a gay period, and a hyper-gay period” (57). The pre-gay period, to which *Una mala noche* and the films *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño*, *Cambio de sexo* and *Ocaña, retrat intermitent* belong, is dominated by the figure of the transvestite –and, I would add, by the unquestioned abiding of the gender binary. The gay period is distinguished by

⁷ *Flor de Otoño* is indeed a very exceptional case. Rafael Azcona and Pedro Olea wrote the screenplay after Rodríguez Méndez's theatrical piece, and transformed it drastically. Lluís de Serracant, the lawyer by day – transvestite performer by night around whom the story is built, evolves from being a flat (effeminate) character whose only “political” aspiration is to flirt with anarchists, to a strong, heroic man who not only stands for his gender identity but who also has firm political beliefs to orchestrate an attack to kill Spanish Dictator Primo de Rivera. Thus, it would be fair to state that Azcona and Olea queer *Flor de Otoño* and claim Lluís de Serracant as a hero who defies both social conventions and the political status quo. A more developed analysis of the divergences between the movie and the play can be found in the article “From Stage to Screen: Flor de Otoño's Transitional Impersonations”, by Rafael Mérida Jiménez (*Hispanic* 2014).

the fight for equality and visibility, which fosters the emergence of public gay and lesbian artists and activists (from writer Luis Antonio de Villena to essayist Olga Viñuales, to name two of them) and which implies a break up with the reductionist vision of the transvestite as the only trans embodiment, introducing the identity of the transsexual. Needless to say, the debate about sex change as a public health issue emerges during this period. Finally, the hyper-gay period, which begins with the passing of the law of egalitarian marriage in Spain in 2005, tackles a more profound questioning of the complexities within the umbrella term *trans*⁸. Aitzole Araneta and Sandra Fernández Garrido dissect this last stage (the hyper-gay period that Guasch and Mas refer to) in two different sub-periods regarding trans activism and discourse: the first one, marked by “the emergence and consolidation of the trans-depathologization movement [in Spain] (2006-10)”, and the second one, “the consolidation of the transfeminist movement” (from 2010 to the present) (35-39)⁹.

This problematization of the gender binary system has been taking place both in the mainstream and in academia. In February 2014, social media giant Facebook expanded the gender options for its users to 58, in order to cover those who would not identify themselves as simply “male” or “female”¹⁰. Successful TV shows such as HBO’s *Orange Is the New Black* (2013-2019) and *Pose* (2018-), Amazon’s *Transparent* (2013-2019), and even Netflix’s

⁸ I will employ “trans” as a generic word that includes every person who identifies as transvestite (a person who dresses and acts as a person from the opposite gender in a sporadic fashion), transsexual (a person who wants to have –or has had– surgery and that uses hormonal treatment in order to adequate their biologic gender to the one they identify with) and transgender (a person who lives a gender that differs from their biologic gender but who does not necessary require surgery or hormones). “Trans” is understood as a term that embraces every different way to live a biological identity that does not agree with the one given by birth. There is a certain agreement, among Hispanic trans scholars, in the use of this terminology, as sociologist Miquel Missé states in *Transsexualitats* (12), a pioneering work that became a reference to trans debates in the Catalan territory.

⁹ Tracing a parallelism with the legal background, not only the passing of egalitarian marriage of adoption helped (normative) gays and lesbians reach a certain degree of acceptance, but also the Law 11/2014 to eradicate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (passed in October 2015) helped Catalonia consolidate as a pioneer territory in the fight against gender and sexual discrimination. The law, driven by the efforts of different LGBT associations from Catalonia, can be read in the website of the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Catalan government.

¹⁰ As seen in Oremus (“Here Are”). Declan Henry collects the opinion of some within the trans community that question the extreme multiplication of gender identities: “there are those who find that too many labels cause confusion and uncertainty in the LGBT community, and also amongst the general population. Some may complain that the list of different identities within the non-binary framework is too large and even nonsensical” (*Trans Voices* 123).

tribute to Mexican telenovelas *La casa de las flores* (2018-2020), also have trans people as protagonists – and real transgender actors in the cast¹¹. As Mirjam Frotscher comments, “it seems safe to say that there has been a noticeable uptick in the presence of trans* or intersex characters in various forms of mainstream media” (253). It is a presence that goes beyond voyeurism, beyond the spectacularization of the transgender body for the mere sake of sensationalism, and generates a more sympathetic and humanizing insight of the collective.

In the academic sphere, initiatives such as the Transgender Studies Initiative (TSI) launched by the University of Arizona in 2013, an enterprise that, according to its website, “seeks to support, encourage and promote trans studies”, and the publication, in 2014, of the first issue of the academic journal *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (TSQ), not only have expanded the visibility of the trans people in the social, cultural and academic dimensions, but have stimulated the examination of trans issues beyond the still necessary debate about the pathologization and the penalization of transgender people. How does the rejection of the binary system help us expand the fluidity of the individual bodies to other debates about, for instance, geopolitical bodies? What does transphobia suggest about the way society regulates a normative development of our bodies? As Regina Kunzel comments, “Many scholars ... put transgender to use as a mode of analysis rather than as an identity category” (288). Trans approaches have recently gained strength as productive analytical lenses and as “an epistemological position from which new, dissident forms of knowledge are produced” (289).

There is a complex and at times contradictory connection between Transgender Theory and Queer Studies¹². The propinquity these disciplines have is, naturally, fluid, and

¹¹ These shows, however, have not been exempt from polemic. Both *Transparent* and *La casa de las flores* have been criticized for hiring a cisgender male actor as a protagonist (Jeffrey Tambor and Paco Leon, respectively). Furthermore, the sexual harassment allegations that two trans actors made against Tambor, and his subsequent firing from *Transparent*, led to the show’s abrupt and dissatisfying ending.

¹² However, the post-identitarian debate on fluidity is present in queer theory from its very beginnings. We can find seeds of this debate in the idea of gender as performance in Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), or in the

depends on how it has been approached. A number of theorists agree that both belong to concomitant fields of study, born and developed within the LGBTQ paradigms, however diverse the collective represented by these initials might be. As Mickael Chacha argues, “The LGBTQ category (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) is often used as an umbrella term for people experiencing oppression because of their sexuality or their gender identity” (142). Undoubtedly, the difference between gender and sexuality is key here to understanding the different approach of Trans Studies and Queer Theory, as well as to comprehend, why some of the trans texts in this chapter wrongfully approach gender via the paradigms of sexuality. Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel and Sarah Tobias state that “these two fields share an interest in interrogating the coherence of a notion such as LGBT. Although originally born out of a desire to establish important alliances between gender and sexually nonconforming communities, it has become evident that the real alliance between Queer and Trans Studies is the common questioning of normativity” (6-7), although, as Heather Love rightfully points out in the first issue of *TSQ*, Queer Studies focus on “nonnormative desires and sexual practices” and Transgender Theory revolves around “nonnormative gender identifications and embodiments” (172).

Martinez-San Miguel and Tobias underscore the essential role that transgender studies have played in making Queer Theory queerer:

Trans Studies have completely transformed and enriched debates in Feminist and Queer Studies. Notions such as cis- and transgender as well as the whole array of options made possible by gender expression, gender presentation, gender identity, gender variance, genderqueer, and gender (self-)determination have totally revitalized

influential manifesto *Transgender Liberation*, by Leslie Feinberg (1992), which draws a historiography of gender non-normativity, questions the binary paradigm as a tool for control and power, and opens the doors to the articulation of new narratives that foster writing about trans debates in a sound manner.

the debates about the cultural, social, and political constructions of gender in the past and contemporary historical contexts. (5)

Some theorists claim that another bond between Queer and Trans Studies is their common foe. Pat Califia, a trans author, states that “Straight culture reads much of the public expression of gay identity as gender transgression. To them, we’re all part of the same garbage heap of sex-and-gender trash. It is practical points like this that can most easily draw queer and trans activists together” (256). I would, however, differentiate between gay/lesbian and queer, most especially after egalitarian marriage has been legalized through many countries in the Western world, Spain included¹³. Whereas homonormative gays and lesbians may have, as Califia suggests, been rescued from the “garbage heap”, queers and trans remain there.

Several scholars and researchers on Queer and Trans Studies have underscored the common ground between both collectives. Queer and Trans scholars position their epistemological approaches in the periphery or normativity, fighting against discrimination, being it gender-based (transphobia) or based on a non-normative desire or lifestyle (homophobia in its variations). Among these scholars we find the already mentioned Califia and Stryker, who connects Queer and Trans activism in the 1990s through the impact of HIV/AIDS and its strategies of resistance within both communities.

Even if another line of scholars, such as Anne Enke, choose to separate Trans Studies from Queer Studies by interpreting Gayle Rubin’s words in his ground-breaking article on queerness “Thinking Sex” –“it is essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically to reflect more accurately their separate social existence” (33)–, I find it problematic to separate

¹³ I have argued for a clear distinction between “LGBT” and “queer” in different articles, in scholarly publications such as “Els invisibles i els silenciats” and “Supervivència i utopia”, as well as in mainstream journals and magazines such as “A favor de la paraula (i el pensament) queer” and “Lo queer como respuesta”.

queer and trans issues, whether in academia or in activism. By questioning a notion like gender binary, Trans Studies, quoting Aaron Devor and Nicholaes Mate, enrich the queer debates by destabilizing “the otherwise easy divisions of men and women into categories of straight and gay because they are both and/or neither” (387). Queer and trans folx have been imbricated since the beginning of modern activism. As I mentioned at the beginning of the section, the symbolic foundational event of queer modern activism, the Stonewall riots, was led by transvestites and transsexuals. Stonewall became the queer cornerstone of the fight for subsequent LGBT rights. In other words, Evan Wolfson’s campaign for egalitarian marriage could not be properly understood without the non-normative subjects that actively resisted the police riots in New York in 1969¹⁴. In their challenging of normative regimes (through desire and through their gender identities), queers and trans push in the same direction. I like to think, like Susan Stryker –arguably the most notorious trans scholar and activist of recent times– claims, that Trans Theory is the rebel brother in the queer family: “it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*) over gender categories (like *man* and *woman*) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim” (“Transgender Studies” 212, her emphasis). By placing the emphasis on gender, trans studies does not only question the binary division as a way to organize (and therefore control) society, but also problematizes ideas such as the traditional family or lineage, and offers readings that multiply socio-political

¹⁴ Evan Wolfson, considered by *Time* magazine one of the 100 most influential and powerful people in the world, is the founder and leader of the movement Freedom to Marry, an organization that played a critical role in pressing the U.S. Supreme Court to rule in favor of egalitarian marriage nationwide – an event that took place on June 26, 2015. Wolfson’s marriage-centered egalitarian politics, already developed in his 2007 book *Why Marriage Matters*, has been openly contested by scholars like Michael Warren and José Esteban Muñoz. “Wolfson represents”, writes Muñoz, “many homonormative interests leading the contemporary LGBT movement toward the goal of ‘naturalizing’ the flawed and toxic ideological formation known as marriage” (*Cruising* 21). Warren takes Muñoz’s arguments further and claims that, by investing so much energy on gay and lesbian marriage, Wolfson’s organization harms other queer fights, such as serophobia and trans rights, obliterated in the fight for a homonormativity that rejects queer (non-normative) subjects. When I asked Wolfson about this criticism in a personal interview with him on 2 April 2018, he replied that every country that has implanted egalitarian marriage has seen a substantial drop of homophobic aggressions, something that ends up benefitting non-normative queer and trans subjects.

possibilities. As Corie Hammers argues, “What was needed, according to ... queer theorists, was an anti-essentialist politics that would decenter the heterosexual regime and contest the central underlying problem –the homo/hetero binary itself” (224). As Anne Enke writes: queers and trans are “disparate bodies differently freighting gender and sex while quizzically looking sideways –and occasionally winking– at each other” (3).

Scholars working in the Anglo academia, such as Jack Halberstam or Lauren Berlant, as well as other European thinkers like Paul B. Preciado or Virginie Despentes, have recently dealt with transgender debates as a productive way to scrutinize postmodern fluidity in a constructive, positive way. In addition to the aforementioned Mérida Jiménez, several other scholars and artists in Catalonia have recently approached the debates on trans identities: authors such as Norma Mejía, Miquel Missé, Gemma Bustamante or Pol Galofré have launched compelling looks over trans realities in the country, both from fiction and from sociological studies. The documentary “Trànsit: menors transsexuals”, produced and broadcasted by the public Catalan television network TV3 in the program *30 minuts* in 2016, deserves a special mention, since it launched the debate about the trans reality and about transphobia in the core of Catalan society to the mainstream¹⁵.

¹⁵ On April 10, 2016, the TV program *30 minuts* broadcasted, on a Sunday evening, a documentary about underage kids (some of them as young as six) who were transitioning towards another sexual identity. The program achieved a considerable audience, and promoted the visibility and the debate on transgender issues, especially about the question on whether it’s better to start the transition in an early age in order to avoid further traumas in kids and in order to facilitate the process –some articles published in newspapers such as *Ara* or *El Periòdic* advocated in favor of this thesis. The success of the documentary surpassed the Catalan borders: *Trànsit: menors transsexuals* was selected in festivals such as the Thessalonica Documentary Festival or the international festival KASHISH, in Mumbai, and it was awarded the prize for best documentary in the Seattle Transgender Film Festival.

However, different sectors of the Catalan transgender collective received the documentary with notable skepticism, and denounced that it whitewashed the image of the trans people. According to sociologist Miquel Missé, the journalists “chose those discourses that fit better with the hegemonic discourse on transsexuality” (Interview by Lara Bonilla). Members of the association Joves Trans Barcelona (Barcelona Trans Youth) published a video on YouTube denouncing that the interviews that they had made with the directors Lluís Montserrat and Roser Oliver were finally cut off because “they stated critical discourses” against the binary division of masculinity and femininity that, according to Missé, was lethal to trans people. They denounced that the documentary presented a clean, innocuous discourse, focusing only in boys that wanted to transition towards girls and vice versa. That polemic triggered an apology by Televisió de Catalunya, which re-edited the program and broadcasted a 20-minute-longer version of the documentary one month later. That new version included some of the witness by the Joves Trans who, instead of relating to the gender-fixed paradigm, understood their own gender identity as diverse and fluid: transitioning being their desired state.

In a similar way to what happened in the Spanish Transition, the Catalan *procés* towards self-determination has overlapped with the writing and staging of a remarkable number of text plays and performances that have addressed trans narratives through different approaches. In this section, I focus on the impact of the transgender debates in the scenic arts and argue that these debates have shaped, or have been consequence of (since both phenomena are taking place simultaneously), an alternative way of regarding the national body.

It is remarkable, and certainly deserving of some thought, that in recent times trans narratives have been present in a consistent amount of plays and performances in Catalonia. Furthermore, trans epistemologies have served as motifs around which several cycles in first-rate institutions and festivals have been organized. In March and April 2017, at the end of the first season in their new venue in Barcelona's Poble Nou district, Sala Beckett celebrated the cycle "La revolució dels gèneres. La construcció d'estereotips en la ficció" ("Gender revolution. The construction of stereotypes in fiction"). The series included three shows and four talks and workshops on gender (and transgender) issues. According to the description on the theatre's website, the cycle was created to offer "an open context for debate and reflection that underscores the outlines and cultural models of a world that is eminently masculine and patriarchal". One of the plays I analyze in this chapter, *Limbo*, was performed in the Sala Beckett during this cycle.

It is important to consider that, according to the interdisciplinary nature of the plays that I study throughout these pages, trans realities seem to work well with non-textual scenic arts. In March and April 2017 (overlapping in time with the cycle at the Sala Beckett), Mercat de les Flors, a public institution that describes itself as "the main hub for the promotion of

If we think beyond the pressures and complaints that the documentary received by the trans community, Televisió de Catalunya's re-emission of the expanded version of the program can be related to a rectification of the way we see bodies and processes of individual (and collective) transformation.

movement arts” in Barcelona, launched the cycle TRANSaccions, according to the promotional booklet published by the institution, to “explore the fluidity of the bodies”. This comprehensive series brought together about twenty different dance and performance shows, from artists such as La Ribot, Ivo Dimchev and El Conde de Torrefiel. The direct, physical exploration of the human body that dance and performance entail opens the door to incisive takes on transgender debates. By intertwining genres as diverse as dance, performance art, music or textual theatre, these works approach gender fluidity in a metaliterary way.

In their introduction to *Queer Iberia*, Gregory S. Hutcheson and Josiah Blackmore state that “Iberia is intrinsically queer, not just by reputation but as a consequence of its own historical processes” (2). As appealing and robust as this claim might seem, such an anachronistic statement (the book examines textual expressions of sexuality in premodern and Early Modern Spain, when the notion of queerness was not yet articulated) demands a deeper insight, especially if we consider “intrinsically” as an adverb that, in a counterintuitive manner, fixates queerness.

What makes (or made) the Iberian territories “intrinsically” queer? Hutcheson and Blackmore point towards the presence of “an Iberian sexuality that was ... dynamic, fluid, constantly challenged and reconstructed” (4) and that problematized the predominant position of heterosexuality in the society¹⁶. The “historical processes” that the curators of *Queer Iberia* mention include the emergence of a pluri-national state, Spain, that brought together different kingdoms and territories, each one with their own traits. As I have discussed in the introductory chapter, a concept such as nation is extremely difficult to define. As Hugh Seton-Watson comments, there is not a “scientific definition” of the nation (5). Benedict Anderson,

¹⁶ This idea, however, suggests that queerness held a central position in Iberia’s social discourse, which is an extremely problematic idea, since it actually displaces queerness from its marginal positioning to a central role. In other words: if queerness was accepted in early-modern Iberia, it couldn’t possibly be regarded as queerness.

in one of the most thorough and inspired analysis on the idea of the nation, defines it as an “imagined political community –and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Taking those two adjectives into consideration, it might not be so inconsistent to think about Catalonia as a queer consequence in the historical processes that led to the current socio-political distribution of power¹⁷.

As the recent pro-independence movement started in Catalonia, the territory immersed itself in a debate about which kind of imagined community it wanted to become, therefore questioning the status quo and the current distribution of sovereignty. The debates and struggles that have taken place in Catalonia since 2010, the rise of the pro-independence movements and the push for a referendum that would ask the citizens if they wanted to stay in Spain or create an independent republic, have led to a queering of time and space: the rethinking of new borders and the sensation of living “historic days” every September 11 (Catalonia’s national day, when massive demonstrations demanding a referendum and/or independence have been taking place throughout the country especially since 2013) and in every turn of the events, seemed to trap the territory in a sort of Groundhog Day where normative developing of the time seems to have frozen in a tiresome repetition. Halberstam, in his book *In a Queer Time and Place*, articulates his idea of queer temporality out of how the emergence of the AIDS pandemic problematizes the idea of a future and the survival of the members of the gay community, not only among the ones who contracted a virus that for many years was lethal, but also among those who did not get infected but saw how many their friends and their lovers faced a reconceptualization of their biographical timeline. One of the answers to the AIDS epidemics was, Halberstam states, to consider and rethink how social systems emphasize notions such as longevity and future, and to propose an idea of community

¹⁷ Also, Catalonia’s process of self-determination can be regarded, under the same light, as the attempt to *un queer* Catalonia.

linked to risk and to sickness (2), as well as the precariousness of the membrane that divides life and death.

Jack Halberstam underscores, in *In a Queer Time and Place*, how trans bodies, as corporeal manifestations of gender fluidity, relate to postmodern times. Halberstam argues that “the transgender body represents something particular about the historical moment within which it suddenly and spectacularly becomes visible” (97). According to this particularity, it can be considered whether it is possible to establish a connection between the historic moment that Catalonia is living and the recent proliferation of transgender bodies on the Catalan stage.

Paul B. Preciado has employed this analogy to reflect upon the changing reality of the Catalan national body. In “La Catalogne trans”, an article published in the online version of the French journal *Libération* on January 16, 2015 –and revised for his 2020 book *An Apartment on Uranus–*, Preciado compares his personal ongoing transition with the so-called Catalan *procés* (the national transition towards an independent republic). As he states, “the process of constituting a free Catalonia could resemble, in its relationships with power, memory and the future, the practice of inventing freedom from gender and the sexual freedom that are at work in trans and nonbinary micropolitics” (101-02). National identity in a macropolitical level, gender identity in a micropolitical sphere: the political Catalan soul has not found a normative body to fit in, given its singularity as a nation –or maybe it has not been able to understand the phantasmatic nature of the idea of national normality– and it maintains a relationship somehow complicated with the idea of normality. Coming from a totally different perspective, Josep-Anton Fernández seems to suggest a similar idea in *El malestar de la cultura catalana* (which we could translate as *Catalan Culture and Its Discontents*, as the title paraphrases Sigmund Freud’s book on the divergences between the desire for individuality and norms and expectations of being within a society), when he

affirms that “One of the main goals of the normalizing process ... is to ... bring back the proportions to the deform body of Catalan culture, according to the parameters of a ‘normal’ body (a body without anomalies, reproductive, maybe also straight?)” (40). Normality, as an ideal, imaginary horizon for the Catalan political reality –and for cultural reality too, since it’s in the culture where notions such as identity are at stake–, has produced a debate in which many different entities have engaged prolifically. Normality as a horizon for an ideal, utopian future, has often led to utter disappointment, not only regarding the historical development of the country, but also regarding its consequent idiosyncrasy. Josep-Anton Fernández speaks, for instance, about two polarized tendencies in the Catalan culture: bulimic (“completely dominated by the dynamics of the market, which can’t do anything but to swallow and to vomit: to produce unsubstantial objects that will be unceasingly consumed”, 31) and anorexic (“that resists to swallow anything that’s not pure and sublime like air”, 31).

In his article, Preciado seems to suggest, through trans epistemologies, two alternatives to the “discontent” Fernández formulates. One of them is to follow the expected and normative protocol change of sex / becoming nation with the final goal of becoming a fully-recognized political, cultural or social entity that fits reasonably well within the established erotic-national paradigms. This is a conservative option, for it does not reject the modern notions of state-nation and of binary bodies.

The risky (and according to Preciado, far more enticing) alternative, however, would be to resist these practices of fixation and to become, following the philosopher and trans activist, “a process of social, subjective experimentation that involves calling into question all normative identity (national, class, gender, sexual, territorial, linguistic, racial, or bodily and cognitive difference) [in order to] generate together the experimental enthusiasm capable of supporting a constituent process that is constantly open” (102-03). In spite of the problems this scheme states at first sight (problems that have to do with pragmatics: a nation can hardly

function by being exposed to perpetual fluidity and mutation), Preciado's idea is interesting if we contemplate it from the perspective of queer utopias, as this chapter (and, most especially, the third section of this dissertation) argues. I would like to consider this idea of fluidity that brings together, in parallel levels, both the individual and the national bodies, in order to see how some scenic art products have chosen to look at our socio-political reality from a fluid point of view and have challenged notions such as the ideas of artistic discipline and the *mise en scene*.

From the first Catalan plays written under the umbrella of European modernity¹⁸ – such as the renowned *Terra Baixa*, by Àngel Guimerà (1896), and *Aigües encantades*, by Joan Puig i Ferrer (1907)– drama written and performed in Catalonia has recurrently addressed debates about (a fixed idea of) the Catalan identity. The epistemological temperature of this examination has been intensified on the contemporary stage, coinciding with the aforementioned debates on the new directions of Catalan politics. Plays that were performed in important venues and that enjoyed wide audiences and critical acclaim, such as *Una història catalana* (premiered in the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in 2010) and *Pàtria* (Teatre Lliure, 2012), by Jordi Casanovas; *No parlis amb estranys*, by Helena Tornero (Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, 2013); or *A tots els que heu vingut*, by Marc Rosich (Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, 2017), have explicitly dealt with essential questions about the Catalan political and social identity. However, I argue that there are other kinds of plays that, by providing a less explicit look at the geopolitical idea of Catalonia, have managed to offer an interesting insight about sociopolitical debates. Going back to Halberstam's remarks, in those plays, the bodies onstage become spectacular representations of the times in which they have been reimagined.

¹⁸ The notion of modernity has been subject to multiple debates. Here, I am employing the word in a similar way as publications such as *Modern Drama* do: to refer to the theatrical tradition that emerged in the 19th Century and that tried to express the ideas and values of the middle class – which were in many cases related to the movements of national liberation.

In those trans works, gender and sexuality configure a parallel –and often countercultural– discourse that problematizes, through a queer gaze, the social order. And they do so by questioning normativity through several trans embodiments: I argue that the recent emergence of transgender plays in the Catalan stage responds, precisely, to what Preciado states in his aforementioned article: the interest and the necessity of expanding the debate about the sociopolitical implications of the complex contemporary Catalan zeitgeist. It is a country in the making – transitioning, maybe, towards the idea of a (problematic, as we’ll see) nation. Through the challenging (or the preservation of) theatrical conventions, and through queering both gender and relational possibilities, these plays lay out a number of inquiries about identities: a debate that begins in the domain of individual affects but that filters over community affects – the extent to which Catalonia has a right and the opportunity to challenge conventions such as “border” or “identity” within the frame of a European Union dominated by more traditional state-nations. Indeed, “opportunity” is a key word. Queer Catalan activist Bel Olid argues, in her article “República ‘queer’ de Catalunya” (“‘Queer’ Republic of Catalonia”), that the process for self-determination opens a window to discuss the kind of country that is at stake. *“If the collective fight leads to independence, the debate about the new constitution, about the norms on which we want to rule ourselves, will be a unique opportunity to get rid of some of the restraints that right now are keeping us from breathing. If we fail, the debate will be equally valid and, maybe, even more necessary”* (her emphasis). Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the text, Paul B. Preciado’s article clearly resonates in Olid’s arguments: both underscore the idea of Catalonia as an experimental field which allows to create a nation that questions the mainstream (the modern nation-states and the bases upon which they were built)¹⁹. In Olid’s words: “is there anything ‘queerer’ than this becoming-nation, than this constant adding of traditions and ways of being,

¹⁹ However, it needs to be acknowledged that for many Catalans who are in favor of independence, having a standard Catalan nation-state is precisely the objective.

than being precisely this mosaic the one what seems more authentic to us?” Even if the idea of authenticity might seem too essentialist in a text that attempts to problematize what is considered natural and pre-determined, the article illustrates that, for many, it is through a queer look that the process of self-determination could be really interesting and constructive. In these scenic works, these ideas unfold through the enacting of desires and possibilities.

Trans Catalan theatre, then, goes beyond a critique of how society regards queer debates and could be interpreted as a thermometer that measures the temperature of Catalonia’s sociopolitical reality. Being propelled to a queer beyond, this variation of queer theatre interrogates the theatregoer about which kind of future is possible. Or, even better, which one is at stake.

However, not all the plays in this section regard trans debates and identities in the same manner. I have chosen to organize my analysis of these works in a progressive way, starting with the ones that might offer a more conventional, still binary, look over transgender questions, and finishing with the ones that try to reject some pre-conceived and stereotypical conventions of trans realities, and try as well to unfold an alternative way of thinking gender that challenges the traditional understanding of the bodies. As we will see, this epistemology challenges conventions such as the traditional layout and hierarchy of stage-audience and ends up proposing an imaginative way of understanding the individual body as well as the national body, following Halberstam and Preciado’s arguments. This idea of “progressive analysis” comes from the story of how the *30 minuts* documentary *Trànsit: menors transsexuals* evolved (actually, transitioned) from a hetero-normative concordant audiovisual production that sticks to a binary division to a film that challenged conservative notions of gender. Inés Orobio de Castro, following Butler, claims that

‘sex’ has to be ‘gendered’ before it can become a term with any meaning at all.

Hence, the essential of the term ‘sex’ is its inherent, ‘gendered’ duality: the male-female division. For the same reason, I would add conversely, gender also needs to be ‘sexed’ in order to make sense. Whereas both terms cannot live without each other, they also refer to two different realms that in one way or another are experienced in our minds as distinguishable realities. (17)

In this chapter I will retrace a journey towards a *(trans)gendering* of Catalan theatre, and therefore becoming aware of the multiple possibilities that exceed normativity.

2. Enacting Negativity in *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius* and Manel Bonany's *La pell escrita*

One of the shows programmed in the Mercat de les Flors during the Festival Grec 2016, Barcelona's scenic arts Summer festival, was *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius* (*The Fragility of Transitive Verbs*). *La fragilitat* was a collective work about transgender identities created around an idea by the dancer and choreographer Roberto G. Alonso. The show, commissioned by the Grec Festival de Barcelona, brought together texts by Catalan playwrights Carlos Be, Marc Rosich, and Helena Tornero, and choreographies by Alonso.

According to the description of the production in the Grec Festival official program, *La fragilitat* "reveals ... the intimate, everyday spaces in which our bodies are subjected, often unconsciously, to unwelcome cultural, social and educational attitudes" ("La fragilitat"). The play also examined the divergences within the trans community, from the difficulties a child undergoes in order to accept and understand their gender identity, to the discrimination towards the elderly trans folks from the younger members of the collective.

One of the central, and most iconic, scenes in *La fragilitat* had as a protagonist the character of a high-school professor, interpreted in the Grec production by actor Oriol Genís. Genís's nameless character leads a heteronormative life while hiding a fervent desire to queer his gender identity – a feature he keeps hidden from his family. In this particular scene, his character manages to depart from the (sometimes excessively rigid) developing of the theatrical piece, and places himself in a moment of queer temporality – one isolated from a plot line in which he is constantly suffering because of the secrets he keeps away from his family and the discrimination from within the younger members in the queer and transgender community²⁰.

²⁰ The acceptance of the elderly is currently considered an important issue within the queer community. Queer activists Jordi Petit and Beatriz Gimeno have addressed the loneliness and the discrimination that elder gays and

Spotlight on the Professor. Defiant at last, he shows up onstage with make-up, on an elegant emerald-colored dress, and high heels. He gazes at the handsome dancer who is waiting for him wearing a tuxedo, in the middle of the stage. The audience has been invited to witness a cathartic impasse to the tortuous path that the show reserves for Genís's character. Suddenly, a song starts playing: an invitation to dance. It's a choreography that comes from another time, a moment of queer, celebrated anachronism in a performative spectacle choreographed in a more contemporary, deconstructive manner. Both dancers seem to be extras from a Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers 1930s film.

In the middle of the slow scene, Genís, who takes the feminine role in the dance, turns to the audience. And, as the fourth wall collapses, he smiles for the first (and the last) time in the whole show: it's in this dance, out of scenic time and space, where he can feel fully realized, where he can find peace with his own body²¹. However, right after the scene reaches its ending, Genís's character goes back to his fictional timeline, and therefore to a tale of persistent rejection and repression²².

This scene embraces a direct connection between time dissonance and norm dissonance. *La fragilitat*, a show coproduced by Companyia Roberto G. Alonso –a company that has recently addressed the limits of gender identities– suggests that queer bodies often need to generate their own time and space in order to reach peace and affirmation. Present-ness, the timeframe that unfolds onstage, is the time of oppression, the time of transphobia – and also the time where non-normative gender identities need to be concealed in order to blend in. The Professor's only instant of peace in *La fragilitat* coincides with the only

lesbians suffer, especially from the younger generations. Concerns on this issue have been recently raised by platforms such as Fundació 26D. More information regarding these debates can be found in the monograph *Vejez y orientación sexual*, by Beatriz Gimeno (2014).

²¹ Early before this scene, the anonymous character performed by Genís tries to deform his body in a choreography in which he manipulates his genitals and tries to hide them between his legs to create the fantasy of having a vagina.

²² A similar queer moment of dramatic (and temporal) relief appears in the movie *The Shape of Water*, directed by Guillermo del Toro (2017), when the mute protagonist fantasizes about dancing with the monster-god in a black and white moment of cinematic isolation.

moment he can fully escape not only from his mundane life, but also from the timeline of the performance. As José Esteban Muñoz states in *Cruising Utopia*, queerness needs to project itself towards an imaginary future (or to an alternative timeline) in order to underscore that the present is not enough, “that indeed something is missing” (1). It is in the time that is not here yet where queers can fully achieve a complete way of being in the world –a world that can only be glimpsed in the aesthetic territory.

La fragilitat dels verbs transitius constitutes an elaborated, multidisciplinary theatrical device. As a piece that tries to innovate by explicitly addressing trans identities (from early youth to maturity), it inevitably condenses the pros and the cons of a pioneering work²³. While inaugurating a performative way of tackling trans debates through the blending of word and movement, the play ultimately seems unable to escape the social order, and condemns its characters to suffer the consequences of a system that rejects them.

Departing on her own experience as a transgender woman, Julia Serano claims:

While often different in practice, cissexism [the system that oppresses people that cross gender boundaries and that encourages people to maintain the gender they were assigned at birth], transphobia, and homophobia are all rooted in *oppositional sexism*, which is the belief that female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires (13).

²³ However, transgender characters have scarcely been present onstage in Catalonia. In 2008, LaVillarroel, a commercial venue in Barcelona dedicated to international contemporary plays, produced *Jo sóc la meva dona*, the Catalan version of Doug Wright’s Tony-Award winning play *I Am My Own Wife* (2003). The Catalan production of play, which is based on conversations with Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a German trans person who managed to survive the Nazi regime while keeping a valuable collection of remains of the bars and cabarets from the Weimar Republic, was starred by Joel Joan, a male cisgender actor well-known for his role in Catalan TV comedy *Plats bruts*.

Most of the sketches of *La fragilitat* feature subjects trapped in this binary system built upon the opposing exclusivity of the categories *masculine* and *feminine*. The characters the show presents can't fit in the heteronormative world because their gender does not fully adjust to their biological sexuality. Their desire to stay in the world and the impossibility to fully adapt to social rules and regulations lead them to an unsatisfactory life. Therefore, what theatergoers see onstage is a performance of negativity, a tension that shifts between loneliness and death. This negativity is explicitly mentioned by Roberto G. Alonso in the program at the Mercat de les Flors, during the Grec Festival:

We have tried to tackle an issue that still nowadays arises controversy and discomfort. However, we did not want to make a documentary show or a social and asserting denunciation. Instead, we wanted to talk about feelings. We have researched what motivates and impulses our characters to swim against the tide in a society that stigmatizes and denies them, that corners them, that does not give them the same opportunities, and that sometimes forces them to conceal and to shame. A society that pushes them to self-censorship, and to a lack of self-esteem that eventually might lead to suicide.

The characters in *La fragilitat* (whose plots don't merge during the play except for in the choreographies) seem unable to escape the social construct, and therefore they can't escape the anxieties and negativities of not being able to fit in –a notion of perpetual failure that, according to Halberstam, is deeply attached to queer lives. In order to question, and overcome, the idea of failure, we must see it as a social, heteronormative construction, and “look for a way out of the usual traps and impasses of binary formulations” that serve to

regulate the society (*The Queer Art 2*)²⁴. Helena Tornero’s section, called “Andersen (de tots aquests petons morts)”, emphasizes, from its very title, this alignment with negativity –and ultimately with death as the only way out²⁵. “Andersen” recalls four moments in the life of a pre-adolescent boy (whose age is not mentioned in the play, but who was performed in Barcelona by a 13-year-old actor): “De tots aquests petons morts” (“Of all these dead kisses”), a moment of utter loneliness in front of a window; “Els problemes del pare” (“Father’s problems”), a scene in which he shares a space with his father, but neither one can find the words, or the emotions, in order to communicate with each other; “Els problemes de la gent” (“People’s problems”), a short deliberation on how the boy’s wish to be a girl is a direct confrontation to society²⁶; and “Tu” (“You”), the longer scene of the section, in which the kid visits a therapist with his parents.

The “kisses” Tornero mentions in the title are “dead” because, as we see in the first scene of this section, they are directed towards a phantom. Negativity, here, points to the idea that the trans character won’t be able to fit in a society: it reverses the (normative) idea of the kisses that seal an affective encounter – and that, in chrononormative narratives, preclude mating and the preservation of the seminal entity of traditional families. Trans subjects are excluded from these narratives: the mortuary message present in Tornero’s section of *La fragilitat* explores a trans subject that can’t adjust to this aural timeline and is thus relegated

²⁴ I will address this notion of queer failure more in depth in section three of this dissertation.

²⁵ According to a message exchange with Helena Tornero (March 22, 2018), “Andersen” works as a reference to the Danish fairy tale writer Hans Christian Andersen, mentioned in one of the excerpts that finally did not make it to the play, when the character’s mother is making a dress inspired in the story “The Snow Queen”. This fragment serves as an opening paratext in the published edition of the text, in Tornero’s anthology *Teatre reunit (2008-2018)*. In Andersen’s fairy tale, the devil creates a magic mirror that distorts the image of those who reflect in it, making them look ugly. Tornero uses this image as a metaphor of the discordances between the external and internal identities of the transgender people.

²⁶ Another of the segments that did not make it to the final version of the play was named “Els problemes de la mare” (“Mother’s problems”), which completed the triangle of the moral forces drawn in the final scene of Tornero’s section: the mother, the father and the society, and underscored the importance of the notion of “having a problem” that runs through the whole play.

to a state of perpetual social and affective failure²⁷. Kisses fly from this character's lips, float, and die: there is no one on the receiving end.

Estàs sol i mires per la finestra i penses: “estic sola i miro per la finestra”.

El teu alè topa amb el vidre i fa un tel com de gebre.

I obres la boca i deixes que el vidre s'enteli

i després hi fas un petó,

fas un petó al vidre humit

i penses en algú que fa temps que no veus

o que ni tan sols has vist mai,

i desitges que aquell petó

arribi als seus llavis llunyans.

...

Però després obres els ulls

i mires el vidre

i veus l'empremta dels teus llavis i prou.

I saps que el teu petó ha mort abans d'arribar al vidre.

I penses: “què en faré, de tots aquests petons morts?” (329)²⁸

²⁷ It is true, however, that in the last scene of “Tu”, he finds the silent support of his parents as well as the therapist. Nonetheless, this support consists on acknowledging that the society has “a problem” and won't accept the young protagonist in its scheme: therefore, the only support he gets is a confirmation, by his inner circle and by a professional therapist, that he needs to be ready for discrimination.

²⁸ “You are by yourself and you look through the window and you think: “I am by myself and I look through the window”. / Your breath in the glass creates a frost membrane. / And you open your mouth and the window condensates / and then you kiss it, / you kiss the wet glass / and think of someone whom you have not seen in a long time / or whom you have never seen at all, / and you wish that kiss / gets to his faraway lips. / ... But then you open your eyes / and you look at the glass / and you only see the imprint of your lips. / And you know that your kiss has died before reaching the glass. / And you think: ‘what am I going to do, with all these dead kisses?’”

Loneliness and isolation are the direct consequence of those who don't (or can't) follow the binary order that articulates social structures. The link between solitude and gender *outlawing*²⁹ emerges from the very first sentence of this section: by portraying a character who is capable to bifurcate in their perceptions, Tornero plays with gender marks and pairs “Estàs sol” with “estic sola”. In the first case, the verb “estar” is presented in the second person, suggesting a certain external look, only capable to perceive the masculine biological traits of the character. The second part of the sentence is formulated in the first person and points out, by reflecting the inner thoughts of the character, to the realm of their gender identity.

This binary, radical opposition between masculine and feminine is ubiquitous throughout the texts of *La fragilitat*, and it functions as an unsurmountable obstacle that separates what the trans characters desire (transitioning from one gender to another) and what society can't accept. In the section called “Els problemes de la gent”, the same character manifests:

Tu ets tu i saps què vols. I cada dia ho tens més clar.

I saps que has nascut un nen però que no vols ser un nen.

I saps que és com si per dins tinguessis molt clar que ets una nena.

I saps que els altres això no ho tenen tan clar i volen que tot segueixi igual

...

Volen que tot segueixi igual perquè això els tranquil·litza. A ells. (334-35)³⁰

²⁹ Following Kate Borstein's pioneering essay on trans issues.

³⁰ “You are you and you know what you want. And it's clearer every day.

And you know you were born a boy but you don't want to be a boy.

And you know it's as if your inner self is positive about being a girl.

And you know that the others are not so positive about it and want things to remain the same.

...

They want things to remain the same because it's soothing. For them.”

Trans writer and activist Miquel Missé underscores how critical it is to reject the commonplace assumption that trans subjects are men and women that have been born in the *wrong body*, since, he argues, this ontological framing helps reinforce a pathological reading of trans people. The image of the wrong body is socially constructed—in an interview for the Catalan newspaper *Ara*, Missé declares that the notion of the wrong body “might have rendered the trans phenomenon visible, but it’s not empowering”, because it’s less dangerous for the social status quo to think “that there are people living in the wrong bodies and who desire to transition” than “people who question gender normativity” (Interview by Laura Bonilla). From its very conceptualization, this idea contains a conceptual negativity: it relates the transgender to the idea of being a *mistake* of nature, therefore suggesting that trans identities are an error that needs to be corrected. “One of each 30 thousand people has been *tricked by nature*: they have been born in the wrong body” (18, my emphasis), states, for instance, the Mexican journalist Juan Pablo Proal in a book that aims to help “society to understand the so-called ‘third sex’” (15). This is just one of many well-intended essays, novels, plays and manuals that attempt to send a positive message, paradoxically, through negativity. According to Sally Hines, this positioning is historically related to the shift from using the term “transsexuality” to “gender dysphoria” in medical writings during the 1970s. “Locked into the notion of ‘gender dysphoria’ is the idea of the ‘wrong body’, which suggests a state of discord between ‘sex’ (the body) and gender identity (the mind)”, she argues (2). Hines underscores the important role of Queer and Trans Theory in order to challenge “the representation of identity categories as authentic. Rather, identities are unstable and multiple” (5).

In *Transsexualitats*, a short essay that aims to explain trans identities to a mainstream audience, Missé denounces that “The body of transgender people is presented as constantly

placed in the paradigm of error” (53). Missé, who has recently publicly advocated for the possibility to live openly as a non-binary person without going through sex reassignment surgery, connects the metaphor of the *wrong body* with what he defines as a pathologizing discourse:

The medical [discourse] presents itself as the official, hegemonic discourse on transsexuality, thus denying other possibilities. The pathologizing model can't recognize other models, other ways of being transgender, because it is precisely based in the existence of only two natural identities –man and woman– and in the margin there are people with biological problems that, for reasons still unknown, are born in the wrong body. Therefore, this model can't accept that, actually, both gender and sex are cultural readings of the body and that there are different ways of living masculinity and femininity. Would this model acknowledge it, the pathologizing theory would invalidate itself. (73)

The previous excerpt of *La fragilitat*, precisely, reaffirms the pathologizing discourse by depicting the young kid as a girl trapped in a boy's body. When Tornero states that “[t]hey want everything to stay the same because that reassures them”, the word “they” seems to refer to everyone in the room, from the audience (challenged by a performance that questions their prejudices and their inaction to prevent transphobia) to the creative team, who, counterintuitively, reinforces the binary division of gender in most of the pieces of the play.

This idea of the *wrong body* is also represented choreographically³¹. In the section “Unes sabates” (“Shoes”), which originally belonged to Tornero's section but whose lines

³¹ As an interdisciplinary performance choreographies play an important part in *La fragilitat*, sometimes as an embodiment of the words that are said onstage (in scenes where the actors recite their lines in front of a microphone while the dancers –or themselves– perform), sometimes as different temporalities (such as the

were finally given to the character of the Professor, the kid performs a choreography with a pair of women's shoes that they find in a box³². The choreography seems to mirror the famous narrative photograph by Duane Michals "The Unfortunate Man". Michals, known from his way of telling stories with images that are often complemented with his handwritten words, as well as his openness and activism against homophobia, portrays a man dragging his naked body, unable to stand except for his arms, whose hands have been replaced by pair of boots. The text that accompanies the photograph says: "The unfortunate man could not touch the one he loved. It had been declared illegal by the law. Slowly his fingers became toes and his hands gradually became feet. He began to wear shoes on his hands to disguise his pain. It never occurred to him to break the law" (figure 6). As Allen Ellenzweig states regarding this iconic image, Michals's piece "might recall the magical human-to-animal transformations of ancient mythology" (66), but in this case the metamorphosis is also loaded with a critique towards the de-humanization of non-normative human beings. Again following Ellenzweig, the photography functions as "a tragic allegory of a nation-state policing sexuality", in which the notion of homosexuality "was devised and medical authorities, parliamentarians, and the courts became involved in regulating and criminalizing sexual expression" (66).

Both Duane Michals's image and *La fragilitat*'s choreographic moment share a similar iconic construction. However, if the "unfortunate man" Michals portraits is constrained by the boots, trapped in his own social failure that forbids him to dream away, the choreography by Roberto G. Alonso propels the character in another temporality that exceeds the dramatic timeline, in which the kid can actually achieve solace –a similar strategy as the one employed with the dance of the Professor. Both Michals's famous photograph and Alonso's choreography embody, in an oppositional manner, an impossibility to fit in a society that

Professor's moment of relief already described), and sometimes as a way of performing discrimination and loneliness.

³² This choreography echoes another piece from the Professor's section, which seems to be one of the reasons why Tornero's parts were finally narrated by the Professor instead of the kid.

discriminates them: the unfortunate man is trapped in his own desolation because his love is not legal and “It never occurred to him to break the law”; the kid fantasizes about unfolding his feminine side in the privacy of his home and of his own imagination.

The two other sections of Tornero’s part, “Els problemes del pare” and “Tu” deal with the struggle to communicate emotions within the family circle, and with the necessity to affirm the character’s own gender identity against social conventions. When asked what triggers the visit to the therapist, the nameless protagonist says: “Hem vingut perquè la meua mare està trista i el meu pare està preocupat perquè ells volen que jo sigui un nen i jo vull ser una nena”, adding: “I perquè tothom diu que jo tinc un problema” [“We’re here because my mother is sad and my father is worried because they want me to be a boy and I want to be a girl ... And because everyone says I have a problem”] (335). The character affirms that they also believe they have a problem (since they belong to the “tothom”). The section ends in a slightly humorous note, with the kid stating that, if they need to go to a therapist, the rest of the society needs it too. This moment triggers a small cathartic crevice, in which seriousness and sadness give room, on stage, to laughter and smiles. The character ends up too, with a bittersweet smile: “Estàs plorant, però també somrius” [“You’re crying, but you also smile”], he says, in a complex emotional innuendo that closes Tornero’s section (336). It can be argued that the ending of the section is not fully pessimistic – it ends in a bittersweet note. However, it does not offer any alternative, any escape to the binary construction of a society that states that they have “a problem” –a clause that the kid accepts. By this final acknowledgement, the character situates themselves in a position of normative social failure. There is, however, no queer turn to this event: embracing failure as a problematization of social prejudices, following Halberstam, seems to escape the possibilities of Tornero’s piece.

The texts created by the Catalan playwright –now living in Madrid– Carlos Be, most of them written for the actor and performer of Asian descent Junyi Sun, aim to the same kind of radically binary discourse in which the trans characters cannot find their place. Be’s piece, entitled “M de mujer” (“W of Woman”, a title that already points out to this binary order), features Mei Ling, who has left behind not only their former identity as Jian Long, but also their family, especially their father, who thinks of them as a dead son (“Mi hijo está muerto”)³³. The piece starts with an emphatic double sentence that, again, sets up a negative and pessimistic –as well as binary– tone from the very beginning: “Lo peor no es lo que se dice. / Lo peor es lo que no se dice” [“The worst is not what it’s said. / The worst is what is not said”]. The negativity is underscored when Mei Ling reveals the meaning of their acquired name: “Mei Ling en chino significa belleza” [“Mei Ling in Chinese means beauty”]. Their beauty, however, is doomed to be wasted (as Tornero’s “dead kisses”) in a transphobic world that condemns them to loneliness, so their utopic discourse is directed towards a future that is not a queer utopia, but sterile death: it seems that only temporality when their beauty can be embraced is in the *after*-life: “tanta belleza sin aprovecharse en vida tiene que ir a parar a algún lado cuando muera.” [“so much beauty wasted in life has to go somewhere when I die.”]

In another scene of *La fragilitat*, Carlos Be designs a series of dual sentences that accentuate, even in a meta-textual way, the binary order in which Mei Ling is trapped:

Sé mirar con el deseo de un hombre
y apartarme el pelo con la gracia de una mujer,
decir “Ésta la pago yo” como un hombre
y decir “Ésta la pago yo” como una mujer;

³³ Mei Ling’s mother might not have reacted in such a radical way, although, according to the text, she was also rejecting her: “ya no podía mirarle de frente” [“I was not able to look at him face to face anymore”].

sé poner mi mano en el muslo como un hombre
y ascender por el pantalón con la suavidad de una mujer,
enfadarme como un hombre
y rectificar los pómulos sonrojados de una mujer³⁴

Mei Ling's monologue addresses, albeit unintentionally, the frequent uber-sexualization of the figure of the trans woman –something that happens when placing gender identities to the foreground, and confounding gender and sexuality. That is also the case of many LGBT-themed movies, featuring characters with narratives that only relate to their sexual desires or gender identities, and a plot that only progresses through the need of love and affection. This is, of course, the way a transphobic society often regards queer and transgender subjects: by reducing them to exclusively sexual creatures, they otherize them and simplify their narratives by diluting the complexities of human existence. In these narratives, queer and trans are relegated to the realm of the taboo and the abject.

In plays such as *La fragilitat*, the playwrights happen to denounce these discriminations by, paradoxically, falling into the same pattern of reducing the trans subjects to over-sexualized beings who, ultimately, are only looking for breadcrumbs of love – quite a simplistic outline. This would be Mei Ling's case: “Y también me ofrecen dinero por la calle, / pobres, no saben que chupar la chupo fatal” [“They also offer me money on the streets, / poor things, they don't know I give terrible blow jobs”]. Loneliness, here, equals the

³⁴ “I can look with the desire of a man
and pull my hair away with the flair of a woman,
say ‘This one's on me’ as a man
and say ‘This one's on me’ as a woman;
I can rest my hand on a leg as a man
and climb through the trousers with the grace of a woman,
get angry as a man
and redress the blushed cheeks of a woman.”

impossibility to find love: “solo quiero amar a otra persona, / ¿lo entendéis?, qué vais a entender vosotros, / y me siento solo como un hombre / y me siento sola como una mujer.” [“I just want to love someone else, / do you understand? You can’t understand. / And I feel alone as a man / and I feel alone as a woman.”]

Mei Ling’s over-sexualization and craving for an impossible love that would allow them a ticket to the realm of the “normal”³⁵ brings us to another trans play: *La pell escrita* (*The Written Skin*). *La pell escrita* is a monologue written by Manel Bonany and that premiered at Sala Àtrium, a new venue situated in the Eixample district in Barcelona, in November 2017, under the stage direction of Manel Dueso. According to a review of the play by Clara Moliné, Bonany had written it seventeen years ago, but at that time he could not find a venue to perform it due to social prejudices. The plot takes the spectators, as it happens in several trans plays, to another non-place (a morgue), where a transgender woman (interpreted in this production by actress Míriam Marcet) is narrating from her death, similarly to what Chilean writer María Luisa Bombal does with her narrator and protagonist in *La amortajada*. The anonymous character (referred as “Ella” throughout the text) appears emerging from what the author describes as a chrysalis, suggesting that death is the beginning of a new (and maybe more benevolent) life. Her body has been practiced an autopsy. The play starts the moment she hears a group of men coming: they are the friends of her impossible love – “impossible” because, even if it desire eventually materializes, it is doomed to end in a tragic manner: in this case, the woman dies of *natural causes* due to an imperfect, vulnerable heart³⁶. The men are coming to perform a final bullying on her: “[vénen per saber] Si sóc o no

³⁵ In another monologue in *La fragilitat* written by Carlos Be, the dancer Roberto G. Alonso, states: “Tot això ho faig només per sentir-me normal, / però com ser normal si tothom et desplaça als marges?” [“I do all this just to be normal, / but how can you be normal if everyone pushes you to the margins?”]

³⁶ “El cor ofegat. Un coàgul. Això és el que va trobar” (19). It has to be noticed that it is her natural death (with evident symbolic connotations: she dies because her heart breaks) what triggers the plot (the bullies wait until she is in the morgue to assault her). This kind of Deus Ex Machina is not unusual in homosexual fiction before the Gay Liberation, in which many homosexual men and women ended up being “punished” for their immorality. In *A History of Gay Literature*, Gregory Woods claims that “at the end of the nineteenth century male homosexuality ... starts to be written about as an essentially tragic condition. Sadness, loneliness and a

sóc una dona. Per això han vingut. Estúpids” [“[they are coming to figure out] If I am or if I am not a woman. This is why there here. Stupid boys”], the monologue starts (3). The cards are on the table from the very beginning: the main (and the only) questions at stake in the play will revolve around her biological body, her sexuality and her emotional desires.

La pell escrita seems to support the thesis that those who try to achieve what is not supposed to be for them end up paying a high price for their audacity. The trans protagonist dares to fall in love with Marc, a cisgender man considerably younger, and much more innocent, than her. And by doing so, she crosses a fatal boundary.

The trans woman in *La pell escrita* appears, as it has been discussed regarding *La fragilitat*, as an extremely sexualized being. She reads the transphobia in the bullies as sexual desire for her: “Tots ells es morien de ganes de ficar-se entre les meves cuixes. Les seves polles d’adolescents. Les seves polles analfabetes” [“All of them were dying to slide between my thighs. Their teenage cocks. Their analphabet cocks”] (4)³⁷. Conversely, she spends a substantial part of the play remembering her relationship with Marc, which is basically described as sexual: “Amb ell... era intens. Calent. / Sucós” [“With him... it was intense. Hot. / Juicy”] (5). Besides her gender identity and her ubiquitous sexuality, the only thing we know about her is that she worked as a hairdresser, but even her profession is embedded of a sexual nature the moment Marc appears in the narrative, as a client who comes for a haircut. This becomes evident as she recalls washing his hair:

El tacte de l’aigua calenta. Me’n recordo... La maneta, tota cap a l’esquerra i t’arribes a cremar...

tendency to end in either suicide or worse have been regarded by many – and not only hostile heterosexuals – as being inherent in the condition” (217). Afterwards, he explicitly mentions the “fatal imperfection” as one of the sources for the tragic drama of which homosexual characters are victims in these narratives.

³⁷ Even if the author does not intend to suggest this, there is a certain transphobia in this assertion. By asserting that the necrophilic rapists are closeted queers, the author seems to unconsciously imply that authentic straight people would be incapable to commit such an atrocity.

Cap a la dreta i... freda.

Al mig, una mica cap a l'esquerra... tèbia.

Com... la pell. Com el cos.

Els cossos són tebis.

...

Les puntes dels dits... entre els seus cabells...

...

El meu nino no era de gaires paraules. Les hi havia d'arrencar com si fossin queixals.

I malgrat tot em vaig adonar de seguida que era un sol.

Tendre. Tan tendre que me'l podria menjar sense mastegar. Se'm desfaria a la boca.

(6-7)³⁸

The water in the scene serves as a catalyzer of freedom and sexuality, and brings her and Marc together through its fluidity³⁹. Her lover is described, here, as an almost liquid being: "he would melt in my mouth". Marc and the narrator communicate through the language of their bodies – thus, Marc is not only an absent character in the monologue, but

³⁸ "The touch of hot water. I remember... the lever, all the way to its left, and you could burn yourself... To the right and... cold.
In the middle, a little bit to the left... warm.
Like... the skin. Like the body.
Bodies are warm.

...
Fingertips... between his hair...

...
My boy was not very talkative. I had to pull his words as if they were teeth.
And nonetheless I immediately realized that he was a good boy.
Tender. So tender I could eat him. No need to chew. He would melt in my mouth."

³⁹ Paul-Julian Smith reflects, in *Laws of Desire* (1992), upon water as a metaphor for queer (in that case lesbian) desire in the Esther Tusquets' novel *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978): the kisses between Clara and the narrator "are described in terms of the sea" (101) and the hidden space in the sea where the women escape by boat represent an "escape from the rigours of patriarchy" (101) and to free their desires, represented by Clara's undressing and swimming naked in the sea. Something similar happens in *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora*, by Majorcan writer Carme Riera (1975). In its opening story, the one that gives the name to the book, the references to the sea as the space of lesbian desire are ubiquitous, from its title to the name of the lover, disclosed at the very end of the story: Maria. Brad Epps thinks about the liquid metaphors as "the persistent loss of materiality in lesbian love" ("Virtual Sexuality" 324), and notices a natural flowing between the key ideas and metaphors operating in the story: mar (sea), amar (to love), mare (mother), and Maria.

also an almost silent one. As the trans woman shaves Marc, he shows an erection: “Sota el davantal hi havia crescut una forma. ... Quan se’n va adonar, va creuar de seguida les cames” [“Underneath the apron, something had grown ... The moment he realized, he crossed his legs”] (10). Over-sexualized as she is, the hairdresser does not hesitate and responds to the physical signal of desire: “Li vaig engrapar l’entreuix sense deixar-lo de mirar als ulls i sense esperar a saber el seu nom ni a dir-li el meu” [“I grabbed his crotch looking in his eyes, not waiting to know his name or tell him mine”] (11). No other connection is necessary prior to the sexual encounter: names would belong to a different level of intimacy.

Sexuality triggers, in *La pell escrita*, the mechanisms that will lead the plot towards the unfortunate death of the narrator. Even if the woman mentions a benevolent, previous affair –the one she had with Ricard, an older, married man with whom she was involved for some time– she makes clear, from the very moment she mentions this, that there was no sexual contact: “mai em vaig posar el seu penis a la boca” [“I never put his cock in my mouth”] (16). Ricard plays a critical role in her biography, because he’s the first one who saw her as she was (as a transgender woman): “La primera mirada que em va mirar com si em veïés. / A mi. / Vivint a través d’una estranya. / Ell se’n va adonar de seguida” [“The first eyes that looked at me as if they were seeing me. / Me. / Living through a stranger. / He realized very fast.”] (17). If Ricard “em va ensenyar a ser qui sóc” [“taught me to be who I am”], Marc was, in a symmetric fashion, her own active (and creative) project: “l’hauria ensenyat... qui és...” [“I would have taught him... who he is...”] (17). By this gaining of agency, and by crossing the border that divides cisgender and transgender, the anonymous transgender woman starts walking the pathway to her own condemnation. As it happens with the tragedies in classic theatre, the temporality of the events seems to flow, for the experienced spectators, reversely, from the end to the beginning: the expected bloodbath that

constitutes the core of the tragedy lingers onstage from the moment the curtain rises. The rest of the events unfold to lead the characters towards their final destiny.

Sexuality is strongly thematized in *La pell escrita*. While the bullies are coming to savage her dead body, the trans narrator makes a balance of her life experiences: all of them seem to be reduced to sex partners and lovers. Even as she remembers Ricard, with whom she never had intercourse, her memory of the events is explicitly infused, precisely, by this erotic absence: “No és per això que mai em vaig posar el seu penis a la boca. Precisament jo, que me n’he posat els que he volgut. ... El meu cos el regalo a qui jo vull” [“This is not why I never put his penis in my mouth. Precisely me, who have taken all that I wanted... I give my body to whoever I want”] (16). *La pell escrita*, as it happens in many parts of *La fragilitat*, shows a trans woman whose dramatic arc is built solely on her gender identity and her sexuality. It is no surprise, then, that her only childhood memories imply her dressing as a woman and her mother finding out and telling her that “mai seràs una dona. / Només una mala imitació” [“you’ll never be a woman. / Only a poor imitation”] (23). As a source of pride, and to defend herself, the transgender woman employs the before mentioned argument of the *wrong body*: “Una dona és menys dona per no tenir vagina? / No són els fills, ni els pits, ni la vagina... És el que hi ha atrapat dins el cos amb què t’han parit” [“A woman is less of a woman when she does not have a vagina? / It’s not her children, her breasts or her vagina... It is what’s trapped inside of the body with which you were born”] (23-24).

Towards the end of the play, the bullies finally gain access to her body, and they discover that she, indeed, has a penis. After raping her, they decide to cut her member off “as a trophy” with some pincers that they find in the surgery room. This ultimate (and quite literal) de-masculinization of the body seems to satisfy both the bullies, who get both an answer to their initial question (“Am I or am I not a woman”) and the definitive satisfaction of

their transphobic desire for violence. She, in exchange, gets rid of the main symbol of her masculinity, even if too late to enjoy her “new” body.

In the last scene of the play, her dead soul seems to find a relative redemption. Marc comes to see her and accepts her as a woman and as a human being, although, again, in a negative way: his feelings are determined not by love, but by the absence of loath (“En els teus ulls... no hi ha fàstic” [“There’s no loath... in your eyes”], 34). The love affair (or, more accurately, the sexual affair) in *La pell escrita*, however, can only be truly honest after the woman is dead (before that, she needed to hide her sexual organ from Marc). The play ends with the woman leaving the stage in a “firm”, “combative”, and “courageous” manner (36-37). As the play reaches the ending, she shouts a final claim: “Sóc una dona que encara vol viure” [“I am a woman who still wants to live”] (37). This, of course, happens to be the ultimate paradox in *La pell escrita*: as much as she wants to live, her death is irreversible – therefore, the play adjusts to a kind of narrative incapable to offer a satisfactory alternative to trans beings: he has transitioned from life to death, and this constitutes another final binary that she can’t escape.

I have already argued that *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius* is caught, too, in the prison of the binary, heteronormative social order, and falls short when it tries to explore outside of its conventions. It is only in Marc Rosich’s part, entitled “Entre tritons i sirenes”, where the break-up with some of the conventions and the commonplaces present in the other trans narratives can be perceived, albeit still bashfully. This part, written for the character of the older Professor, seems to tinge some of the precepts observed in the other sections of the play. In his initial monologue, the Professor explains his incapability, as a child, to walk on male shoes, since he was unable to tie their laces, and how his shoes become the perfect excuse in front of his parents whenever he comes home bruised. The bruises, however, come

not from falling, but from being bullied at school. As he speaks from the present, he recalls those moments and how he has learnt to gain stability:

Tota la vida buscant solucions...
quan, de fet, no calia buscar solucions...
Perquè no hi havia cap problema.
La millor solució hauria estat convence's de la veritat:
que en mi no hi ha cap problema,
que en mi hi ha... què hi ha... una realitat?
M'agrada.
Una realitat. Inqüestionable. (116-17)⁴⁰

This monologue ends up partially contradicting Helena Tornero's part, in which the younger boy states in front of his therapist (and of his parents) that he, indeed, might have a problem. In the case of the Professor, it is only the society that has a problem, not himself: instead, he has *a reality*. The "reality" that is "out of question" in the Professor's body leaves no room for social acceptance, except for those moments of fantastic solace outside from the narrative timeline.

This acceptance could have taken place, at least partially, had he been born later in time. In the last piece of the Professor's monologues, conveniently called "Metamorfosi" ("Metamorphosis"), he begins by acknowledging the presence of young trans students in his

⁴⁰ "All my life looking for solutions...
when, actually there was no need to look for them...
Because there was no problem.
The best solution would have been to convince myself to the truth:
that there was no problem inside me,
that inside me there was... what's in there... a reality?
I like that.
A reality. One out of question."

classroom: “Els temps són més lluminosos” [“We live more luminous times”] (119). The light, though, seems to be shining only for the youngsters, while the older generations still remain in the shadows of intolerance, as one of the final choreographies in *La fragilitat*, in which the Professor gets cruelly and systematically rejected by the other trans characters, seems to claim. However, as he states that the newer generations have opened a door to challenge transphobia, the Professor seems to realize that he as well is able to think of himself beyond the precarious conditions of possibility performed in *La fragilitat*. In this moment, he takes a step forward and claims that

Ha arribat l’hora de ser jo. Jo vull ser jo.

I això no té res a veure amb etiquetes ni quiròfans.

Encara sóc a temps de ser qui sóc.

Una persona amb el seu cos i el seu cap marcant la mateixa hora.

Sense etiquetes, ni calaixos. (124)⁴¹

A similar claim to the one that puts an end to *La pell escrita*, but in this case stated by a character that is actually alive⁴². It is only at the end of this section when the audience realizes that an alternative to heteronormativity can be thought of.

In most of its scenes, *La fragilitat* functions as a confrontational play: its aim is to face the audience and to show them the magnitude of their prejudices. To put it in different words,

⁴¹ “It’s time to be who I am. I want to be who I am.
And that has nothing to do with labels or surgeries.
I still have time to be who I am.
Someone with their body and their head synchronized.
No labels. No compartments.”

⁴² In a slightly different context (even if also regarding subaltern, queer subjects), this craving for life becomes a leit motiv in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, when Prior Walter asks the angels to grant him “more life” as a blessing – which means, in his case, to survive AIDS. The last scene of the play takes place years later. For the first time in the whole play, Walter breaks the fourth wall and turns to the audience to bless them as he had been blessed: “You are fabulous creatures. Each and every one. / And I bless you: *More Life*. / The Great Work Begins”, the play ends in a moment of collective catharsis – one much needed during the AIDS crisis (148).

instead of standing by the audience, the show antagonizes them and traps them in this dynamics of opposition: society, as it has been claimed in several moments during the play, systematically rejects all the transgender characters. The traditional, impermeable opposition, between stage and audience that operated during the performances at the Festival Grec reinforces this confrontation – as I will argue further in this chapter, immersive theatre and non-conventional spaces provide a representational context that breaks with the binary division audience/stage and that facilitates an unconventional approach to the social structures. *La fragilitat*, then, does not present any solution, any alternative, to this negativity – perhaps, except, for the brief choreographic atemporal moments, such as the one performed by the Professor and the mysterious gentle dancer. As Catalonia itself was debating about *transitioning*, about deconstructing and reconstructing its body (its borders) in order to redefine its national identity (or identities), *La fragilitat* seems to be stuck in this normative system that has been built by rigid, binary categories, incapable of seeing beyond these structures and look for imaginative, interesting, queerer solutions.

In this system, the characters in *La fragilitat* are condemned to isolation, loneliness, and to a state of motionless death in life in the main narrative. The play shows no alternative than to follow the parameters that the mainstream proposes, and therefore gets stuck in a claustrophobic vision of a society in which trans subjects are destined to failure and frustration. *La fragilitat* proclaims a sterile negativity that can be extrapolated, in a macropolitical context, to the impossibility to transition and generate an alternative kind of realization.

Nevertheless, there are other trans plays that, instead of abiding to social paradigms, challenge them and propose alternatives. By doing so, they offer the spectators the possibility to think *beyond*. That would be the case of two plays that have enjoyed a promiscuous presence both in Barcelona stages and in the rest of the territory: *Limbo* (2014), a collective

creation by the company Les Impuixibles, and *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams* (*Tennessee Williams Didn't Write Me*) (2015), another show by the Companyia Roberto G. Alonso. By expanding the horizon of possibilities, I believe, these plays have the capacity to configure, through the enacting of utopian possibilities, emotional responses to the idea of queering our socio-political reality that both Preciado and Olid formulated.

3. *Limbo*: Transgender Poetics of the No-Place

From its very conception to the way it was translated onto stage, *Limbo* stands as a liminal spectacle. A piece created from different readings, interviews and research, as well as out of improvisations in the rehearsal room, *Limbo* does not hesitate to alternate a range of disciplines without stablishing a hierarchy among them – disciplines include text theatre, dance, live music and performance, often overlapping on stage. *Limbo* brings together texts by playwright Marc Rosich, live music and performance by composer Clara Peya (who in 2019 became the youngest Premi Nacional de Cultura), and choreographies by Ariadna Peya, who was also present on stage. Even if the piece’s point of departure is a personal anecdote by Clara Peya⁴³, the dramaturgy is based on autobiographical texts by transgender activists Miquel Missé and Pol Galofré, and it narrates a crucial episode in the personal story of Albert, a trans person medically transitioning from female to male. The play begins when Albert gets stuck in an airport (where he was trying to board a plane to get to the hospital for sex-change surgery) because the security officer in passport control would not understand why the passport he’s presenting shows the picture of a woman – representing Albert’s former persona, Berta. While he’s stranded in this non-place, Albert recalls different moments in his life that have brought him to his current situation: from his childhood as a girl to the visits to the doctor, as well as several dialogues with Berta, still present inside him and fighting to survive, even if as a ghost – dialogues that evoke other temporalities and other situations outside the airport space, and that might recall this idea of death within life and precarious timeline that I have addressed in this chapter. As it happens with *La fragilitat*,

⁴³ In a personal interview with Peya published in *Nuvol*, she claimed that “I had a friend that I had not met in several years. When I stumbled upon her in a bar, I came to say hi calling him by her former name, and he answered: ‘I’m not Maria anymore, now my name is Miquel.’ So many questions unfolded right in front of me at that very moment! Questions that neither me nor anybody surrounding me were prepared do answer. There were no models: it was a distant, bizarre issue for everybody.” (“El teatre català”)

these memories are complemented by other a-temporal, interdisciplinary scenes, in which Albert sings several songs about his tribulations and/or performs one of the choreographies with the other dancers onstage.

The initial premise in *Limbo* relates to one serious concern among the trans community: the problem of how identity documents often do not offer an accurate depiction of the subjects in transition –airports being one of the battlefields where this issue becomes especially problematic. Nora Butler Burke, for instance, points out a recent case:

In late January 2012, news rapidly spread through social media and among trans activists in Canada claiming that a recent amendment to federal flight regulations would ban all trans people from boarding a plane within Canada if they did not have identification documents that corresponded to their gender appearance, or if there were major discrepancies between different IDs. (113)

Passport control posts function, at the airports, as a painful boundary, and shows clear evidence of how trans people challenge the mechanisms of control and surveillance. By questioning the legitimacy and verisimilitude of a document such as the passport, the trans subject makes the borders (and, consequently, the security procedures to which those in control decide who are entitled to cross them) more unintelligible and diffuse. Airports, then, become a space where the binary system clashes with non-normative forms of existence.

As the initial stage directions of *Limbo* (missing in the published version) state, following Marc Augé's terminology, the airport also works as a "lloc de transit, *no place*" (*sic*). It also works as the metaphor of an interrupted journey: stuck in his private identity limbo, Albert is barred from their flight, and thus from his transition. The first song of the show is performed while the protagonist is trying to overcome the obstacles –incarnated

onstage by the bodies of the two dancers of the show, who execute an aggressive and physical choreography— that are blocking their way to passport control. As they are challenged, Berta sings: “Sento tanta por ... que no sé què he de dir / per no semblar boig ... atrapat en aquesta carn. / En aquesta pell. / En aquesta carcassa. / Carcassa de carn” [I am so afraid ... that I don’t know what to say / so I don’t look mad ... trapped in this flesh. / In this skin. / In this carcass. / Carcass of flesh”] (37). Rosich brings back, at the beginning of the piece, the metaphor of the physical camouflage (the carcass, which at the end of the play is complemented and mirrored by the idea of the mask that comes down at the very end of the play⁴⁴), which was a recurrent one in the literature about homosexuals before Stonewall and the subsequent gay liberation. Belonging to the same symbolic field as the closet, masks and carcasses signaled the necessity of imposture in order to hide a truth that carried social stigma⁴⁵. The new borders of (homo)normativity, which have allowed those gays and lesbians that have managed to adjust to normative paradigms, have erased (or at least problematized) the notion of the closet. However, the metaphor, a ubiquitous image present in most of the gay and lesbian narratives until recently, still fully relates to transgender narratives. According to statistics, most population in Spain has an accepting attitude towards homosexuality –but the numbers also show that transphobia is still prominent⁴⁶. LGBT

⁴⁴ Both images, the carcass and the mask, might share the notion of covering, of disguising physical or psychological traits, but they also differ lightly: the carcass may point out, in this transgender play, to the idea of a shape that does not maintain a concordance with what is covered by it.

⁴⁵ One of the most influential works that employs this metaphor in a more robust way is the novel *Masque the chair (Mask of Flesh)*, by the Belgian writer Maxence Van der Meersh. It was originally published posthumously in 1958, and translated to Spanish under the title *La máscara de carne* in 1961. The novel followed the pathologizing line of other texts about homosexuals published at the time, and became a moderate best-seller in the Francoist Spain.

⁴⁶ According to statistics provided by World Values Survey and mentioned by Kiko Llaneras in Spanish newspaper *El País*, the rejection of homosexuality in Spain has declined from 54% in 1983 to 8% in 2012. However, as Rebecca Stotzer states (170-79), trans subjects are exposed to higher rates of different types of violence, from verbal injuries to sexual aggressions. The most recent annual report “L’ estat de la LGBTI-fòbia a Catalunya” published by the Observatori contra l’homofòbia states that, out of the 84 reported cases of homophobia that were denounced in Catalonia in 2016, 12 were specifically directed towards trans people. Lastly, the recent polemics related to the bus by ultra-catholic association Hazte Oír that toured Spain showing a transphobic message (“Los niños tienen pene. Las niñas tienen vulva. Que no te engañen. Si naces hombre, eres hombre. Si naces mujer, seguirás siéndolo” – “Boys have a penis. Girls have a vulva. Don’t let them fool you. If

activists in Catalonia, such as Jordi Petit, have recently denounced transphobic prejudices, even within the gay and lesbian community⁴⁷.

After realizing that he's trapped in this transitional space, Albert runs to the restrooms. He feels that in the stalls he'll find the much needed privacy to calm himself down. On his way to the lavatories, he stumbles upon the perfume section in the duty-free area. All the fragrances are organized according to a binary male/female order: "A la dreta, perfums d'home. A l'esquerra, perfums de dona" ["On my right, perfumes for men. On my left, perfumes for women"] (41). The publicity slogans, floating in the air like the aromatic scents that they are trying to sell, create the atmosphere of a nightmare and show how society has tried to define masculinity and femininity as opposed social categories –therefore reinforcing the paradigm of immobility. At each side of the corridor, completely separated and unable to merge, both archetypes (the socially constructed stereotypes on fierce masculinity and sensual femininity) try to attract Albert with enticing slogans: "SoftVelvet: el suave poder de ser mujer" ["SoftVelvet: the soft power of being a woman"] versus "TigerNights: atracci3n salvaje para el hombre de hoy" ["Tiger Nights: wild attraction for the man of today"] (41). These are the only two options that the binary order is able to offer; two extremes that leave those who don't fit in them in a diffuse in-between-ness. At this moment, it is all about transition in *Limbo*: Albert's transitional body is trapped in a transitional space, but the elements that try to put an order in this space can only offer a heteronormative, and therefore binary, approach. Therefore, Albert is rejected as a subject whose body can't be read by social normative conventions, as it had already been stated in Scene One, when he fails to go through passport control.

you're born a man, you are man. If you're born a woman, you'll keep being one") is just a sign that transphobia in Spain is far from extinct.

⁴⁷ Despite the small number of data collected, studies such as "Questioning the 'Heteronormative Matrix': Transphobia, Intersectionality, and Gender Outlaws Within the Gay and Lesbian Community", by Julie Nagoshi et al., argue for "[t]he difficulties gay and lesbian individuals felt in openly communicating and interacting with gender nonconforming people" (19).

This binary order becomes clear the moment he finally reaches the restrooms. In *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam brings up “the bathroom problem” to enunciate the troubles the binary division of the restrooms might create in some individuals⁴⁸. In *Limbo*, Albert illustrates this moment of identity clash:

A la dreta, el lavabo d’homes.
A l’esquerra, el lavabo de dones.
I no dubto. Fa temps que no dubto.
Jo queestic entre la por i l’activisme.
Entre la resignació i el trepitjar fort.
Entre la voluntat d’amagar-se
i les ganes de trencar-ho tot... no dubto.
I entro corrents al lavabo d’homes
i corrents em tanco amb balda a un dels lavabos
i corrents, en aquell lavabo d’homes,
m’assec a la tassa com una dona. (41-42)⁴⁹

This moment shows both the contradictions that merge in Albert’s persona, and how impossible it is for him to fit in the binary social organization. Albert eventually overcomes

⁴⁸ Halberstam states that choosing which door to go in, and therefore to define ourselves as men or women, is only a culturally imposed decision that is related to the idea of gender and sexuality as a way of imposing discipline, to speak in Foucaultian terms.

⁴⁹ “On my right, the restroom for men.
On my left, the restroom for women.
And I don’t hesitate. It’s been a long while since I last hesitated.
I, being between fear and activism.
Between resignation and coming out strong.
Between the intention of hiding away
and the will to break up with everything... I don’t hesitate.
And I run towards the restroom for men
and I run to lock myself in one of the cabins
and I run, in that restroom for men,
to sit down in the loo as a woman.”

his hesitation and enters the men's restroom, given that this is the gender with which he identifies, but once he manages to get in, his biological sex adds an additional dose of distress in his inner debate: being forced to sit down on the toilet is the physical, performative manifestation of this problem –and thus Albert does not find any soothing in the restroom, but more discomfort when he acknowledges, one more time, that this world is not laid out for people like him.

As it happens with some other shows by the company Les Impuixibles⁵⁰, *Limbo* is unable to get rid of certain didacticism. The piece was born, nonetheless, out of the necessity to speak from a perspective that was beforehand unseen in the traditional Catalan stage⁵¹. This educational purpose becomes evident the moment the spectators enter the performance space: while they wait for the show to begin, a screen shows, in loop, names and definitions of different objects related to the trans experience. Objects that most of the audience probably ignore, from the packer (a package that is hidden in the underwear to suggest the presence of male genitalia) to the binder (a compressive bandage that is applied around the torso in order to conceal the breasts)⁵². The process having the audience familiarize with these words mirrors Albert's own learning process to entitle himself and not seeing his body as a mistake. According to Miquel Missé (who echoes the claims from queer activist organizations such as the International Gay and Lesbian Association – ILGA and Transgender Europe), the stereotype of the trans subject as somebody trapped in the wrong body comes from

⁵⁰ Such as the more recent *Aiïc. El so de les esquerdes (Aiïc. The sound of the crevices)*, premiered in La Seca – Espai Brossa on June 29, 2017, under the Grec Summer Festival. *Aiïc* addressed the problematic issue of gender violence towards women and it became an important play with ravishing reviews. However, in spite of some very powerful scenic moments, such as a choreographic scene in which the four women on stage perform a methodical and fierce shower trying to wash themselves away from the bitterness of having been raped, its pedagogical tone did not serve to reinforce its message. The men in the audience, for instance, were not directly interrogated about what were they doing to stop gender violence until the very last scene of the show.

⁵¹ In my interview with Clara Peya, she admits that the company struggled to “find a balance between an interesting story and its pedagogic content”. “We did not want *Limbo* to become a pamphlet. That is why we tried to give emphasis to the story, to the plot. But, of course, from the very moment you start employing terms such as ‘cisgender’, you have to do some pedagogy, because otherwise the audience will get lost in the concepts.”

⁵² Actually, the promotional pictures of Les Impuixibles' production of *Limbo* showed actress Mariona Castillo (who performed Albert) in the process of hiding his breasts with a binder (figure 8).

aforementioned pathologizing and transphobic discourses, which “is based in the existence of only two natural identities –man and woman– and that [leaves] in the margins ... people with biological problems” (*Transexualidades* 73). Following Butler, Missé states that “this model does not acknowledge that, actually, both gender and sex are cultural readings of the body, and that there are different ways of living masculinity and femininity” (73). And there is a complex network of financial interests (among them, the pharmacological and esthetic surgery circuits, both present in *Limbo* from the first scenes) that sustains itself on this social order.

As a play, *Limbo* also experiences a transition (a more evident one compared to *La fragilitat*) towards understanding that society works in binary systems, and that trans characters need to disrupt this hierarchy in order to achieve a certain personal fulfillment. Rosich’s text gives the audience some clues to show this slow transition. Part three (Records d’infància [Childhood Memories]), for instance, begins with Albert recalling the frustration that he experienced every Christmas, when his parents tried to give him the presents he asked for, but with the mandatory feminine touch: “un cotxe de carreres, sí, però de color rosa pastel” [“a racing car, indeed, but painted in pastel pink”], he says (43)⁵³. He complains: “Fins i tot en el moment més innocent... tot s’acaba conjugant en masculí o en femení. I mai en neutre. Mai en neutre. Perquè el neutre està... neutralitzat” [“Even in the most innocent moment... Everything ends up conjugating in either masculine or feminine. Never in neutral. Because the neutral is... neutralized”] (45). This is the first moment in the play in which Albert suggests that there is an option that exceeds the binary masculine/feminine. And even if in the following song Albert follows the same pattern of adjectival opposition that Carlos Be employs at *La fragilitat*: “De petita / quan em deien / que bonica / jo volia / ser bonic”

⁵³ This is actually another commonplace in queer fiction. See, for instance, the beginning of Jean-Marc Vallée’s coming of age film *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (2005), when Zack, the main character complains about him never getting the presents he actually wanted for Christmas (and his birthday), since his father considered them too feminine.

[“When I was a little girl / whenever they said / what a beautiful girl / I wanted / to be a beautiful boy”] (45-46), the song is disrupted by a stanza in which he suggests that his preferred state would be transitioning: “Els teus pares / creien que era / transitori, / una fase a / superar. / Però un dia / l’evidència / els supera, / tu només vols / transitar” [“Your parents / thought it was / transitory, / just a phase / you would get over with. / But one day / evidence / hits them: / you just want / to transition”] (46-47). Here, a productive tension unfolds: even if the structure of the song follows the already discussed dual patterns that suggest that the transgender bodies are trapped, according to the society, in a gender dysfunction (and that also state the impossibility to break these rules), there is a crevice of disruption in the song, where Albert unveils the possibility of seeing himself beyond those conventions⁵⁴.

This is just a first and incipient intuition, since Albert immediately goes back to his previous idea that he could only be complete as a man if he has surgery performed on him. “L’arca dels cossos equivocats” (“The ark of the wrong bodies”), a scene with clear Biblical resonances in which Albert tries to gain access to the rescue Ark commanded by Doctor Noè (the surgeon who is supposed to perform sex reassignment surgery on him), rescues the binary paradigm (and the idea of the wrong body) and functions as a metaphoric embodiment of the necessary procedures that Albert needs to undergo in order to be admitted to sex reassignment surgery. The allegorical construction is clear: Doctor Noè is the savior, the one who is going to help Albert survive by adjusting his body to what the society expects. Moreover, by bringing in the Ark male and female couples, by reorienting Albert towards a trans identity that would only be tolerated if he tries to adjust as much as he can to the traditional masculinity, Noè is also preserving the binary (and heteronormative, monogamous) order.

⁵⁴ In the final working version of the text, Marc Rosich points out that the part in which Albert claims his transitional state as definitive is a late addition to the previous lyrics. That would indicate that this tension between binary organizations and transitional attitudes only emerged in advanced stages of the creating process, a transition in itself.

Albert gets stuck, again, this time in the control access to the ark: in order to be granted admission to the vessel and embark in the trip towards sex reassignment, he needs to go through a previous step: “Primer has de reconèixer que no ets normal. / Que ets un error. Perquè ets un error” [“First you need to admit that you are not normal. / That you are a mistake. Because you are a mistake”], demands the guard at the gates of the ship (63). Gerard Coll-Planas and other trans activists and scholars have denounced that, in order to grant access to medication and surgery, transgender people in Spain (and many other countries) need to accept that their gender dysfunction is a pathology. “To obtain a mental disorder certificate is also a mandatory requirement in order to access hormonal treatment and sex reassignment surgery”, Coll-Planas explains (*La carne* 17). The moral price that Albert has to pay in order to be admitted in the lifeboat of the normative binary is to accept that he is a “mistake of nature”, a step that a consistent part of the trans community is, counterintuitively, willing to take. For instance, the pathological diagnosis spared many transgendered people to being charged with felonies and being sent to jail. In his personal testimony, Kim Pérez explains why, to many trans people, being labeled as pathological subjects saved their lives:

To those in complete darkness, isolated, shut up, uncommunicated, living in guilt, ashamed of what we did not understand as a sin or a vice, it’s hard to understand nowadays to what extent this position actually represented some kind of opening. *Going from vice to sickness is taking one step upwards.* Going from being damned to being helped is something. Going from being regarded with disgust by many confessors to being regarded with compassion by psychiatrists meant to be able to understand oneself. (102, my emphasis)

Departing from the same point, Miquel Missé remarks the confrontation that has been taking place within contemporary trans activism regarding the strive to de-pathologize transsexuality as a mental illness: “Depatologization, a process that from the beginning intended to empower the trans community, has often been regarded in a completely opposite way: as an attack on the very trans identity, and as an attempt to risk the health benefits that we have achieved (or that can be achieved) thanks to pathologization” (*Transsexualidades* 267).

An irresolvable paradox seems to emerge at this point. In his critique to the narratives of normality, Michael Warner declares that “Nearly everyone, it seems, want to be normal. And who can blame them, if the alternative is being abnormal, or deviant, or not being one of the rest of us?” (*The Trouble* 53). In the heteronormative social scheme, the idea of the normal is naturally opposed to that of an aberration – to a pathology. By admitting being a “mistake”, trans subjects are reluctantly granted their passages to the Ark of Normativity, although, as non-cisgender, they will never completely blend in the scheme of social normativity. Accepting their *erroneous nature* can be read as a perverse rite of passage, an act of self-shaming established by society as a protocol toward being redirected, as much as it is possible, to normative paradigms.

To find his way out of this social entanglement, it is critical for Albert to challenge what society understands by “normal”. In *The Trouble with Normal*, Michael Warner challenges what he calls the “false alternative” that is built over the radical opposition between being “normal” and being pathological (59). I argue that there is an ethical, queer responsibility in rejecting this limited range of options. In order to reach that stage of queer enlightenment, the dramatic tension in *Limbo* escalates in the entrance of the Ark of the Wrong Bodies. As Albert is required to shame himself, he ends up desperately screaming at Doctor Noè (“Regali’m la vida. / Regali’m una fal·loplàstia! Quan baixi de la coberta del seu

vaixell, vull fer-ho amb un cos que sigui habitable” [“Give me a life. Give me a phalloplasty! / When I get down from your boat / I want to do it under a habitable body”] (64). It is at this precise moment when a decisive double revelation, a true scenic anagnorisis, strikes him: neither he is a sick person, nor he needs to enter the Ark in order to find self-realization. Conversely, entering the Ark would imply giving up the to the normative, binary conventions, and rejecting the creative and mysterious possibilities that would imply embarking in another trip to a different unknown⁵⁵.

Struck by this revelations, Albert revolts against the doctor and the protocols that he has been commanded to follow in order to access the Ark: “Prou! A la merda el Doctor Noè! Jo no he nascut en un cos equivocac. Sou vosaltres que us equivoqueu!!!” [“Enough! Fuck Doctor Noè! I was never born in the wrong body. It is you who are wrong!!!] (65). Here, Albert acknowledges the possibility of his own agency. Kendall Gerdes, considering the implications of performativity related to trans subjects, states that one of the key questions to ask ourselves is about intentionality: “is the subject of gender in charge or not?” (149) Moments of trans empowerment such as the one Albert embodies onstage are critical to realize that bodies do not necessary need to be manipulated in order to fit in normativity. The epiphany in *Limbo* comes when Albert realizes that he can have agency and decide which body he wants to inhabit. Again following Gerdes: “The performative power of gender is its ceaseless materialization of gender in the flesh. It is the power not only to make bodies legible as having gendered characteristics but also to make gender itself *take place* through bodies.” (149, her emphasis). Being agent of this materialization, of this *taking-place*, is a fundamental step in Albert’s process⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ In Clara Peya’s works, the revelation of a world that is ruled by heteropatriarchy is not rare. The song “Oceanes” (2017) starts with a similar revelation: “En som moltes, però minoria / les que hem entès que el món canvia. / Fa massa que el patriarcat / ens obstrueix totes les vies.” [“We are many, but still a minority / who have understood that the world is changing. / It’s been to long since patriarchy / obstructs all our paths.”]

⁵⁶ The discourse of gender performance in Transgender Studies comes from, as Susan Stryker claims in her introduction to *The Transgender Reader*, from Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990). However, she –and other

This final epiphany in *Limbo* –one that never occurred in *La fragilitat*– leads the audience to the final section of the play: the moment in which Albert understands that his body is not a *problem*. Instead, as Missé claims, the short-circuit is in “the system, which does not know in which box to put him, classify him, read him” (*Transsexualidades* 56)⁵⁷. In several scenes throughout the play, Albert speaks to his former identity, Berta. These dialogues, or bifurcated monologues, between Albert and Berta manifest a dislocation in the temporality of the events: the past (Berta), the present (Albert, a trans subject trapped in a liminal space and identity) and the imprecise horizon of a future after surgery collide⁵⁸. *Limbo* functions here as a theatrical piece outside of space as well as time in a normative way. The last imaginary conversation between Albert and Berta revolves around transforming this dislocation into a new social project that would defy binary divisions. Berta interrogates Albert and asks him why, after all that he’s been through, he gives up the idea of undergoing surgery to have a phalloplasty. The final part of this scene works almost as a manifesto:

He nascut amb un cos indecís. Un cos que, com a cos, funciona a la perfecció... però que va néixer indecís... només això... Per què he de canviar-me el cos? Per què l’única solució possible és el quiròfan? Per què fins i tot en això només hi pot haver una sortida estandarditzada? Cada cas, cada cos, cada cap és únic. I es mereix una resposta única. ... Per què he de canviar jo per quadrar en aquest

transgender theorists, such as Jay Prosser in *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (1998) or Henry Rubin in his article “Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies” (1998)– finds some of Butler’s ideas on performativity problematic, since they seem to suggest “that gender is a ‘mere’ performance, on the model of drag, and therefore somehow not ‘real’” (10).

⁵⁷ It can be argued that the texts by Helena Tornero in *La fragilitat* reach a similar conclusion. However, in Tornero’s piece, the boy also explicitly states that he has a problem.

⁵⁸ According to Clara Peya, Berta is essential in order to show the non-binarism of the piece “From the earliest stages of our lives, we are forced to be men or women, depending on the biological sex that are assigned by birth. Berta’s role is to interrogate Albert about what he’s going to do with his feminine part. And, somehow, she also asks us, the audience: can we begin to change our masculinities and our femininities in order to create more complex beings that shatter cultural stereotypes?” (“El teatre català”)

món binari? Per què no pot canviar el món? Que canviï, collons, que canviï.

(66)⁵⁹

It would be convenient to think about spatiality and temporality in this scene. José Esteban Muñoz defines queerness as something that is “not yet here”, conceptually opposing himself to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s activist and *presentist* claim “Queer and Now”. Queerness, states Muñoz, is futurity, potentiality: “we must dream and enact new and better pleasure, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds”, he affirms (1). By queer performance we, as spectators, can perceive the crevice that suggests what can configure another world, a future hypothesis. The ending that *Limbo* proposes can be read from this utopian vision: once he accepts that his identity does not fit in the binary system, Albert finds the ability to transform the non-place that the airport is into an affective space that allows him to freely come and go. This final revelation propels the piece towards a last scene, an epilogue that unfolds outside from the plot, in which Albert finds himself in the square of a city that is not mentioned, on a sunny morning. He is sitting in a terrace, in the open air, waiting to meet somebody:

I de sobte, t’adones que tens forces.

Que has perdut aquella por a mostrar-te tal com ets.

A ensenyar el teu cos davant dels altres, tal com ets.

A despullar el teu cap davant dels altres, tal com ets.

Apartes el cafè i deixes que l’altre et conegui sense màscares.

⁵⁹ “I was born in an undecided body. A body that, as itself, works perfectly well... but that was born undecided... just that... Why should I change my body? Why is surgery the only viable solution? Why, even in this situation, there can only be one standardized way out? Every case, every body, every mind is unique. And it deserves a unique answer. ... Why do I have to change in order to fit in this binary world? Why don’t the world change instead? What the fuck, let it change, let it change.”

I no et fa res parlar del teu cos.

Perquè el teu cos ja no és peatge ni frontera.

Apartes el cafè, amb un gest decidit.

Li mires als ulls.

Allargues la mà.

I et toca el sol a la cara. (69-70)⁶⁰

The tense dualism Albert/Berta has finally disappeared, because it has merged in a new identity – and the reward for this renovated way of looking at social possibilities is the potential for love⁶¹.

The emergence of this new, albeit absent character, a potential partner, symbolizes new possibilities of affective sociability for Albert, who is now able to find positive emotional responses in the world. The potential lover, finally addressed in the text, presents a contrast with the other external characters with a corporeal presence in the piece: the security officers in the initial scene of the play and in front of Noè's Ark. This contrast is also palpable in the location of the scenes where these characters appear: whereas the airport and the ark function as transitional spaces, the square is regarded as an *agora*, a meeting point, a junction where different people confluence and merge: a place where life can fully develop. Here, the set design (naked, open, and dramatically illuminated) seems to propel the audience and the

⁶⁰ “And suddenly, you realize that you're strong.
That you have lost that fear to show up as you are.
To show your body to the others, as you are.
To undress your mind to the others, as you are.
You move the coffee aside and let the other recognize you without masks.
And you don't mind talking about your body.
Because your body is neither toll nor borderland.
You move the coffee aside, with determination.
You look at his eyes.
You reach out.
And the sun touches your face.”

⁶¹ I will address the potential complexities of the “happy endings” in the next chapter of this dissertation.

performers towards a promising futurity. Despite this final scene being written in present tense, it is placed outside of the narrative arc (and dis-placed to an epilogue). It relates to a timeline that unfolds *beyond* the narrative journey, fraught with a positive queer futurity that allows us to illuminate the more complicated present and to see the potential, the optimism, that comes with embracing the fluidity of a transitional space that functions in a scenic level (the airport) and also in a corporeal level (Albert's body).

The end of *Limbo* opens a door to optimism, unlike *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius*, a spectacle that emphasizes negativity and discrimination⁶². This negativity echoes the stereotype of the miserable and tragic queer subject, especially abundant in the cultural production before Gay Liberation. Contrariwise, it can be stated that, through the breaking of the gender binary paradigms and Albert's final non-conformity, the end of *Limbo* suggests a leap towards what I would define as transtheatricality, in which both gender and genre marks dilute and the body proposes an alternative geography and temporality. I am not referring, as Jean Baudrillard suggested in his contested essay about transsexuality, to a metaphor about the delocalization of the bodies in postmodernity, but to a real, physical, corporeal body (which constitutes no redundancy, considering Baudrillard's problematic metaphor of the floating bodies), that sets out an alternative to hetero-cis-normativity.

Limbo reaches this final, non-binary anagnorisis through a clar, albeit sometimes a bit too didactic, journey. Inversely, *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*, by Marc Rosich, takes a different path, that of humor and implicitness, in order to reach a similar end. This is the only text in this chapter that does not explicitly address trans epistemologies – and, in his tacit way of assuming queerness, I argue that it embodies, in an interesting manner, a refined case of transtheatricality.

⁶² In this case I employ the word “transsexual” because the play revolves around the biological sexuality of the characters and their need to use surgery and hormonal treatment to readjust biological sex and gender.

4. Bodily Evictions in Marc Rosich's *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*

In April 2015, Roberto G. Alonso commissioned playwright Marc Rosich a piece that he, a veteran dancer and choreographer who defines himself as an actress, could perform⁶³. The result of this collaboration was *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*, a hybrid piece that, as it happens with other trans works such as *La fragilitat* and *Limbo*, flows between text theatre, music, dance, and performance. *A mí no me escribió* premiered in September 2016, with a remarkable success, at the prestigious FiraTàrrrega. Oriol Puig Taulé, the theatre critic of the digital cultural platform *Núvol*, stated: “*Standing ovation* for Roberto G. Alonso and the rest of the team, in a show that both spectators and critics agree in labeling as one of the best in this edition of FiraTàrrrega” (*Les perles*). In another laudatory review, Justo Barranco wrote in *La Vanguardia* that “*A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams* becomes a big success in the Fira del Teatre al Carrer ... yesterday the audience saw a touching play under a typical concrete bridge”. The show, indeed, followed the conventions of what Richard Schechner defined as environmental theatre, in which “the audience is one medium in which the performance takes place, the living space is another”, and “[t]he living space includes all the space in the theatre, not just what is called the stage (*Environmental* 1-2)⁶⁴. Rosich and Alonso conceived a piece to be performed under a bridge, which functioned as the spatial representation of the marginal life that the protagonist was living⁶⁵.

⁶³ In a 20-minute interview broadcast on Catalan public television, Roberto G. Alonso admitted that “I have discovered that I want to be an actress. I think I had to be an actress ... because of my phesomy, how I am, how I express myself, I believe I’m better as an actress than as an actor. Sometimes we don’t need to fight against this ... I think being a transvestite and wear high heels meant, to me, not to go against the tide” (“20 minuts”).

⁶⁴ In *Staging Place*, Una Chaudhuri states that “[t]he premise of environmental theater is ... an assault on the traditional divisions, taxonomies, and codings of theater space, and a commitment to overriding, erasing, or even destroying them” (23).

⁶⁵ That is the reason why the first performances of the show in Barcelona did not take place in a regular venue, but in an old factory transformed into a performance space called Nau Bòstik, under Barcelona’s Rooftop Festival Terrats en Cultura, on October 9th and 10th, 2016. From March 7th to April 1st, 2018, the production ran in La Seca–Espai Brossa, a small scenic arts space in Barcelona’s neighborhood El Born.

A mí no me escribió moves between the stage play (based on the preponderance of the text, in this cases the one written by Marc Rosich) and the performative work (which takes the text, in case there's any, as a departure point and relies more on the actor). Diana Taylor, one of the most eminent researchers on performance, argues that the performance emerged as a way to question the "classical notions" in which theatre was rooted, that is: "a mimetic art based on a written text, represented in a special, separate space to delight and instruct an exclusive, generally economically privileged, audience" ("Opening" 10). Rosich and Alonso tell the story of a nameless mature woman who tried to make a living out of acting, but whose life started to collapse the moment she became a freelance worker and she went through an emotional break up. After being evicted from her apartment, she was forced to a different, precarious life under a bridge, with the few possessions that she could salvage (mainly her dresses and a few books that she ended up burning during the winter to keep herself warm). There is an organic bond between the plot and the setting of the show in a *marginal* space. In a TV interview, Roberto G. Alonso admitted that "the marginal characters, the marginal beings draw all my consideration. It calls my attention how society deals with these characters ... [I'm interested in] What revolves around homophobia, transsexuality, around those who are in the margins of what is considered normal" ("20 minuts"). These ideas function as points of departure in this performance, which features a mature woman who has been evicted and has lost everything, except for, as mentioned, a considerable amount of dresses, a detail that reinforces the femininity of the woman. The excessive character performed by Alonso changes clothes about 20 times during the one-hour ten-minutes long performance. The fact that she keeps changing her outfits and remains anonymous during the performance

(something that she shares with other characters from *La fragilitat*) also suggests that her place in society is not static, but vulnerable and precarious⁶⁶.

A mí no me escribió also establishes a queer correlation with both space and time. The unique idiosyncrasy of the play, a nomadic production created specifically to be represented in non-conventional spaces, intended to force the theatregoers to get out of their comfort zone of the traditional theatre venues in order to attend the performance. If, according to scholars like Marvin Carlson or Jill Dolan, attending a performance bears the potential of participating in a communal experience of utopian epiphanies, queering the theatrical experience even before the performance starts unfolds a deeper way to engage the spectators and make them acknowledge, in a conscious way, their shared experience as a community. Therefore, the journey to the (non-)place where the mature woman will greet them becomes a critical part in most of the performances of *A mí no me escribió*: by following a river until the bridge where the show was taking place, as it happened in the performances in Tàrrrega as well as in Lleida, or by dis-placing themselves to an abandoned clearing by a country house in the middle of nature (as it occurred in El Bruc) or to an abandoned factory (as it was the case in the Barcelona premiere), the theatregoers become something different: they are not, technically speaking, “theatre goers” anymore (if by “theatre” we refer to the physical, traditional space where the performance happens). They are *going* somewhere else. Instead, they become *theatre-bringers*: as spectators that have agreed to attend a performance, they carry the potentiality of a theatrical experience no matter where they are heading to. *A mí no me escribió* transports the spectators to an alternate world, and part of that journey needs, according to their creators, to take place in a literal sphere.

⁶⁶ In the text, Marc Rosich gives the character a generic name: Dona Madura (Mature Woman). A character with the same name (they don't seem to be the same character) appears, in a completely different context, in his play *Surabaya* (2006).

From its very title, the spectacle suggests a queer temporality that complements its alternative spatiality. In the first scenes of the play, the Old Woman gives a justification of its title, *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams (porque no me conocía)*. This explanation sets up a bifurcation that is distinctive of queer temporality: by its sole mentioning, it situates the spectators in the realm of the utopic and the alternative. Therefore, the first scene of the play unfolds a potential temporality:

A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams.

Pero sólo porque no me conocía.

Sólo por eso... y nada más.

Porque si me hubiera conocido, tal cual soy,

hoy otro gallo me cantaría. (81)⁶⁷

The ubiquitous usage of the Spanish subjunctive in this scene indicates an unreal condition: *had A happened, I would have been able to B*. In the timeline of the here and now, however, that condition did not *really* take place. However, the Mature Woman does not fully live in the here and now –and the spectators, who have walked for as much as mile to see the show (as it happened in Tàrrega, where the bridge that served as a performance space was in the outskirts of the town), start to assume the queer temporality from the very beginning. A queer crevice of possibility unfolds, and by playing the main theme from the movie *Out of Africa*, the Mature Woman transports herself “out of the realm of here”, to an alternative set

⁶⁷ “Tennessee Williams did not write me.
But just because he never met me.
That is why... only that.
Because had he met me, as I am,
it would be a different story.”

of events. Even if what she states did not happen, she has been pushed out of normative time, therefore she can make it happen nonetheless.

Tennessee se hubiera parado a los pies del árbol [donde ella hubiera tratado de suicidarse] al oír el crujir de las ramas en lo alto. Y nuestras miradas se hubiesen cruzado. Yo, al verle fumar, le hubiese pedido fuego desde allá arriba. Con un hilillo de voz, voz ahogada, por la presión de las cuentas de colores contra el gaznate.

“Tennessee, tú no me conoces, no nos conocemos,
pero me gustaría que me diceses fuego.”

Y él me hubiese dicho: “Yo no puedo prenderte fuego. Busca otra brasa.”

Y yo le hubiese dicho, no quiero ese fuego. Quiero tus tristezas, quiero tus palabras

Y entonces él, de una calada, me hubiese prendido toda. (83)⁶⁸

By recreating a scene that did not take place, the Mature Woman propels herself (and the audience) to another set of events. Through the embodiment that unfolds via the performance, these events collapse with the real story –the story that she is also going to tell the audience, the story of a fall that ends up under the bridge where the theatrical experience takes place. *A mí no me escribió* lives through a double temporality: the straight one, that has expelled her, an abject being, from the normativity she can’t belong to, and the queer one, where she can experience another kind of sadness the one of the artists and the outcasts, which in return unfolds a queer joy: the joy of queer kinship, of affect-sharing with other

⁶⁸ “Tennessee would have stopped at the feet of the tree [where she would be trying to kill herself] as he heard the cracking of the upper branches. And our glances would have crossed. I would see him smoke, and I would have asked, from the top, if he had a light. With a reedy voice, tiny voice because of the colorful beads against my throat. ‘Tennessee, you don’t know me, we have not met, but I’d like to ask you if you give me light.’ And he would have answered: ‘I can’t give you light. Look for another bonfire.’ And I would have said, I don’t want that fire. I want your sadness, your words. And then he, in a puff, would have set me on fire.”

queer individuals –in this case, Tennessee Williams. It only makes sense that queer temporality is expressed through the subjunctive, which is the realm of the potential and the alternative.

The protagonist of *A mí no me escribió* is a liminal subject in the way Judith Butler proposes in her essay “Agencies of Style for a Liminal Subject”, a being excluded from “the norms that govern the recognizability of the human” (184) and that, as Jack Halberstman affirms, “are sacrificed to maintain coherence within the category of the human” (*In a Queer Time* 153). Both Butler and Halberstman are interested in those who exceed the social structures, in the living surplus: those subjects who have been rejected, excluded, marginalized (that is, relegated to the margins) in order to guarantee social uniformity and stability. It is a kind of transgender liminality: as Susan Stryker comments, regarding the flourishing of transgender studies, “it is not just transgender phenomena per se that are of interest, but rather the manner in which these phenomena reveal the operations of systems and institutions that simultaneously produce various possibilities of viable personhood, and eliminate others” (“(De)Subjugated”, 3). Pushing Stryker’s words further, it could be claimed that the transgender gaze provides, through the performative act, other possibilities of existence (of personhood) to those erased from the “systems and institutions”, as it is the case in *A mí no me escribió*.

The Mature Woman in *A mí no me escribió* suppurates liminality in both the spatial ecosystem that she inhabits and her silent, albeit certainly not passive, defiance of the binary conventions of what masculine and feminine are, as a physical manifestation of her active rejection to heteronormative conventions. Miquel Missé argues that “transphobia can’t be fought in the surgery room by making transgender people’s bodies easy to read, but educating the gaze of the other in front of the existing diversity of bodies and genders”

(*Transexualidades* 95). By departing from an explicit debate on gender identities and focusing on pure embodiment and performance, *A mí no me escribió* emerges as a powerful transtheatrical device, one that does not explicitly reflect upon trans issues, but that performs them by working on the “gaze”, quoting Missé: even if there is no explicit mention of trans-related debates, Alonso embodies, through her gender-bending (a male performer who considers himself an actress and performs as such), the complexities of the trans gaze. This constitutes, as well, a compelling act of resistance. As José Esteban Muñoz states at the beginning of *Disidentifications*,

[t]here is a certain lure to the spectacle of one queer standing onstage alone, with or without props, bent on the project of opening up a world of queer language, lyricism, perception, dreams, visions, aesthetics, and politics. Solo performance speaks to the reality of being queer at this particular moment. More than two decades into a devastating pandemic, with hate crimes and legislation aimed at queers *and* people of color institutionalized as state protocols, *the act* of performing and theatricalizing queerness *in public* takes on ever multiplying significance. (1, his emphasis)

In the alternative space and time that the spectators are taken to, the Mature Woman becomes the performative embodiment of queerness –understood as the revealing of alternative social constructions.

According to Muñoz, “Disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (*Disidentifications* 4). Taking over a theory by philosopher Michel Pêcheux, Muñoz establishes three modes in which the subject is

constructed by socio-ideological practices: *identification*, when the subject accepts the mainstream ideological discourse; *rejection*, when the subject resists and rejects dominant ideologies; and the fluid, queer option, *disidentification*, when the subject neither accepts nor rejects the discourses, but attempts to transform them from within. Even before the beginning of the performance, *A mí no me escribió* reveals this queer potentiality by summoning the audience in a space that is fraught with liminality and disidentification. There is no rejection of conventional theatre, but the space challenges the role of the traditional cultural institutions in the times of crisis. There is no direct rejection of the social schemes, but the Mature Woman places herself in the underground, ready to question, through her queer timeline, how a tight definition of the normative creates, conversely, a periphery of the abject –following Kristeva’s terminology. As an actress, Roberto G. Alonso is an outsider –her gender-bending is a profoundly queer action that raises pertinent and provocative questions for the audience. As a performer, she disengages (even disidentifies) with normativity –the show takes place far from a performance space, therefore it provides an alternative to the more conventional venues. As a character, she embodies a story that begins with rejection but ends up providing a precarious but productive life that constitutes an alternative to the heteronormative timeline of survival.

Underneath the bridge, the Mature Woman acknowledges and greets the audience. She is the host, the master of ceremonies, and by seeing the spectators, she turns them into guests, into active, living presences in the show. The nature of their relationship is neither, however, one of allies, nor of foes: their identities flow in different dimensions –the audience as voyeurs still belonging to the world *on* the bridge, the Mature Woman strapped in the world *underneath*. Even if Jonathan Culler claims, regarding cultural communication between agents and subjects, that “[Other art forms besides from literature] encourage identification with characters by showing things from their point of view” (113), I find it more productive to

think in the terms José Esteban Muñoz suggests. If, as Culler asserts, transgender characters “address us in ways that demand identification, and identification works to create identity: we become who we are by identifying with figures we read about” (114), I believe that might fully work for the kind of countercultural audience that can be found in performative spaces such as LaMama or PS122, in New York, often inhabited by queer embodiments and ideas, on and off stage. The case of *A mí no me escribió* is slightly different (the play was premiered for a mainstream audience in a well-known scenic arts festival), and thus demands a different sort of theatrical kinship: disidentification implies permeability, and at the same time it is embedded with queerness. It is more about the awareness, about the curiosity of getting to know a different form of being in the world (which is queer, precarious, evicted), than empathy about participating in it. However, both the audience and protagonist do share something: the physical space, the shelter offered by the bridge. Thus, they share the illusion, even if just for a bit more than one hour, of partaking a glimpse of liminality. The negotiation between connection, rejection and disidentification, although neither Muñoz nor Culler address this, is complex and fluid, and offers moments of shadow as well as queer crevices of light⁶⁹.

The fact that the upper part of the bridge is employed to bring together two points originally separated by a geographic accident, and to facilitate the circulation between them, marks a clear contrast with the architectural reverse, where the spectators find themselves: a residual space, a physical surplus of the social spaces in the civilized world. If the upper part of the bridge is pure communication and constitutes a paradigmatic definition of living in society, its lower part, what we find underneath, is pure isolation and represents a non-place

⁶⁹ Speaking of disidentifications, I might add that, in the case of plays such as *La fragilitat* or *La pell escrita*, the same characters reject this creative impulse by confronting the audience. According to Muñoz’s categories, these plays are built upon an inverse rejection – not from the audience to the artists, but the other way round. This is another reason why these works can’t fully function as truly queer plays.

for the individuals who can't afford to live in that society. The overlooked shadow of the center: a periphery in an upside down.

Naturally, in such a space most of the conventions of classical theatre cannot be maintained. The fourth wall becomes impossible to create, and therefore falls from the very instant the Mature Woman acknowledges her guests/spectators. After all, the other three walls are also absent. There is no physical separation between character and audience, from then on exposed to the nuisances of disidentification: her living space is, at the same time, public and private, and she's not surprised by her visitors, although she reminds them that they are not up there in the surface, in the realm of the connections and the social networking. Here, in the underworld, other rules and hierarchies apply: "Tranquilos. Aquí nunca hay ratas. Bueno, casi nunca. Bueno, sólo si no habéis traído nada de comer... Si habéis traído algo de comer, algo rico, quizás asomen el hocico. ¿Alguien ha traído algo rico de comer? [It's ok. There are no rats. Ok, they seldom come. Ok, only if you don't have any food on you... If you have something to eat, something yummy, maybe they show up. Does anyone have anything yummy?]" (80) The almost schrödingerian dichotomy between the absence and the presence of the rats, an animal that thrives in the sewers of civilization, anchors the audience in the subsoil, and also establishes a symbiotic relationship between the Mature Woman and the abject animal: it is not by chance that in this same scene she is asking the audience for any spare food.

From that moment on, the Mature Woman will start sharing her personal story with her audience. It is a story of loss: of falling in love with the wrong person and unleashing a series of events that eventually lead to her being evicted from her own house. In the socioeconomic context where *A mí no me escribió* was premiered, this was, concurrently, a familiar case: the inability to pay back the mortgages was one of the main reasons why the economic recession hit hard on Spain by bursting the real estate bubble. In the case of the

Mature Woman, we easily understand that she has been expelled from the heteronormative society and has been relegated to a precarious space in the margins because of her trans identity⁷⁰. The text suggests that it is her queer embodiment as much as her downfall as a freelancer that brought her to the bridge, when she states that her lover “me había aceptado tal cual soy, *con todos mis aditivos*... pero a la que asomó un problema, a la que mi vida autónoma empezó a zozobrar... él prefirió tender puentes en terrenos menos pantanosos” [“he had accepted me as I am, *with all my add-ons*... but during the first issue we had, when my life as an autonomous worker began to stumble... he decided to build bridges in more stable land”] (89-90), my emphasis). As Marc Rosich states in a personal interview, this is the only moment in the text where there is a hint about the trans identity of the character⁷¹.

It is interesting to notice, however, that the lover’s departure seems not to be motivated, according to the Mature Woman, by the “*aditivos*”, but by the loss of financial stability. Nonetheless, at this point a question demands to be raised: can we trust the actress? Is she, following Wayne Booth’s terminology, a reliable narrator of her own story⁷²? Is it true

⁷⁰ It is important to acknowledge that, two months before *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams* premiered in Tàrraga, the well-known Catalan playwright Lluïsa Cunillé premiered, in the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, her play *El carrer Franklin* (2015), a farce about house evictions whose protagonist was also a transvestite character – performed by the artistic director of the theatre, Xavier Albertí. The festive and comic air of the show, described by critics like Imma Fernández as a “divertimento”, “crazy comedy” and “refreshing spectacle”, diminished the impact of the show and seemed to approach in a frivolous manner one of the most dramatic human problems resulting from the economic crisis. The travesty strategy, in *El carrer Franklin*, seemed to point towards a *camp* reading of the conflict, destined exclusively to entertainment. The play was written to celebrate the reunion of the company La Reina de la Nit, which created shows such as the memorable *El dúo de la Africana*.

⁷¹ The fact that this same expression was employed in another play by Rosich, *Copi i Ocaña al purgatori* (2005), as another trans reference, only reinforces and clarifies the trans reading of this moment. In *Copi i Ocaña*, this “aditivos” point at a moment where Copi decides to show himself to the doctor as a man instead of disguised as a woman, with a wig and a fake moustache: “Abrila... ¡Y que me vean tal cual soy! ¡Con todos mis aditivos!” [“Open the door... Let them see me as I am! With all my additives!”] (49).

⁷² According to Wayne Booth, the narrator, especially when he/she is part of the plot or has concealed interests in the story, can become unreliable, as it is the case in Henry James’s short novel *Turn of the Screw*: Is the governess really seeing ghosts, or is she just a neurotic suffering from hallucinations? Unreliability, following Booth, unfolds different pleasures on the reader: the pleasure of communication, an enhanced pleasure of deciphering the codes within the novel, and the pleasure of a complex, sometimes unpredictable collaboration between the narrator and the reader (*Rhetoric* 300-2). Some of the narrators deceive on purpose, “in order to trap his auditors and readers into judging him first” (295), as it’s the case in *Tristram Shandy*, by Laurence Sterne, some of them are not aware of their unreliability, as happens with *Turn of the Screw*. Unreliability in theatre would demand a research on itself; it will suffice to say that, in the case of *A mí no me escribió*, the spectators can’t be sure if the Mature Woman is telling them a true story or if the story is not accurate (either because she

that her lover accepted her as she was but rejected her as she began her economic decadence? Did she make up, or reformulate, her love story in the same way Tennessee Williams's tragic heroine Blanche DuBois invents or idealizes her own love affairs? The context of unreliability—she speaks from this alternative, disidentified, queer universe that the audience only get to glimpse for the duration of the performance—where these words have been pronounced might set the audience or the reader in an atmosphere of skepticism. We're set in a physical-textual paradox: her lover, an engineer who designs bridges, in the end “prefirió tender puentes en terrenos menos pantanosos”. The bridge over the Mature Woman's head, thus, also functions as a reminder of her impossibility to subscribe to a straight, normative relationship. Living under the bridge works as a symbolic embodiment of her being in the reverse of the normative affects.

In this context of (gender and social) confusion, economic downfall and emotional rejection seem to be interconnected⁷³. Elizabeth Warren coins the word “chrononormativity” to designate how our heteronormative society creates a sequence of the normal development of time (education, work, marriage, reproduction, retirement, etc.), and rejects those who don't pledge to it. Even if the Mature Woman's social rejection is triggered by her economic downfall, the avalanche drags, as well, her affective life. Social rejection, as a whole, comes organically, as she acknowledges: “Porque mi ingeniero de puentes y caminos funciona como una parte del todo. Del todo que es una comunidad, que te deja tirada bajo un puente y que

wants to deceive them on purpose or because, after her downfall, she's lost her sanity). In any case, the story of the Mature Woman can be regarded, at the very least, with disbelief.

⁷³ The play was written during the last years of the global economic crisis, which hit with virulence in Spain. During the recession, public theatres saw their budgets significantly reduced and had to cut the amount of productions that they could host during their seasons: the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, for instance, staged 26 productions in 2011 and only 13 in 2012, coinciding with a three-month halt in the artistic activity of Teatre Lliure. As a consequence, many artists and companies turned to small venues that emerged as survival strategies. Both cultural managers and artists launched, as a response, initiatives that brought scenic arts outside of the traditional stage, as Aida Pallarés and Manuel Pérez claim (*El carrer* 170). *Cultura a casa* (which brought the theatre to private homes) and *Terrats en Cultura* (Barcelona's rooftop festival) are only two of those initiatives. The strategy proved itself fruitful, since plays such as *Animals de companyia*, by Estel Solé, and *Pequeños monstruos*, by Marília Samper, were created under these new circumstances and enjoyed success outside traditional theatre spaces, and eventually found their way to commercial, traditional venues.

decide seguir su camino sin ti” [Because my civil engineer works as part of a whole. Of a whole that is a community that leaves you stranded under a bridge and that decides to follow its course without you.]. (90)

In any case, the Mature Woman is naturally expelled from (back to Michael Warren’s terminology) a *normal life*. “Naturally”, because, as a queer subject, her capacity to belong to that normality is precarious and unstable. The eviction from her former house, unable to pay the mortgage and incapable to look for working opportunities because of her emotional failure, creates a melting-pot in which all of the events are at the same time cause and consequence.

Music plays a fundamental role in reinforcing this precariousness in *A mí no me escribió*. The eclectic blend of musical styles with which Marc Rosich peppers his dramaturgy suggests a radical contrast that intends to challenge the audience. In one of the first scenes of the play, the Mature Woman performs, lip-syncing, Mari Trini’s classical tune “Yo no soy esa” (“I Am Not That Woman”) –in a scene that seems to pay a tribute to both the repertory and the classic performing strategies of transvestites and drag-queens in their shows that gave an underground re-reading of the mainstream cultural products of the Franco era. Besides, the song’s lyrics, read in the context of the performance, seem to point towards a problematization of the Mature Woman’s queer identity: “Yo no soy esa / que tú te imaginas” [“I am not the woman / that you think”] (88)⁷⁴.

In another scene, the narrator of the play performs Burning’s well-known 1980’s hit “Qué hace una chica como tú en un sitio como éste” (“What Is a Woman Like You Doing in a Place Like This”). Again, the song provides different layers of meaning, in this case making a polysemic reference to the space (the “sitio como éste”) where audience and actor meet – a

⁷⁴ The fact that in the scene prior to this musical number, the Mature Woman recollects a moment when the “feriante”, the man who works in the fair, wants to add her to his “freak parade”, is also relevant. In her rejection, she shouts at him (and at the audience): “¡No soy una mona de feria!” (5), hence underscoring a certain negativity – she does not define herself by what she is, but by what she is not.

stage that has been built aside from any standard theatrical venue, and that brings the audience to the reverse of public space. As one of the anthems from the counter-cultural movement known as *la movida madrileña*, Burning's song connects the Mature Woman with the aesthetics and the subversive messages and proclamations of (democratic, sexual, social) liberties that the *movida* promoted during and after the *Transición*. Alberto Mira links the emergence of the queer claims in Spain with the festive, hedonist and –at least in appearance– free context of the *movida* (*De Sodoma* 584)⁷⁵. As the artistic and counter-cultural outburst that emerged as a response to thirty-six years of dictatorship, the *movida* boosted the creation of an atmosphere of perceived freedom, that can be acknowledged in the optimistic visibility of different characters who play with transgender aesthetics⁷⁶. The link between the political Spanish transition and the transgender bodies is, here, explicit.

There are other songs in *A mí no me escribió*, and many of them subscribe to similar registers. One of the most shocking ones, due to its radical shift of musical genre in contrast with the rest of the soundtrack, is the presence of “Supremacy”, one of the hits by the alternative rock band Muse. In the particular scene when this song is played, the Mature Woman starts throwing plates against a wall as Matt Bellamy's high-pitched voice seems to warn the audience about the lies of the dangers of capitalism and the promise of a revolution emerging from the underground: “Wake to see / Your true emancipation is a fantasy. / Policies / Have risen up and overcome the brave. / ... You don't have long, / I am on to you. / The time, it has come to destroy / your supremacy” (100). In the context of the performance,

⁷⁵ Mira does not specify if he's referring to Queer Theory, born within academic boundaries, or if he's pointing out to the socio-political queer activism. However, I believe, we can think that both currents emerge in Peninsular territory through the *transición*, thanks to the ludic and socially committed claims by intellectuals and activists such as Alberto Cardín or Armand de Fluvià – which played crucial roles in the de-criminalization of homosexual acts in Spain in 1979 and raised voices about the impact of the AIDS epidemic in Spain.

⁷⁶ I argue that the political transition brought a change in the transgender epistemology –from the predominance of transvestites (as an imprecise and generalist category that broadly refers to the margins of gender binary, but also to imposture and the tension between fear and desire) and the medical category of the transsexual. In a simplistic way, it would be the moment in which, in the same aesthetic and artistic context, we can see the confluence of figures as Fabio McNamara and Bibi Andersen.

as the Mature Woman destroys an object that has been created to organize a normative life (the plate preserves the hygiene and the good manners on the table –and it’s not a coincidence the show starts with the Mature Woman asking for food from the audience), the song also seems to suggest the possibility of an inverted, alternative, queer life.

Halberstam affirms that the musical styles emerging under a context of protest and fights for recognition of rights, such as punk, have provided many revolutionary groups of a language and rituals that allowed them to channel and give a public voice to their claims (*In a Queer Time* 153). The presence of Muse’s song in *A mí no me escribió*, fiercely contrasted with more traditional, folk tunes in the show by Sara Montiel or Lara Fabian, can be interpreted as a cry that emerges from the abyss of society and that threatens with subverting the established order⁷⁷. With her mere endurance in the margins, the Mature Woman becomes a potential threat for the normative, since she embodies the possibility of survival outside of the system.

The important role that time and its connection to both normativity (in its straight, chrononormative version) and utopian projection (through queer time) plays throughout the play finds an explicit formulation in the final part of *A mí no me escribió*. In *The Trouble with Normal*, Michael Warren addresses the anxiety caused by the need to adjust to the parameters of straight temporality and the impossibility of queer subjects to fit in. This is, precisely, what the Mature Woman seems to state in a moment toward the end of the play: “El tiempo es una cosita rara. El tiempo que todo lo cambia. Día a día, no le das importancia. Pero de pronto, llega una tarde y empiezas a sentirlo, implacable, cómo te rodea, cómo vive dentro de ti” [Time is a strange little thing. Time changes everything. Day after day, you don’t think it

⁷⁷ However, Halberstam criticizes the hierarchy between different subcultural manifestations. According to him, lesbians are still discriminated in such a hyper-masculine territory as punk. In this regard, the presence of Muse, as an all-male band well-known in the mainstream (even if they come from the alternative music circuit) could seem, at the very least, problematic.

matters. But suddenly, an evening comes and you start feeling it, relentless, you feel how it surrounds you, how it lives inside you.”]. (100)

The “relentless” character of time (as referred to aging in the song, but played also as the idea of the weight of chrononormativity in the play) is emphasized in this scene: in the original text for the performance, Rosich isolates the adjective in a single line. The way time unfolds in the normative life seems to allow no way out without facing severe consequences. Moreover, it functions like a virus: a living organism that regulates the body from the inside. The abject bodies according to society, including the trans/queer body of the Mature Woman, can’t survive the epidemic of straight time and therefore are rejected, expelled as a polluted organism from the social body. By succumbing to the virus, they are socially dead. Queer time demands her to challenge chrononormativity, and she does it in quite a literal way: “A veces me levanto a media noche y voy parando, uno a uno, todos los relojes” [“Sometimes I get up in the middle of the night and I stop, one by one, all the clocks”] (100). Stopping the clocks is a symbolic action related to death; in this case, to social death, since she has been forced to the outskirts of society, where time unfolds in a queer way –far from the straight timeline described by Halberstam: the time for reproduction, for marriage, for mortgages, etc. Auden, a queer poet, starts his famous elegy “Funeral Blues” with the verse “Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone” (141). In Auden’s poem, the lover has died, and time is immediately cancelled. The Mature Woman, equally, stops all the clocks as an elegy to her own passing. Her straight time is deceased, and, in order to survive, she needs to find a different timeline: “El tiempo es un misterio, un gran misterio. Y precisamente existimos... para soportarlo. Y en el “cómo” lo soportamos... ahí está la diferencia” [Time is a mystery, a big mystery. And, as a matter of fact, we exist... to put up with it. And “how” we put up with it... that’s what makes the difference.”] (100).

This is how this section of *A mí no me escribió* ends: by an essential intuition. The unfolding of time is impossible to avoid, but, as the spectators have seen the moments when the Mature Woman's history freezes and the soundtrack of *Out of Africa* again triggers an affect that transports them to an alternative time and space (a "then and there", as José Esteban Muñoz refers to queer utopia), there is a parallel haven functioning under different parameters. It is a queer and distant space, as she fantasizes: "Yo tuve una granja en África al pie de las colinas de Ngong. La situación geográfica y la altitud se combinaban para formar un paisaje único en el mundo. Las panorámicas eran inmensamente vacías" [I had a farm in Africa by the hills of the Ngong. The geographic setting and the altitude combined to create a landscape like no other in the whole world. The panoramic views were immensely empty] (104).

The last song in the show, Lara Fabian's rendition of the French ballad "Je suis malade" ("I Am Sick"), composed and originally sung by Serge Lama in 1973, seems to point out to the same direction and reinforce the abandonment of straight temporality. As it happens in *Limbo*, the Mature Woman is overcome by a need to verbalize, to explicitly acknowledge her pathological status in the eyes of the normative society before the ultimate breakup with the norm. That might be why at this point, and for the first time during the performance, she does not lip-sync, but sings it, her broken voice overlapping Lara Fabian's, Spanish overlapping French and creating a sort of dislocated, bi-dimensional, multilingual choir.

The song's chorus opens up the gate to queer temporality: "Me siento enferma, / completamente enferma, / el tiempo vuelve hacia atrás / con mi niñez y el miedo de la soledad" ["I feel sick, / completely sick, / time goes backwards / to my childhood and the fear of loneliness"] (105-06)⁷⁸. By enacting the song and manifesting that she feels "completely

⁷⁸ In the text version of *A mí no me escribió*, most of the songs appear in an abridged version, for copyright reasons. This is why, exceptionally, the lyrics I quote (sung by Roberto G. Alonso during the performance) and the published version are not identical.

sick”, the Mature Woman underscores her connection with the criticism, of clear Foucauldian resonances, of the queer as related to the pathological⁷⁹, as well as giving another hint to the audiences about her non-reliability as the narrator of her own life events: what is the origin of her sickness? Is it merely a love condition? Has it something to do with her gender identity, the one that would reduce her to the kind of “freak” that the *feriante* of the play wants to include in his human menagerie? Is it related to that socioeconomic failure that has ultimately dragged her apart from the social structures? The song might actually blend these multiple lectures in one. Back to Sara Ahmed disruptions of the idea of happiness, back to Lauren Berlant’s notion of “cruel optimism”, the “dissolving assurances”, the securities and fantasies of a “good life” that are fraying in the context of a crisis that has shaken the core of the capitalist world reveal themselves as impossible to maintain (*Cruel Optimism* 3). Being able to detach from those fantasies often leads to anxiety –the impossibility to adjust to “the desire to feel normal” that most have (*Cruel Optimism* 170, a sentence that echoes Michael Warren’s *The Trouble With Normal*, a work with which Berlant establishes a clear dialogue).

Halberstam offers a queer escape to these anxieties with his notion of turning the negative affects of failure into an “opportunity ... to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (*The Queer Art* 3). The positive outcome of social failure, Halberstam argues, is the

⁷⁹ As Foucault acknowledges at the beginning of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, “[From the beginning of the 17th century on] A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom. The rest had only to remain vague; proper demeanor avoided contact with other bodies, and verbal decency sanitized one's speech. And sterile behavior carried the taint of abnormality.” (3-4) Even if, as it’s been discussed before, gender identity and sexuality are often erroneously confused and Foucault is focusing in sexuality here, the (trans)gendered body can be considered one of those “other bodies” that are not “decent or fertile”, according to the bourgeois moralistic codes. Both sexual conduct and gender performance were pathologized as perverse deviations – see the chapter “The Perverse Implantation” (36-49) about the discourses of sexual repression. Susan Stryker, in her introduction to the noteworthy anthology *The Transgender Studies Reader*, claims that the pioneers in transgender studies found a fertile ground in two foundational works: *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler (1990) and Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (1978) (5). As Heather Love states, “Foucault’s account of the disciplinary force of the modern regime of sexuality informs the antinormative, anti-identity politics of [both] transgender and queer studies” (173)

permission to “escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods” (3).

Conceding a heteronormative, social failure, then, bears the potential to unfold queer possibilities. That might be the case in *A mí no me escribió*, when, after Lara Fabian’s rendition, the play presents a final scene that brings on the emotional tension that comes from the musical number and actually supports the idea that she, as Blanche DuBois, projects herself into her own fantastic world –which in the case of the Mature Woman can be read as a queer, alternate temporality. In this last scene, the Mature Woman gets the chance she has been waiting for and can finally not only perform Tennessee Williams’ words, but also reformulate them as if they were written just for her, *A mí no me escribió* ends up with a rendering of Tennessee Williams’ underrecognized fantasia *Camino Real* (1953). Williams’s allegoric play is set in the Hostal Siete Mares, a dead-end fictional place surrounded by desert (again, transgender plays work with liminal spaces, even in their intertextualities). Williams presents a remote space outside of time, where fictional characters such as Don Quixote or Marguerite Gautier coincide with historic figures like Lord Byron. All of them are trapped in the Hostal Siete Mares, prisoners, like in the Eagles hit “Hotel California”, “of our own device”.

After admitting, through the previous song, that she is a deviant subject from the point of view of heteronorm, the Mature Woman in *A mí no me escribió* unfolds a queer temporality that brings her to the realm of allegory –precisely what Tennessee Williams brings onto stage in *Camino Real*. The Mature Woman, then, asks the spectators to go away (“Y ahora mejor iros. / Dejadme sola” [“And now, go. / Leave me alone”], 106) as she takes over Marguerite Gautier’s words in *Camino Real*. Williams’s writing from Block Ten in *Camino Real* blend and collapse with Rosich’s additions in the last minutes of the

performance. The Mature Woman questions the reality of her own existence (“¿De qué estamos seguros? Ni siquiera de nuestra existencia” [“What are we certain of? Not even our own existence”], 107), and then she abandons the stage and disappears, in the over-dramatic way she had dreamed about from the very beginning of the play, in the darkness:

Estamos solos. Estamos aterrorizados. Oímos como silban los basureros no muy lejos de aquí, barriéndolo todo. ¿Qué es esto? ¿Este sentimiento entre nosotros? Sentimos algo, sí, algo... delicado, irreal, pero sin sangre... igual que las violetas que arraigan en la luna o en las grietas de estas llanuras yermas, fertilizadas sólo por las cagaditas de los buitres carroñeros. Los buitres... esos pajarillos me son familiares. Sus sombras habitan este puente. Pero... ¿ternura? Ya no queda ternura aquí. Por más que lo intenten, las violetas no pueden partir la dura roca⁸⁰. (107)

If the audience limits the theatrical experience to what they have seen, the ending of *A mí no me escribió* could be read as pessimistic. However, queer plays demand the

⁸⁰ The translation of this excerpt goes:

“We’re lonely. We’re frightened. We hear the Streetcleaners’ piping not far away, sweeping everything. What is it, this feeling between us? We feel something, yes, something – delicate, unreal, bloodless... the sort of violets that could grow on the moon, or in the crevices of those far away mountains, fertilized by the droppings of vultures. The vultures... those birds are familiar to me. Their shadows inhabit this bridge. But... tenderness? There’s no more tenderness here. As much as they try, the violets in the mountains – can’t break the hard rock.”

The intertextuality with Marguerite’s monologue in *Camino Real* is clear. Williams’s text goes as it follows:

We’re lonely. We’re frightened. We hear the Streetcleaners’ piping not far away. So now and then, although we’ve wounded each other time and again – we stretch out hands to each other in the dark that we can’t escape from – we huddle together for some dim-communal comfort – and that’s what passes for love on this terminal stretch of the road that used to be royal. *What is it, this feeling between us?* When you feel my exhausted weight against your shoulder – when I clasp your anxious old hawk’s head to my breast, what is it we feel in whatever is left of our hearts? *Something, yes, something – delicate, unreal, bloodless! The sort of violets that could grow on the moon, or in the crevices of those far away mountains, fertilized by the droppings of carrion birds. Those birds are familiar to us. Their shadows inhabit the plaza.* I’ve heard them flapping their wings like old charwomen beating worn-out carpets with gray brooms... *But tenderness, the violets in the mountains – can’t break the rocks!* (807-08, my emphasis to point out the parts borrowed by Rosich)

theatre-goers to think *beyond* what they have witnessed and to think *beyond* the normative notions of pessimism and failure. Rosich, who knows *Camino Real* very well (he was the author of the dramaturgy of Tennessee Williams' play performed at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 2012, under the direction of European *enfant terrible* stage director Calixto Bieito), surreptitiously leaves a trace of intertextual hope: even if Gautier acquiesces to the realistic idea that a flower can't break through the compact structure of a rock (therefore, it is impossible to escape the confines of Hostal Siete Mares), the last scene in *Camino Real* challenges this pessimism. The scene features, as Rosich parallels in *A mí no me escribió*, a getaway to unknown landscapes, un contemplated possibilities: as the character of Don Quixote embraces the quest of going through the desert to find freedom in *Camino Real*, the water in the fountain of the plaza, which has stayed dry throughout the play, starts flowing. A fissure of hope and fertility. Ultimately, contradicting Gautier's statement, Don Quixote shouts in a rebellious gesture: "The violets in the mountains *have* broken the rocks!" (my emphasis)⁸¹.

As Don Quixote in *Camino Real*, the Mature Woman in *A mí no me escribió* embraces adventure: away from the spotlight, she too might discover a different kind of optimism—a queer optimism, one that, quoting Michael Snediker who echoes Sara Ahmed, "doesn't aspire toward happiness, but instead finds happiness *interesting*" (3, his emphasis). Snediker, as Lauren Berlant does in *Cruel Optimism*, theorizes the anxieties generated by the social pressure to stay optimistic and to continuously aspire to a "good life", one that, needless to say, fits in the ideals of heteronormative paradigms. Throughout *A mí no me escribió*, the Mature Woman comes to grasp that, in order to achieve not just self-realization, but also mere survival, she needs to reject the timeline of a "normal life" and readjust her existence to a

⁸¹ In his positive review of Goodman's production of *Camino Real* for the *Chicago Tribune*, Chris Jones states that "this is not a wholly nihilistic show" and points out to the utopian intuition of possible ways out. Some characters, Jones writes, sing "of a world that could have been" ("Bieito's").

queer (trans) paradigm that flows in the outskirts of time (outside of chrononormativity) and in a time-cancelled space (in the residues of the architecture of communication, the reverse of civilization: under a bridge). Not “good”, but “interesting”. And, after sharing this journey, quite literary, in the performance space, the audience is also participating in this domain of queerness. Ultimately, *A mí no me escribió* offers the possibility of contemplating the life of the spectators from a liminal point of view; and, by witnessing the Mature Woman’s existence beyond the norm, the performance opens up socio-political alternatives. The Mature Woman has been repeating, in several occasions, that there is a political reading of her life in the play: “¿Quién dice que lo mío no sea teatro político?” (“Who says that this is not political theatre?”), she keeps claiming. In the play, this assertion seems to function as a humoristic device (during the performance, she keeps pointing at whichever graffiti she would find under the bridge, no matter what they say), but indeed, the gap she breaks through the play may lead, through her silent transgendered embodiment, to a queer reading of social and geographical boundaries.

5. Trans Horizons

La fragilitat dels verbs transitius, *Limbo* and *A mi no me escribió Tennessee Williams* represent three different stages of the trans look. *La fragilitat* is built around theatre-denunciation and confronts the audience. The invisible wall that separates performers and audience also seems to mark the boundary between the center and the periphery inhabited by the fragile, excluded other. As spectators, the play places us on the other side, the side of the ones in privilege –and it directs towards us a feeling of guilt for allowing transphobia in society. The transgender characters in *La fragilitat* (as well as the trans woman in *La pell escrita*) are defined only by their sexual desires and by their gender identities: the only feature we know about them is their suffering motivated by their lack of adjustment to normativity. The choreographies in the performance seem to suggest that their struggle is destined to failure: the (biologically male) dancers, dressed with feminine clothes seem to reaffirm this message instead of challenging the limits and conventions of binary epistemologies. The sensual, delicate dresses and the high-heels represent, in the play, the femininity to which the characters aspire.

Limbo seems to follow the same path but from the opposed perspective –the transition, in this case, goes from woman to man. However, towards the ending of the play, this binary trajectory collapses when Albert understands that the double space of transition in which he's trapped (the airport, as a non-place designed for temporary passages; the body, as a battlefield where hormones and surgery are in dispute) can become the spaces for the emergence of a crevice, an alternative where the bodies don't have the obligation to fit in "un món tristament binari" (66). At the end of *Limbo*, Albert understands and accepts that Berta has a voice inside him, that she also belongs to the person he is now: in other words, that masculinity or femininity are cultural conventions that we perform, and therefore we can decide to perform

whatever we want to no matter what heteronormativity dictates⁸². Albert's body, fluid and unstable, is finally acknowledged as a perfectly valid body. Consequently, he rejects "la violència del bisturí" ["the surgical knife violence"] (66) (that is, surgery as a way to re-adjust to social conventions), while, on stage, the two dancers perform a dual choreography in which the masculine and the feminine reconcile and merge. A queer crevice that opens up the audience to a different horizon of *gender trouble*.

However, it is in *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams* where we can find the truest expression of trans-theatre –even if striped from any explicit textual mentions to the trans. This empowering is achieved, in the performance, through the body. The very same space where the scenic event unfolds already suggests the entrance in a world regulated by alternative rules: rules that go beyond the conventions of the orthodox theatre venue, and also beyond from the regulations of the society that circulates in the upper level of the bridge, while underneath the audience and the Mature Woman meet. In this secluded and marginal space, the correspondence between the body and the gender of the Mature Woman does not warrant a single line in the text: the audience, however, perceives the disidentification. As a play that proposes alternatives (both spatial, linguistic, and regarding to both gender and genre), *A mí no me escribió* works as trans theatre, since it reminds the audience of the existence of ways of life that go beyond the normativity of space and time they are accustomed to living. Through these stories, the spectators learn to look and to understand lives that emerge and develop outside the margins of social normativity: from the lives of

⁸² At the end of the show, just before the epilogue in the plaza, Clara Peya performed the rap after which *Limbo* is named. In this rap, which takes place just after the anagnorisis, Peya explicitly acknowledges this very Butlerian view on gender performance: "empiezas a pasar por, a pisar cual / un hombre... ¿qué digo un hombre? Empiezas a performar / la semblanza a ultranza de la performance de un hombre, / con hambre de ser, sin ser visto; de ser visto, sin ser", she recites. ["you start passing as, stepping like / a man... what am I saying, a man? You start to perform / the staunch resemblance to a man's performance, / eager to be, to not be seen; to be seen, not being"] (68).

those who reject the binary, gender heteronormative conventions (embodied in the play by the Mature Woman) to the victims of evictions that eventually find a way to live in the margins.

It is in this sense that both the ending of *Limbo* and *A mí no me escribió* suggest a certain regard that complements the one that Paul Preciado suggests in “Trans Catalonia”:

Becoming trans, like becoming independent, means that one must above all always resign from nationhood and gender identity. Renounce anatomy as destiny and history as prescriptive of doctrinal content. Renounce laws based on body, blood and soil. National identity and gender identity must be neither foundation nor goal. In nation as in gender we cannot look for ontological truths or empirical necessities that allow people to decide who belongs where or what the borders are. There is nothing to verify or demonstrate; everything is to be by experiment. Like gender, the nation does not exist outside of collective practices, which imagine and construct it. Cross out the map, erase the first name, propose other maps and other first names whose collectively imagined fictional nature is evident. Fictions that might allow us to fabricate practices of liberty. (103)

Preciado understands his body as a symbolic battlefield, a collision of desires, wills, and ecosystems. As it happens with Albert/Berta in *Limbo*, Preciado’s gaze is purely trans. He does not try to accommodate his body to what normativity expects him to – his 2008 hybrid book *Testo Junkie*, half essay, half memoir, explores this formulation of gender in the borderlines of society, as he buys testosterone in the black market and explicitly rejects gender-reassignment surgery. In his own words, he assumes that he incarnates “a new form of life” as a gender smuggler (an expression he uses to define himself in his 2019 book *An Apartment on Uranus*). This trans gaze allows him to contemplate the Catalan pro-

independence process as an opportunity to question the identitarian paradigm of the modern nation-state.

What is, then, the Catalonia trans? Preciado formulates his theories walking the streets of the Raval district downtown Barcelona. I believe the space where his conceptualization of the new Catalonia is laid out plays an important role. According to the Department of Statistics of Barcelona City Hall, immigrants constitute 48.5% of the population of the Raval (“La població”). It’s very possible that Preciado wants to suggest a Catalonia that rethinks the traditional links between land and culture, and proposes a new country as a space that accepts a linguistic and socially diverse nature. If we translate this idea to the scenic approach of *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*, trans-Catalonia would assume both the upper part of the bridge, as a paradigmatic and normative flow of circulation, and its concealed reverse, as the possible space of an alternative life, detached from what until that moment has been contemplated as the norm.

The theatregoers coming from the other side of the bridge (those who make the journey from the streets and other spaces of sociability to the underworld) will read *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams* as the tale of a failure: the defeat of being unable to blend in. Eviction, here, represents the impossibility to achieve a full realization in the capitalist society, symbolized in the play by the access to a home – a problem that was not precisely minor the moment the play saw its premiere, as organizations such as the Plataforma dels Afectats per la Hipoteca (PAH), the platform of those affected by the mortgages founded in Barcelona in 2009, claimed⁸³. The failure of the Mature Woman is a queer one: incapable of find a way to adjust to society, she’s expelled, literary and metaphorically, to the underworld.

⁸³ The PAH was born as a consequence of the “extremely abusive practices that have been taking place in the last years” by the banks and the debt corporations that managed mortgage rates and contractual conditions (*Plataforma*). There are several articles and publications that provide context for the real estate crisis in Spain, such as José Manuel Naredo’s “El modelo español y sus consecuencias”, where he claims that the Spanish case works out as a perfect (and perverse) model for the “expansion of urban-territorial pathologies” (15). It is interesting to see how, when Naredo speaks about the urban body, he also employs notions such as “pathology”

But queer failure is not, as José Esteban Muñoz, echoing Jack Halberstam, states, something negative. Quite the opposite, it is fraught with a heavy utopian weight: “a generative politics can be potentially distilled from the aesthetics of queer failure. Within failure we can locate a kernel of potentiality” (173). The narrative arc of the *Mature Woman* ascribes to this idea of queer failure. In her performance we see, however, that she has been able to build something from her failure: a certain precarious futurity. Going back to Halberstam, the reverse of failure in heteronormative society allows us to perceive possibilities at the margin of the disciplinary regime that is regarded as natural and innate: “a way out of the usual traps and impasses of binary formulations” (*The Queer Art 2*). Under the bridge, without a fourth wall that serves as a membrane to isolate her, exposed to the audience and to those curious pedestrians who might dare to look down, the *Mature Woman* unveils new social and affective possibilities from the physicality of both her trans body and the space that surrounds the audience; a space that she has ultimately conquered and transformed. What the audience is witnessing is, then, the counterpoint, a scapegoat to the standardized, normalized, idea of failure.

Through the *Mature Woman*, as well through Albert’s gaze in *Limbo*, the audience might read and critically observe some of the processes that take place in the political body. But could we, conversely, state that the identitarian debates that take place in the Catalan socio-political scenario propose, at the same time, a rethinking of how the norm acts upon the individual subjects? It seems plausible to link the debates that have emerged around the transit of a territory that questions her own identity, with the proliferation of pieces about trans identity, as Rafael Mérida Jiménez does in *Transbarcelonas* regarding the Spanish transition. Even if the connection between the films and the sociopolitical reality of the country is not always direct, the parallelism between them operates in a certain metaphorical

level and can tell us something about a people's interrogations during certain historical moments.

That is the reason why, I believe, the trans gaze has been sharper, more ubiquitous, and more complex as the process for self-determination in Catalonia has been taking shape. The queering of the narrative arc in *Limbo* and, most especially, the performative proposal of *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams*, show a certain sensibility, a way of looking that can also suggest ways to read, think and feel the context that surround us, as well as the possibilities it reveals. In this sense, Preciado's ideas should be read in parallel to the utopist formulations stated by Muñoz: not as much as a specific, practical project, but as a horizon, a certain potentiality that propels itself perpetually to an unspecific future and that allows us, thanks to its constant and incomplete unfolding, to glimpse different forms of community and of affect. The trans bodies that flow in the plays I have reviewed in this chapter would function as the keys to open these doors. Or as a way to help us read maps upside down.

ACT THREE

CRUISING UTOPIAS: QUEERING THE FOURTH WALL

Thursday, March 31, 2011. It's going to be an eventful evening at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, although nobody in the house –neither the personnel working in the theatre offices nor the artistic teams– knows it yet. In the Sala Tallers, the third venue of the main Catalan performing arts institution, the actors are getting ready for another performance of *Gang Bang (Obert fins a l'hora de l'Àngelus)*, the new work by Josep Maria Miró. Created within the framework of the Projecte T6 to promote contemporary dramaturgy, the play had generated a deep controversy even before it premiered.

The 2010-2011 season program of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya described the play as follows:

The Saint Pope is heading to Barcelona, and the visits to the Sagrada Familia have skyrocketed; the selling of souvenirs, crucifixes, and other kinds of Christian memorabilia is on the rise. Consequently, in the middle of autumn, the hospitality industry is making a fortune off-season. The Pope's visit, and the pilgrims that follow him, is also the reason why La llum [The Light], a bar for men, is jam-packed tonight. Here, pilgrims and regulars collide: a 60-year old who is always the first one to come and the last one to leave; a catechist high on GHB; or a young man who just turned eighteen and who has decided to offer his body to anyone willing to possess him to celebrate his birthday and its happy coincidence with the visit of the head of the Vatican. In the middle of the orgy, a desperate man shows up with the intention to get his son back. (*Programa 32*)

The publication of this synopsis, alongside the subtitle of the play (which employs a Christian reference such as the “angelus” to signal at what time the clients have to leave the bar, and which therefore brought together Catholicism and homosexual desires), triggered reactions of anger and outrage among certain conservative religious groups, all of them with only this short text in hand –that is, before the text of the play was divulged, or even written¹.

In March 2011, right after the press conference to present the play, held (as customary) a few days before the premiere, Carlos Sala published an article in the conservative Spanish newspaper *La Razón* under the title “La Generalitat paga una obra contra la iglesia” [“The Generalitat Pays a Play Against the Church”]. Sala recalled that both Sergi Belbel, artistic director of the TNC, and Josep Maria Miró, author of the text, tried to minimize the polemic, arguing that the content of play was much less controversial than what the synopsis and the title insinuated. According to Belbel, *Gang Bang* was “more poetic and suggestive than critical or disrespectful”, and he compared Miró’s dramaturgy with the subtleties of the poetic universe of Lluïsa Cunillé (32).

According to what José Carlos Sorribes stated in his preview of the production for *El Periódico de Catalunya*, the play quickly became the most polemic event of the whole theatrical season in Barcelona: the presentation to the press had “an expectation that not even [the Catalan production of] *August: Osage County* had in its day” (59)². The Catalan Christian organization E-Cristians led a campaign to force Ferran Mascarell, the member responsible

¹ The play was highlighted in every article about the new season in the TNC. For instance, the headlines in the piece published by *El Mundo* read: “El papa y una orgía, en el Nacional” [“The Pope and an Orgy, at the Nacional”] (55). The piece written by Mercè Pérez for *El País* had as a title: “Líos amorosos y orgías en el Teatre Nacional” [“Love Affairs and Orgies at the Teatre Nacional”] (5). Ignacio Peyró, for the ultra-conservative journal *La Gaceta de los Negocios*, was especially belligerent. His two articles on *Gang Bang*, “La Generalitat sufragar una obra furiosamente anticatólica” [“The Generalitat Finances a Furiously Anti-Catholic Play”], and “El Teatre Nacional de Catalunya financia una obra vejatoria contra la Iglesia” [“The Teatre Nacional de Catalunya [sic] Finances a Play Degrading the Church”] (both of them published on March 2nd, 2011) underscored the fact that the play had been written for a public institution.

² *The Catalan* production of Tracy Lett’s theatrical blockbuster, *August: Osage County*, still holds the record as the most successful play ever produced at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, in terms of number of performances and tickets sold.

for Culture in the Catalan Government, to withdraw the play from the public institution. Meanwhile, the official response coming from the TNC stated that these outraged voices had jumped to conclusions before having the chance to read the text and see the show, and defended Josep Maria Miró by stating that the institution would never restrict the creative freedom of any of their playwrights.

Needless to say, the controversy sparked an unusual interest in the play, and *Gang Bang* announced a sold-out run before the premiere –a truly exceptional fact for a modest production included in a cycle created to support emerging playwrights and aimed at an audience of young theatregoers and theatre connoisseurs.

Gang Bang finally premiered in March 24, 2011. The day after, Víctor Fernández published the first review, once again in the conservative newspaper *La Razón*. The review, with the emphatic title “Insulto a los católicos sobre el escenario” [“Offense to the Catholics Onstage”], began: “The affront announced days ago finally took place”. After making the remark that the box office featured a sign reminding that the show contained scenes that might disturb the viewers, Fernández confirmed: “That is what happened to the Catholic spectators.” The subsequent paragraphs of the review enumerate the elements, scenes, and characters that the reviewer considers offensive for the Catholic audience: “The stage features a sauna [sic] in which, in the first scene, someone coming from the Vatican agrees to a sexual encounter with another man.” Fernández attempts to describe different events and characters of the play:

In the play we can find a man barely dressed in the flag of the Vatican who sings drunk as he falls from his stool: “This is the youth of the Pope!”. Among the clients of the sauna [sic] we find a politician that defines himself as “both a democrat and a Christian” while he negotiates his night of male sex with a member of a rival party.

Another character, who does not hide his political conservatism, is urinated on by other men as he sings out loud the [Spanish fascist anthem] *Cara al sol*, the [traditional Catalan song] *Virolai*, and the anthem of F. C. Barcelona, affirming earlier on that scene that he is “Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman”. (“Insulto” 53)

The polemic around *Gang Bang* planted the seed for what happened during the evening of March 31st, one week after the production had started its run. Twenty minutes into the play, two men barged into the stage, shouting “You can’t say the name of God in vain, goddam it!”, “Long Live Christ the King, Long Live the Priests of Christ!”, and “Sons of a bitch!”. The assaulters grabbed a stool from the stage and threw it against the bar; on the other side of the stage, the actors remained paralyzed. Then, they threw four stink bombs to divert attention and fled the building without being stopped. Even if no one was injured, a few members of the crew were visibly distressed by the event, so the show was halted for fifteen minutes. When the actors returned to the stage, they received a standing ovation. A crew from Barcelona local television channel *Betevé* happened to be recording the performance, and the images became immediately viral (see Muñoz “Dos espontanis”).

The attack lasted a total of fifteen seconds. In that brief lapse of time, a tension that would be hard to describe unfolded. It spread like a virus throughout every trace of past, present, and future involving the production: a tension that, maybe in less violent ways, had materialized from the very moment the synopsis of the show was revealed at the first press conference of the season, in early September 2010 (with the E-Cristians petition to censor the play), and that inevitably lasted until the last performance of the play at TNC’s Sala Tallers, in April 17, 2011. During the run of the show, there was the fear that another attack, or something worse, might happen again.

This episode might have functioned as a mere anecdote that, at most, would have further bolstered the fame of *Gang Bang* as an irreverent and provocative work. However, the attack can be –and should be– interpreted as a significant event, with a symbolic influence that expands beyond what happened. By breaking the imaginary fourth wall that separates the audience and the stage from outside in, the attackers both shattered the theatrical conventions and threatened the security of the artistic team. By invading a stage that represented a queer sex bar, and sabotaging the performance while shouting ultra-conservative religious rants, they also aimed to collapse the stage representation of a traditional and paradigmatic safe space for the queer people.

In his essay “Choreographies o Resistance: Latina/o Queer Dance and the Utopian Performative”, Ramón H. Rivera-Servera talks about how crucial queer spaces for socialization were in the shaping of a sentimental education that needed to reconcile his Latinx and his queer identities: “I learned to articulate my sexuality and my political identity at the dance club”, he states at the very beginning of his text. For Rivera-Servera, the club “is one of the places where I renew myself, where I am able to witness, *in almost religious reverence*, the most immediate and affective manifestations of vibrant communities in motion” (269, my emphasis). By employing the formula “religious reverence”, Rivera-Servera reads the experience of the dance club as something transcendent as well as ritualistic: an ecumenical encounter of identities in intersection.

Rivera-Servera argues for the club as a space that encapsulates “formative and utopian potential”, since, through the sharing of the dance floor, the dialogical combination of choreographies, the physical and kinesthetic interaction of the bodies, the club fuels “the emergence of community, the world of possibilities and strategies, the promise of pleasure” (270). In his discussion of Sydney’s Mardi Gras celebrations, Jonathan Bollen argues for the club as “a safe place free from the violence of a homophobic world” (287). However, this

text, published in 2001, encapsulates a state of mind prior to the Al-Qaeda attacks against the Pentagon and New York City's Twin Towers. Contemporary forms of terrorism such as 9/11 threaten to alter, and even shatter, this idea of the "safe space". No matter where you are, in the Middle-East or in the United States, in a public space or in your office, you are not totally safe. For the queer community (and most particularly, for the subculture that navigates the intersection of queerness and latinidad), that was clearly the message after Orlando's Pulse attack.

We can't possibly read Bollen's argument for the queer clubs as safe places the same way after June 12, 2016. That night, the Pulse, a well-known nightclub in Orlando, was hosting a celebration night for the Latinx queer community. According to *The New York Times*, salsa and merengue were playing in the dance floor when Omar Mateen, a 29 year-old US citizen who had proclaimed alliance to the Islamic State terrorist group, stormed into the club wielding an assault rifle and a pistol. What happened next would become the deadliest mass shooting in the history of the United States, with 50 people dead (including the perpetrator) and 53 injured³.

Mass shootings inevitably remind us of how fragile life can be, but there is some additional vulnerability attached to this particular attack. The event took place at the core of one of those queer safe spaces that Rivera-Servera and Bollen address. For a minoritized group such as the queer community (queer Latinx community, in the case of the Pulse), constantly exposed to intersectional discrimination and aggression under the forms of racism and homophobia, queer spaces may have a *sacred* nature⁴: the queer bar is a space where the LGBT community hope to feel at ease, free from the closets, the quotidian tension, and the potential aggressions that await in every corner; a space not to be defensive, but to let oneself

³ The Pulse massacre was tragically surpassed as the deadliest one in American soil on October 1st, 2017, when Stephen Paddock opened fire at a concert in Las Vegas, Nevada, killing 58 concertgoers.

⁴ Further in this chapter, I will address the use of religious terminology in the context of queer spaces regarding Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*.

go; a space to embody and share stories of survival, not only with words, but also through the dialogue of gestures and movements, and the intertwining of bodies. Therefore, the Pulse mass shooting had particularly devastating consequences beyond the number of casualties, because it sent a message to minoritized targeted communities: you are not safe anywhere.

For me, the Pulse mass shooting brought back memories from the attack that had taken place five years earlier at the Sala Tallers, during the performance of *Gang Bang*. Needless to say, both attacks are radically different in both their intensity and their consequences: one of them was aimed at a real community in a real space; the other one, at a fictional recreation of a similar community and a related space. One of them had dozens of casualties and will forever remain as a tragic event in the collective LGBT (and Latinx) memories; the other one was a hostile attempt to boycott a performance. Yet, both aggressions were driven by hatred and homophobia. The two attacks were fraught in a symbolic manner, for they violated safe spaces and stripped them from their nature as shelters where the LGBT community could feel protected from the violence that they potentially have to face in the outside world.

In this chapter, I want to explore the utopian potential of these spaces. I think about queer utopias as physical and emotional territories where community and freedom unfold. A queer utopian approach, I will argue, is critical because it is aimed to disrupt normative spatial and temporary conventions to propose a horizon of alternative possibilities in which queer people can project themselves beyond a present-ness that is often loaded with homophobia in its different manifestations. Jill Dolan has worked on a theorization of utopia in performance, describing it as something that “takes place now, in the interstices of present interactions, in glancing moments of possibly better ways to be together as human beings” (*Utopia* 457). These utopias, according to Rivera-Servera, perform “enactments that produce alternative experiences and visions of how things could and should be” (“Choreographies” 271). Queerness, according to these scholars, is embedded with potential. As José Esteban Muñoz

claims, “[q]ueerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality”, an affect that can be felt but that never fully expresses itself, and that serves us to “dream and enact new and better pleasures” (*Cruising 1*)⁵.

The theoretical discourse in this chapter will be articulated through the three axis of this unstable triangle: queerness, the performative event, and utopia. I will reflect upon three Catalan plays that address queer bars and clubs in different manners. In the aforementioned *Gang Bang* (2011), Josep Maria Miró imagines a desiring community in the shadows, a counter-reading of institutional powers in almost Foucaultian terms: the Catholic Church and the politicians of the conservative Catalan party. In *Smiley* (2012), Guillem Clua employs the (hetero)normative conventions of the romantic comedy in order to disrupt from within (through a strategy that he has defined as a “Trojan horse”) affective expectations such as the “happily ever after” (which I link to Elizabeth Freeman’s notion of *chrononormativity*), the concepts of *queer failure* (elaborated by Lauren Berlant and Jack Halberstam, among others) and *queer utopias* (formulated by Muñoz and Rivera-Servera). I will finish the chapter by briefly addressing another play by Clua, *L’oreneta* (*The Swallow*, 2017), written as a direct response to the Pulse mass shooting; *L’oreneta* deals, among other subjects, with the appropriation of trauma –albeit in a controversial, even contradictory, way.

By discussing the performance of queer utopias, I want to end this dissertation in a hopeful note: looking toward a future that holds the promise of a more thorough performing of stories that had been (and sometimes still are) left out of the mainstream narratives.

Through theatre and performance, archives can be revealed and stories can be articulated in a

⁵ These words can also be read as a response to J. C. Penney and other scholars that state that queer theory finds its end the moment it is assimilated by academia. In the aforementioned article “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?”, co-written with David L. Eng and Jack Halberstam, Muñoz, argued against this proclaim, stating that queer theory (and queerness in general) is always reinventing itself and expands beyond the study of desire and sexuality to offer a compelling way of looking at the questions and problems of our times (from the refugee crisis to, I would argue, climate change). Hence, according to Muñoz, queerness is never whole: it is always in transformation, reinventing itself as a way to imagine a better future.

way that directly affects the audience. As Dolan argues, sharing a performance has the potentiality of generating *communitas*: “This, for me, is the beginning (and perhaps the substance) of the utopic performative: in the performer’s grace, in the audience’s generosity, in the lucid power of intersubjective understanding, however fleeting. These are the moments when we can believe in utopia. These are the moments theatre and performance make possible” (*Utopia* 479). Theatre does not only condense the potential to articulate and embody dissident, peripheral communities. Through the art of performance, these communities are placed in a central position. They literally take the spotlight in an act that is, at the very same time, celebratory and reparative: in unique moments of queer utopia that, at times, cruise through the theatrical event to propose queer horizons.

One final remark: it can be easily claimed that Jill Dolan, José Esteban Muñoz, and Ramón Rivera-Servera’s rendering of queer utopias fall into a certain naïve positivity. Something similar could be argued, also, about Samuel Delany’s account of porn theatres in Times Square as a romantic resistance to gentrification and class homogenization in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1999). Queer spaces (bars, clubs, cruising areas) have also articulated hierarchies and discriminations in the intersection of other categories and identities: Joseph Beam and Essex Hemphill reflect upon the racist attitudes within the queer community in their introduction of their anthology *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men* (1991); there is, also, a long history of transphobic remarks by gays and lesbians, from the banning of trans people in gay bars to the more recent debates about the rejection of trans women by the trans exclusionary radical feminists. In this chapter, I will not avoid being critical. In the end, however, I do align with these scholars when they underscore the need to disclose a message of positivity that counteracts the ubiquitous toxicity of homophobia. As Latino queers living in the United States, both José Esteban Muñoz and Ramón Rivera-Servera understand (in first person singular) the dynamics of racism, by itself as well as

articulated through its intersection with queerness. Positivity, in their case, is a deliberate discursive, ethical, and activist option. It is, it can be said, their way of looking *beyond*, of setting their affects in motion, towards the horizon that only queer utopias can delineate.

1. The Sex Bar as A Utopian Space: Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*

There is, we could say, a foundational tale of queer coming of age: it's a story that begins when the child discovers that their desires, or their gender identities, do not align with the *normal* ones. The narrative, in this story, emerges out of a conscience of *difference*: through little traumas and daily aggressions (for instance, when they hear their relatives using terms like “faggot” as an insult, or whenever somebody tells a joke diminishing lesbians or gays), the kid realizes that they will never be able to fully fit in the familial and socio-political structures. Eventually, kids from villages and small towns, who live in extreme isolation and repression (the alternative, in the case they are discovered in their *weakness*, tends to be worse: bullying and other forms of direct aggression), realize that if they make it to the metropolis they will find other people like them: they have read about these communities in newspapers, they have seen images on TV. There is a clear Biblical resonance in this story: if the insult is the genesis, then the migration to the metropolis is the exodus that follows.

The city has always been a destination landmark for the queer individuals in search of community. It promises excitement, and anonymity; it offers a horizon of possibilities⁶. The journey to the big city has been represented in countless creative works, from the very opening of HBO's series *Pose* to plays and performative works such as David Cale's *We're Only Alive for a Short Amount of Time* (Goodman Theatre, Chicago, 2018; Public Theatre, New York City, 2019) to Scott Bradley's *Packing* (AboutFace Theatre Company, Chicago, 2019). The metropolis as a promise plays such a critical role that scholars and thinkers like Michael Warner, Sarah Schulman and Samuel Delany have devoted a remarkable number of

⁶ There is a clear resonance with the Baudelarian character of the *flâneur*, the man who wanders around the modern boulevards of Paris designed by Haussman, fascinated by the idea of crossing with people that he will never meet again (an idea that Baudelaire develops in poems like “À une passante”). Writers like Edmund White, in books like *States of Desire* (1980) and *The Flâneur* (2000), provide a queering of the *flâneur*, linking it with cruising and the exploration of desires.

pages to reflectin on how the queer community changed the city, and vice versa: how the city shaped the hopes and fears of those who migrated in search of different models of relationality, and how, more recently, gentrification and the new wave of homophobia that emerged shielded by the AIDS crisis have modelled, once again, a reshaping of cruising areas and sex movie theatres in order to generate a sanitized (and counterproductive) version of the city. However, none of the aforementioned critics have produced a piece of work as exhaustive as George Chauncey's. In his indispensable monograph *Gay New York*, Chauncey brings to the light a comprehensive archive of personal testimonies and writes the history of gay male life in the city of New York, making a special effort to uncover an archive of testimonies that reveal what queer life was like before Stonewall.

Didier Eribon seems to take Chauncey's helm and describes, in *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (the curious English translation of his *Réflexions sur la question gay*), a journey that commences with a traumatic experience: "It all begins with an insult", he states (again, in Biblical style), to start the first part of his ambitious essay (15). Insult, according to Eribon, is one of the foundational experiences of the queer subject: a painful and repetitive way that society has to remind them that their desires and their identities are not accepted. This is why "gay lives are oriented towards the city and its social networks", he claims (19). In the queer minds, the city has always constituted itself under the imaginary of a haven that offers constellations of kinships that bring together those who have experienced insult, those rejected by the heteropatriarchal structures. In these queer safe spaces, they can forge different bonds and communities, and create their own, often non-normative, relationships. "A gay person who decides to move to a big city plans to join others who have done the same thing previously, who have helped create the world that provides the city's attraction, that has made it an object of dreams long before the move could be", Eribon claims (21). This journey, needless to say, does not constitute a minor event. It is "a true fissure in the

biography of these subjects”, as Erving Goffman says, referring to homosexuals who exiled to big cities (121).

In the 20th century, the two American cities which most seemed to capture the imagination of gays searching for a new, more open life, were New York and San Francisco. But can we also think of Barcelona as a European example of those “mythological cities” –in Eribon’s words– that stretched as promising spaces of hope for the queer imagination? Do plays such as Josep Maria Miró’s *Gang Bang* (or Guillem Clua’s *Smiley*, in its original version) reinforce, in their specific references to Barcelona landscapes and monuments, an envisioning of the capital of Catalonia as a space where queers can find a community? Further in this chapter I will argue that, in its performative visibility, *Gang Bang* delivered to the audience the promise of promiscuous pleasure (one that is specifically set in Barcelona) as a direct confrontation to Catholic puritanism. However, the notoriety that the play received from the moment it was announced delivered a message beyond the –more constrained in terms of geography and social class– theatregoers: it *shed light* to the existence of queer spaces like *La llum* (literally, “the light”, another name with evident mystical resonances), the name of the bar in the play.

Even if Núria Perpinyà states that *Gang Bang* is “a brutal gay piece that recalls Sarah Kane’s impressive *Blasted* (1995) in its blending of extreme sex, torture, and tenderness” (115), it can be argued that the play, like many other works by Josep Maria Miró, is more situational than argumentative. The play is divided in a preamble (section zero), and three sections: “1. Dotze hores per a l’Àngelus” [“1. Twelve Hours before the Angelus”], “2. Vuit hores per a l’Àngelus” [“2. Eight hours before the Angelus”], and “3. Quaranta-cinc minuts per a l’Àngelus” [“3. Forty-five Minutes before the Angelus”], which gives the play a sense of countdown to an event: the Angelus, at noon, which is the moment the clients leave the bar and face the world.

The weight of *Gang Bang* does not rely on an elaborate plot, but on the depiction of a rich canvas of characters: men (and women) that gather at La llum, a gay sex bar near the Sagrada Família, the night before the Pope comes to Barcelona to consecrate the temple. Some of these clients will remain unknown –and their faces unseen, like the client who sleeps around the bar and rejects taking off his mask even after the “masked night party” is over. Among those the audience meets: Ricard, an old, undesirable man (he is constantly rejected by the clientele) who owns a fabric business, has been working extra time making flags: “Aquesta setmana he venut gairebé dos mil metres de bandera vaticana”, “Gairebé mil de catalana, ... Uns quants d’espanyola, ... I uns quants més de blanca ultraanticlerical” [“this week I have sold almost two thousand meters of Vatican flags”, “Almost a thousand of the Catalan flag”, “Quite a few of the Spanish one”, “And a few more of the ultra-anticlerical white flag”], Ricard claims, satisfied, before adding that “Sento profundament les meves conviccions, però les meves teles poden abraçar tothom” [“I profoundly feel my convictions, but my fabric can hold anybody”] (64)⁷. Other characters we meet include Toni, a moderate politician who tries to keep his sexuality under the radar, and Víctor, a member of a Catalan Christian conservative party (presumably the nowadays dissolved Unió Democràtica de Catalunya) who loses all his inhibitions whenever he enters the sex club: “No sé dir que no. Mai no tinc un no per ningú” [“I can’t say no. I never say no to anybody”] he says, after he sees that the man he has just had intercourse with is his political enemy⁸ (58). We also meet Thomas, a French man who is into pushing his sexual boundaries as far as he can – “Todo lo

⁷ In this chapter, I am quoting the revised version of the *Gang Bang*, published in Josep Maria Miró’s *Teatre reunit (2009-2018)*. According to a private exchange of messages with Miró, he revised the play (as well as all the other plays published in the anthology) and introduced all the modifications (in this case, minor) that Miró included during the rehearsals of the 2011 production, after the first version of the text was approved to be sent to the print. In the moment I completed this dissertation, a translator was working on *Gang Bang*’s English version, but the text was still unavailable, so I provide every English translation of the scenes I quote.

⁸ In another significant moment, Víctor points at his waist and claims that he is “Demòcrata, d’aquí en avall; cristià, d’aquí en amunt. I una bragueta que pujo i baixo quan a mi em dóna la gana” [“Democrat, from here down; Christian, from here up. And a zipper that goes up and down as I please”] (71). Since Unió Democràtica de Catalunya defined itself as a “Democratic-Christian” party, the parallelism is very transparent.

que me gusta cabe en mi cuerpo” [“Everything I like fits within my body”], he states in a moment of the play (63). And Sergi, a married businessman who is already late for work but, even if he has become disenchanted with regular sex (“He follat amb tants *maricons*, que han deixat d’interessar-me” [“I have fucked with so many *faggots* that I have run out of interest”]), he claims, 74, author’s emphasis), he can’t get out of the bar. Another important characters are Adela, the woman who runs the place, and who is waiting for her former lover’s phone call so she can leave her life behind, including a father with dementia who does not remember her; and Pol and Anna, who help Adela in La llum.

Workers and regular clients mingle, in this particular night, with herds of followers of the Pope who seek pleasure while waiting in the surroundings of the temple, including members of the Legion of Christ, priests, and a pious young catechist who is carried into the bar after being drugged and raped by her students, and who eventually is struck by the divine revelation that she has to refrain from her impulse to go to the missions and stay in the bar: “Déu no em vol a les missions, vol que em quedi aquí. Podria recollir els homes que acaben per terra i que tothom trepitja; netejar-los; ajudar a trobar els objectes perduts dels clients i que els poden posar en un compromís si no els recuperen; carregar amb els borratxos a última hora... Escoltar-los...” [“God does not want me in the missions, he wants me to stay here. I could pick up the men that end up on the ground and that are stepped over by the other clients; clean them up; I could help finding those items that the clients lost, and that would put them in trouble if they don’t find them back; I could take care of the drunk men at the end of the day... I could listen to them...”], she claims (95), in a plot twist that might recall the queer nuns in the early Almodóvar film *Bad Habits* (1983)⁹.

⁹ I agree with Núria Perpinyà when she claims that “[Josep Maria] Miró’s characters lack the violence of [Sarah] Kane’s skinheads”, as well as when she states that “the play is more conventional and realist” than Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*. However, the play does not reject allegorical moments, as I will argue.

Two other men will storm into La llum to alter the course of the busy night: one is a middle-aged man named Pere, who is looking for the son he kicked out of his home two years earlier because he could not accept the way his son looked at men (for vague reasons, he is convinced that his son should be in the bar on this particular night: “És impossible que hi hagi un lloc pitjor que aquest. Estic segur que només pot ser aquí” [“It must be impossible to find a worse place than this one. I am sure he can only be here”], 70). The second character is Moi, a mysterious young man who wants to celebrate his 18th birthday by offering his body to anyone who wants to have him. Since both characters will not coincide onstage until the end of the play, the author seems to want the audience to suspect that Pere and Moi are, indeed, father and son.

Despite the myriad of characters that circulate around the stage, I believe the authentic protagonist of *Gang Bang* is La llum, the queer bar that constitutes by itself a generative force in the universe thanks to the amount of sexual energy it conveys. In a moment when some of the clients realize that the ceiling seems to have a weird inclination, Anna comments: “he arribat a la conclusió que el centre on se sustenten els eixos de la Terra és aquí” [“I have reached the conclusion that the center that sustains the axis of the Earth is here”] (78).

The very name of the bar, La llum, encourages a multitude of readings. Firstly, it has obvious divine resonances. As it can be read in the New Testament, “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1.5); John employs the light as a symbolic equivalence of God, since it depicts purity and wholeness. Being a physical manifestation of the divine force of God, the light also evokes the sensuality of religious mysticism –like the solid rays of light that Bernini designed in the sculptural group *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1647-1652), in Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Being a queer sex bar, the name and its religious connotations can only be read with sarcasm, as Pere, the outsider who comes to the bar in search for his son, notices:

PERE: Quina ocurrència posar-li “La llum” a aquest local!

RICARD: Per què?

PERE: No sé què té de lluminós. És fosc I més aviat... brut.

POL, visiblement excitat, deixa anar una riallada forta.

RICARD: Brut?

PERE: Sí, brut. (*Mira de reüll a POL*) Vostè mateix ho ha dit: aquí la gent ve a fer sexe.

RICARD: El sexe només és brut si es fa ben fet. (63)¹⁰

Ricard, the first customer to come in every night and the last one to leave, seems to understand better than Pere –who belongs to the outside world– how to read the name of the bar, as well as the universe that it captures. Pere reads “La llum” as a paradox, but Ricard does not understand why: to him, the name seems to refer to another kind of *enlightenment*, not literal, but erotic. In this regard, La llum embodies the ethical reverse of the Christian and heteronormative values: here, sex is neither hidden (does not remain *in the dark*, even if it takes place in *dark rooms*) nor constrained in the private sphere of the family home (the kind of “good sex” that Ricard, sarcastically, refers to). In fact, it expands and promiscuously creates different intersections between the bodies.

In the 2011 production, the sex club encompassed different floors and spaces. The lower floor through which the clients entered La llum was the one that the audience could see onstage. The central part of the stage was taken over by the bar, where almost all of the

¹⁰

PERE: What an idea, to name this place “La llum”!

RICARD: Why?

PERE: It has no light in it. It’s dark and actually... dirty.

POL, visibly excited, laughs out loud.

RICARD: Dirty?

PERE: Yes, dirty. (*looks askance at POL*) Even you said it: men come here to have sex.

RICARD: Sex is only dirty when it’s good.

conversations took place. It was dimly lit, most of the time in blue and green tones. On the right side of the stage, a giant fist represented the sexual practice of fisting (although Pere, who ignores these non-normative practices, reads it as a communist sign). To the left of the bar, a set of stairs separated by a plastic translucent curtain led to the upper floors, which were not in sight. To the left and the far right of the stage, the audience could see two pieces of sex furniture: a sling to the left, made of leather and attached with chains to the ceiling, and a high leather chair to the right. And, at the edge of the left side, a small dark room could be glimpsed through a set of boards.

The upper floors were exclusively destined to non-verbal exchanges and communication. When Pere asks Ricard about those floors, the veteran client explains that “[e]l segon pis és un gran llit. Diuen que el més gran d’Europa” [“The second floor is a giant bed. They say it’s the biggest one in Europe”] (62). Pere does not want to know what’s on the third floor, and thus the audience is deprived of this information¹¹.

Further in the play, Pere will explain why he kicked his son out of his house: “Era com mirava els homes ... sempre tenia aquella mirada ... No era com caminava, parlava o pels gestos que feia... Era com mirava els homes. Sobretot com els somreia. Sempre tenia aquell somriure. M’hauria volgut... No feia res. Només somriure. Però era suficient” [“It was the way he looked at men ... he always had that look ... It was not the way he walked, the way he talked, or the gestures he made. I would have liked... He did not do anything else. He only smiled. But that was enough”] (80). As a homophobic man (and, as we will discover in the final revelation of the play, as a repressed homosexual and pedophile himself), Pere can’t stand the gaze or the smile on the face of his own son: because they represent bodily actions

¹¹ In the 2011 production, while Ricard is describing the bar, he’s observing Thomas, the French client, give the bartender Pol a blow job behind the bar. It is at this precise moment when Pere finally understands where he is.

that crystalize the non-verbal acknowledgement of desire and that gays use in the negotiation of intimacy when cruising.

Intimacy resists being fully captured in words. In his essay “La ética de la promiscuidad”, Brad Epps claims that readings of the darkroom (which, according to him, might function as an international symbol of non-normative relationships) have historically been left out of orthodox academia, maybe for its own good: Epps claims that the dark room needs to be left in the dark –that is, unspoken– in order to keep it away from the hegemonic moralist regime. In his essay, Epps argues for an ethics of promiscuity that does not escape contradictions but that addresses “a heterogeneization of the moral, of democracy, and of the moral of democracy that nurtures from a great diversity of practices, experiences and ideas” (146). Promiscuity, he argues, “resists identity and celebratory codifications” (147) and needs to be addressed without a romanticized scope that tends to obliterate “the spectrum of unfortunate ramifications” of undesired pregnancies, STDs, and how desire exchange operates differently according to race and class¹².

Even if the stage in *Gang Bang* embodies one of those spaces for non-normative desires, it only does it in a partial manner: most of the sites where the erotic action takes place in *La llum* are hidden, left off-stage, in the upper floors, and can only be grasped by the imagination of the audience. Onstage, we mostly witness preludes and interludes in the ongoing flux of desires –like the powerful, controversial beginning of the play, in which a high ranking member in the Vatican wears a mask and is sensually trying to convince another masked client to consent to be fisted¹³. This first scene shows the audience that the

¹² This is, precisely, one of the most problematic features of works like Samuel Delany’s *Times Square Red Times Square Blue*, half essay, half memoir, where he re-elaborates Jane Jacobs’s vision in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* to argue against gentrification. Delany states that the porn theatres in Manhattan’s Midtown served to erase class separation while he recalls his sexual encounters with homeless men. He does not seem to consider, though, neither what happens after the encounters (he can go back to his partner and his household in the Village, while the homeless stay homeless), nor the devastating consequences of AIDS within the American lower classes, unable to afford the high cost of the antiretroviral drugs.

¹³ Wikipedia describes “fisting” as “a sexual activity that involves inserting a hand into the vagina or rectum”.

negotiations at stake need complete trust and communication: sexuality, in *Gang Bang*, is not just ruthless and unruly; it also contains –incomprehensibly for those who tried to sabotage the play– tenderness, as well as a certain sense of non-normative, harmonic order. In this scene, which serves as a preamble to the play, the anonymous masked client is trying to teach the names of the fingers in Catalan (thus heightening the physicality of the moment) to the masked man from the Vatican, in a dialogical moment of total intimacy. Learning to love and to break the boundary of otherness through understanding the language of the loved one is a narrative strategy of classical resonances, that can be seen in songs like “Maria”, in *West Side Story* (1963) or “Sunrise”, in Lin-Manuel Miranda and Chiara Alegria Hudes’s *In The Heights* (2008). After the short lesson, the Masked Client from the Vatican reveals his plan:

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1: Mira: Primer et posaré l’*índice* /

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 2: Només un?

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1: No... *También el del... ¡Este!*

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 2: El del mig /

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1: *Después el anular, el chiquito i el polze. Así (Li fa un gest amb tota la mà.) ¿Sí?*

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 2: Perfecte! Portes bé les ungles?

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1: *¿Qué?*

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 2: Las uñas.

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1: Ah... *Bién [sic]. Están bien [sic].*

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 2: *¿Te quitarás el anillo? (Pausa.) Es muy grande. Podría... /*

CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1: Claro. *¿Me ayudas?*

El CLIENT EMMASCARAT 1 allarga la mà.

El CLIENT EMMASCARAT 2 es posa el dit a la boca i li treu l'anell (56, author's emphasis)¹⁴.

In *La llum*, clients *ascend* through the stairs to fulfill their erotic desires: they elevate their desires to the upper floors that remain unseen and that escape words and conversations, as it happens with the notion of ecstasy in the Western (mostly Christian) mysticism. As Antonella Rocchetti states, “in its constant ascension, the ecstatic being drops, little by little, everything that was sensible in the first degrees of the prayer As it lives, the mystical soul realizes the inadequacy of the poor terrestrial language, its metaphors, its allegories” (403). There is, however, a violent penetration that takes place at the end of the first part of *Gang Bang*, and whose consequences are rendered visible at the beginning of the second part. It is both a physical and symbolic penetration that exceeds the human body.

Part one of *Gang Bang* ends with a “strident noise” that precedes the curtain. When part two begins, the audience sees that “La punta d’una de les torres de la Sagrada Família ha caigut i ha foradat una de les parets del bar” [“The tip of one of the towers from the Sagrada Família has fallen and has drilled one of the walls of the bar”] (83). When describing the event, Anna makes a clear sexual analogy: “De ple. Tota de cop. Com si frisés per ser / ...

¹⁴ The translation, not taking into account the puns between Castilian and Catalan, could go as follows:

MASKED CLIENT 1: Look: first I'll insert the index finger /
MASKED CLIENT 2: Just one?
MASKED CLIENT 1: No. Also the... this one!
MASKED CLIENT 2: The middle finger.
MASKED CLIENT 1: And then the ring finger, the little finger, and the thumb. Like this (*He makes a gesture with the whole hand.*) Is that right?
MASKED CLIENT 2: Perfect! Are your nails well done?
MASKED CLIENT 1: What?
MASKED CLIENT 2: Your nails.
MASKED CLIENT 1: Ah! Good, they are good.
MASKED CLIENT 2: Will you take off your ring? (*Pause.*) It's really big. It could... /
MASKED CLIENT 1: Of course. Can you help me?

MASKED CLIENT 1 extends his hand.
MASKED CLIENT 2 puts the finger in his mouth and takes off his ring.

aquí dins i com si les parets s'haguessin obert per deixar-la entrar en notar el simple contacte amb la punta. I, sobretot, aquestes ganes, aquest voler. Finalment a dins: imponent, una mica salvatge i sense demanar permís” [“Completely. All at once. As if she was willing to be / ... here and as if the walls would have opened up to let her in at the slightest touch of its tip. And, especially, this will, this desire. And finally inside: magnificent, a bit wild, and not asking for permission] (84). Just as members of the clergy enter La llum pursuing sexual intercourse, the phallic-shaped tower of one of the most famous religious temples in the world seems to replicate this erotic pulse in a larger scale. However, the Sagrada Família does not function only as a religious or a phallic symbol; here, it can also be read as a synecdoche of a gentrified city. Thus, while the pious Maria Teresa interprets the penetration as a divine signal, Anna, more skeptical, claims it has nothing to do with religion:

ANNA: La Sagrada Família fa temps que ha deixat de ser de Déu i dels vostres.

MARIA TERESA: I de qui vols que sigui, doncs?

ANNA: Com tot: de les empreses, de l'Ajuntament, de la televisió, d'algun departament turístic... del Japó o de la Xina! Jo què sé... *(Pausa.)* A Déu i els teus també fa temps que us han expropiat. Potser és l'Àsia que ens envia un senyal. (84)¹⁵

In the course of the events that unfold in *Gang Bang*, this violent irruption does not seem as relevant as one could imagine: at the end of the day, La llum is a place where clients make an investment in fantasies, no matter how twisted or bizarre they may be. It is a place that challenges the boundaries of the imagination; a place that plays with bodies and objects.

¹⁵ ANNA: It's been a long time since the Sagrada Família belonged to God and to you.

MARIA TERESA: And whom does it belong to, then?

ANNA: Like everything else: to the corporations, to the City Hall, to the media, to some touristic department... to Japan or to China! How would I know... *(Pause.)* It's been a long time since they expropriated you and your God. Maybe Asia is sending us a signal.

It is, indeed, a world-other –one in which normative dogmas and rules do not apply. Fantasy, defined in the Merriam-Webster as “The power or process of creating especially unrealistic or improbable mental images in response to psychological need”, functions as a generative force in La llum. In this particular context of the fantasy, the fallen modernist tower of a religious temple does not become a major event, but something plausible and almost irrelevant.

Something that can even be read as a coherent sign: the religious tower penetrates the sex bar the same way clergymen (some of La llum’s favorite and most loyal clients) are engaged in other acts of penetration upstairs. Indifferent to the new fantastic presence in the bar, every client keeps pursuing their desires, whether fulfilling a sexual fantasy or finding their son.

At most, the fallen tower brings together the two politicians, Víctor and Toni, who seize the opportunity to sell it and make some profit from it. Following the previous moment, where Anna discusses materialism and consumerism regarding whom the tower belongs to, Víctor says: “Aquest país està en venda, Toni... Tot i tothom es pot comprar i vendre. ... La costa, els terrenys protegits, els edificis catalogats... Tot es pot requalificar, descatalogar o revisar” [“This country is on sale, Toni... Everything and everyone can be bought and sold. ... The coastline, the protected land, the catalogued buildings... Everything can be reclassified, declassified, or revisited”] (90-1). The potential miracle (or tragedy) becomes, in La llum, a mere business opportunity that corroborates that, deep down, both conservative and moderate politicians are subject to corruption.

In this place-other, rules apply in a different manner. Michel Foucault makes a distinction between utopias, which he defines as “sites with no real place” that “present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down”, and heterotopias: “real places ... which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia” (“Of Other” 24). In Foucaultian terms, La llum could be argued as the performance of a “heterotopia of deviation”, a site that serves as a refuge for “individuals whose behavior is

deviant in relation to the required mean or norm” (25)¹⁶. The bar works as a secluded reverse of the moralist world outside, one where “men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time” (26)¹⁷: in the same moment they take off their clothes in the locker room of La llum, Sergi, Ricard, Toni, and Víctor concurrently strip off their social obligations, their familial bonds and their political beliefs.

If Foucault thinks of his heterotopias as sites “often linked to slices in time” that, as it is the case of the cemetery, have more to do with the dissolution of time than with the future (“Of Other” 26), Jill Dolan and José Esteban Muñoz consider utopias as “not-yets”, promises that, even if they can only be glimpsed in the horizon, they can be enacted onstage by virtue of the performative event. The three parts of *Gang Bang* are titled following a countdown (twelve hours, eight hours, forty-five minutes) to the Angelus: the time of prayer and the time of closure. The temporality of the play progresses towards that final moment in which, as I will show at the end of this section, hope awaits. Waiting for the Angelus, however, time seems to dissolve in a chain of sexual acts: during most of the play, Moi disappears upstairs and gives himself up to anyone who wants to take him. In this regard, the space of La llum can be read as a heterotopia in performance that, while time recedes in a countdown, unfolds, through the enacting of pleasures, the promise of utopian queer communities. It is, indeed, only a promise: sexual fantasies, as community fantasies, tend to work better projected into a (better) future. The individual orgasm is an instant of fleeting present-ness, but it also reveals the end of pleasure. By contrast, the mysterious and submissive Moi seems to embody –and to channel through his body– an ongoing flow of erotic energy that can only persevere through

¹⁶ Foucault, however, seems to articulate these heterotopias of deviation as places created by the hegemonic institutions, where the “deviant” individuals are placed (for instance, prisons). I would like to think about these heterotopias in a queer, constructive manner, that is, as a reaction to the normative paradigms: shelters where queer individuals go freely to find solace and community. That would imply, of course, a queering of the word “deviation”.

¹⁷ I addressed this opposition of *queer time* versus traditional (normative) time, through Jack Halberstam’s formulation of queer temporalities and Elizabeth Freeman’s elaboration of chrononormativity, in the previous chapters of my research.

the efforts of the community in La llum. His body becomes a communal experience that literally echoes the Bible's Last Supper: "Preneu i mengeu-ne tots, que aquest és el meu cos" ["Take, eat ye all of it; this is my body"], says Ricard when describing the orgy (77).

This is the kind of energy that, going back to Anna's words, transforms a sex bar in the axis of the Earth –a radical statement, by the way, tacitly accepted by the clients. In the queer universe depicted in *Gang Bang*, the bar functions as a pure container of desires with a force so formidable that it becomes a sequestered planetary epicenter. Anna claims that La llum might function as such a place because it's "l'únic lloc pur que queda" ["the only pure place remaining"] (78). Many of the plays written by Josep Maria Miró depict the queer stasis of spaces precariously protected from an outside world where a crucial, mostly terrible event is on its way. Those events somehow manage to suppurate through the dark haven where the play takes place and alter the course of the plot, sometimes in the shape of rumors –as is the case of *El principi d'Arquimedes*, arguably Miró's most acknowledged work so far (2012)–; other times announced by a uniform multitude –like the threatening crowds that gather outside the hotel in *Fum* (2013)–; or embodied by a character that, ominously, is capable of trespassing the physical and emotional membrane that protects the community isolated onstage, as it happens with the anonymous and silent character of the boy in a more recent play by Miró, *Temps salvatge* (2019). The explicit presence of these outside elements within the insulated reality onstage makes the threat real and explicit, unlike, for instance, Dino Buzzati's novella *Paura alla Scala* (1948) or Luis Buñuel's film *El ángel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel*, 1962), both sustained by the tension of the uncertain existence of the outside perils –and both capturing, in a way, the tensions and uncertainties of a World shattered by two world wars.

Jospe Maria Miró's plays also seize a world at the verge of a radical change. In *Gang Bang*, the Pope's visit functions as the anecdote that sets the theatrical device in motion;

however, a larger affect of change traverses the play: if the axis of the Earth is moving, as Anna states, it is as much because there's an orgy taking place upstairs as it happens because of climate change:

ANNA: La Terra ens dona avisos. Fa temps. Però que no us hi heu fixat? Els hiverns comencen més tard i hi ha dies que fa la calor d'un agost en ple desembre i a l'agost hi ha pluges d'abril i no descarteu que un dia al mig de l'estiu veurem nevar. Les notícies porten cada dia un nou terratrèmol, un huracà, un núvol de cendres causat per un volcà o un tsunami en un racó o altre del planeta. ... La Terra ens està donant avisos de grans canvis. Això és el que passa. (79)¹⁸

These words find an echo in Raquel's words at the end of Miró's *Temps salvatge*, premiered at Teatre Nacional de Catalunya's principal stage, the Sala Gran:

RAQUEL: La pluja, que tant havíem esperat, de sobte, s'ha convertit en un problema. En un perill. Ja no som capaços de destriar la bondat de l'amenaça. Ara sembla que no pararà de ploure. No fa ni quatre dies suplicàvem que ploqués i des de fa setmanes supliquem que pari. Aquesta pluja salvatge que no ens deixa sortir al carrer. Dia sí, dia també... Aquest temps salvatge... inclement... També ens hi hem acabat acostumant. El temps també s'ha tornat incompreensible. (552)¹⁹

¹⁸ "The Earth has been warning us. For some time now. Haven't you realized? Winters start later and there are days in which we have the heat of an August day in the middle of December, and in August we have April showers; don't rule out the possibility of seeing snow in the middle of the summer. News brings, on a daily basis, a new earthquake, a new hurricane, a cloud of ashes caused by a volcano or a tsunami in one or another corner of the planet. ... The Earth is warning us of big changes. This is what happens."
¹⁹

"The rain, which we have been waiting for so long, suddenly has become a problem. A danger. We are unable to discern kindness from threat. Now it seems that the rain will never stop. Not long ago we were begging for the rain, and it's been weeks since we beg for it to stop. This wild rain that does not let us go out to the streets. Day after day. This wild weather... merciless... We will get used to it, too. The weather has become unfathomable."

The world is spinning towards a change that seems already inevitable. Inside the haven of La llum, however, most of the clients carry on with their desires as if the passing of time had vanished. But, as the three parts of the play suggest, the narrative time is imperceptibly progressing towards the Angelus, and the clients suspect that the moment they leave the bar, their lives might have been modified forever. La llum is packed with clients, the mysterious Moi is offering himself for a sacrifice that seems to unfold as a queer mirror of Biblical resonances, as Ricard playfully states by quoting the Last Supper. This time-less night is unlike any other: hence the continuous orgy underscores the (heterotopian) presentness, which enters in conflict with the horizon of promise that the Angelus entails.

This universe in the present is possible because the theatrical event is complete by itself. Just as we, the audience, know that there are no physical upper floors beyond what we see onstage, we also know that there is no world outside the fictional door that takes you to La llum. As a theatrical device, it is the author who sets the rules for what is plausible. And yet, there is a sense of *truth* in theatre, that is both autonomous and holds a connection with the world outside the stage. It is linked to the specular nature of the scenic arts, that “privileged imaginary space, where fictitious worlds and illusory social actions and transactions are represented” and “ideas, myths, fictions, ideologies, and social models are produced, displayed, negotiated, and contested” (Sandoval, *José* 8). As a fictional discipline traditionally

The extreme transitions of the weather in Miró’s *Temps salvatge* inevitably recall Sergi Belbel’s theatrical success *Després de la pluja* (*After the Rain*, 1993), set in the rooftop of an office building in a city that has not seen the rain in more than a year. *Després de la pluja* “officially” ends when the rain finally starts to fall, but Belbel adds an epilogue that takes place one year later, in which he explains that it has been raining continuously for the last year, and the extreme weather has eventually destroyed the high-rise.

Just as it happens in *Després de la pluja*, *Temps salvatge* goes from draught to flooding. Even if Belbel’s play does not explicitly mention the (by then not so acknowledged) climate change crisis as his source of inspiration, there is, as Carles Batlle mentions in the prologue of the play, a certain “apocalyptic *crescendo*” (“Després” 14) that creates a tension between the familiarity of the world that the author depicts (an office building in a Western city) and an atmospheric alienation that separates us from the fiction in a similar way that Aldous Huxley’s novel *Brave New World* (1932) or Ridley Scott’s film *Blade Runner* (1982) manage to do.

attached to the system where it's created, theatre constantly negotiates its place between production and re-production.

In his philosophical approach to theatre, Alain Badiou makes the distinction between Theatre, a production capable “to pronounce itself about itself and about the world” (that is, capable to successfully conduct the aforementioned negotiation between production and reproduction), and ‘theatre’, “the inversion of Theatre”, which “can be recognized in the fact that those who come to exhibit their salacious or restrained enjoyment in it are marked by an identitarian sign, be it constituted by class or by an opinion” (*Rhapsody* 21). While “theatre” is related to conformism, Theatre, a very rare phenomenon according to Badiou, questions the system within which it is born with an “elevated, superior exigency” (22), and by that questioning, it raises hatred between those who came to the venue expecting a celebration of the self and an acritical recreation of the system. Through Theatre, Badiou writes,

we come upon the process of a truth, of an elucidation whose spectacle would be the event. Consequently, hatred will manifest itself for sure, due to the fact that it is properly impossible simply to watch what happens there. Because under these conditions, theatre makes it known to you that you will not be able innocently to remain *in your place*. (23, author's emphasis)

Which brings us to the beginning of this chapter. Why did E-Cristians feel the need to raise the alarm about *Gang Bang* even before they knew the content of the text? Why did some Christian radicals plan an attack during the performance of the play at Sala Tallers? It is the kind of hatred that Badiou mentions in his essay: for by the mere enacting of queer search for pleasure and exposing not only sexuality, but also homosexuality –a taboo within a taboo–, by making explicit the contradictory connections between religion and eroticism (through

the queering of Christian iconography and through the active presence of different members of the Church in the sex bar), and by underscoring the present-ness of the theatrical space and confronting it with a horizon of possibilities that detaches from religious faith and turns to queerness, Josep Maria Miró's play creates a "truth" that makes it impossible "to just watch" the play and remain neutral, unprovoked.

This theatrical truth queers Christian ontologies, which, in the case of *Gang Bang* and of conservative Catalonia, are inevitably linked with a particular way of navigating a national identity. At the end of the second part of *Gang Bang*, Ricard finally manages to attract the attention of several clients. He moves from the bar to the back side, just behind the giant fist, enticing everyone to come by and give him a golden shower –an erotic foreplay that consists on pissing on other people's body or mouth. "Sense vergonya!", "Sense por!" ["No shame!", "No fear!"], Ricard commands –just as if he was shouting for gay liberation in a Pride march. In this scene, one of the clients of La llum, a Middle-Eastern man, ascends to an elevated point. The stage note says: "el raig va directe a la boca de Ricard, com si begués a galet. Ricard taral·leja *Cara al sol* i ho enllaça amb el *Virolai* i l'himne del Barça" ["the stream goes directly to Ricard's mouth, as if he was drinking straight from the source. Ricard mumbles the *Cara al sol* and mixes it with the *Virolai* and the F. C. Barcelona anthem"] (96). In this moment of the play, a sexual activity related to the BDSM dialectics of submission and domination enters in conversation with different national symbols. The first of the melodies represents the fascist Spain: the *Cara al sol*, co-written by Spanish dictator José Antonio Primo de Rivera, was the anthem of the fascist party Falange Española de las JONS. The second one refers to the Catholic roots of Catalonia: the *Virolai* was written in 1880 by Mossèn Jacint Verdaguer, to celebrate the millennia of the consecration of Montserrat, Catalonia's sacred mountain and, in words by Colm Tóibín, a haven for "conservative, lower-middle class Catalans, the bedrock of Pujol's support, who had office jobs, owned small

shops, who kept the faith, both Catholic and Catalan. Montserrat, for them, was Mecca” (135). Finally, the anthem of Futbol Club Barcelona is also charged with political connotations, as the motto of the sports team, “More than a club”, suggests; back to Tóibín, Barça functions as a symbol, one of the sources of international pride of the Catalans: “it wasn’t football, it was another piece of pageantry, the vast parade which a fragile country was making of its sacred symbols” (141), and, following the same logic, the president of the club (in that case, the real estate businessman Josep Lluís Núñez) is also the unofficial president of Catalonia: “he did run the country”, Tóibín writes. “The club was as important as the government. You had to understand that” (141). Alejandro Quiroga argues that F. C. Barcelona has functioned as “the recreation of Catalonia’s national football team” (165). “In the last years of the Franco regime, F.C. Barcelona regained its association with Catalan identity and its role as an advocate of Catalan nationalism / regionalism”, writes Quiroga, also quoting Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who called Barça “the unarmed army of Catalonia” (164).

In this particular moment of *Gang Bang*, Ricard gives himself in to sexual submission and humiliation, and he willingly receives anonymous urine while somehow reaffirming a fluid (or *liquid*) national identity: from Spanish fascist to Catalan Catholic to a laic version of Catalan nationalism. In this moment, sexual fantasy and national fantasy collide. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman establish a (problematic) relationship between queerness and nationality, one where the idea of the national fantasy is “displayed as a spectacle of desire” and functions both incorporated in and external to “the official national frame” (194). When addressing the critique of contemporary American politics by queer performance, Berlant and Freeman claim that queer performances might promote “a collective desire to reclaim the nation for pleasure” (195). Indeed, in *Gang Bang*, Catalan national symbols are constantly dismissed alongside religious ones: when Anna cleans the darkroom, she finds a holy chalice,

but also a “Creu de Sant Jordi” (one of the highest civil distinctions awarded by the Catalan Government) and a Romanesque capital. She also finds “Documents confidencials amb segell oficial” [“confidential documents with an official stamp”], which indicate that, in the darkroom, “els homes acaben perdent el cap i tot el que porten a les butxaques” [“men end up losing their minds as well as whatever is in their pockets”] (91).

Ricard comes back onstage after the golden shower, covered in blood. He explains that an accident has occurred while he was performing oral sex in the upstairs darkrooms: he claims that he has been pushed to the ground by a Latin-American man. Even if in the previous scene he had taken pleasure from someone that came from abroad (the Middle-Eastern man who showered him), Ricard now shows that, beyond sex, he wants nothing to do with foreigners:

Han canviat tant les coses en aquest país. ... No és que sigui racista, encara que mai no m’ha agradat la gent d’altres llocs. Lladregotes! ... Com en diuen, ara, d’això? Conflictes multiculturals... Això! Gentussa! Púrria! Com han de saber aquests indocumentats qui soc jo i què he fet per aquest país! Si ni se’n recorden els d’aquí! ... Aquests sud-americans no tenen pietat! En ve un, em clava una empenta i s’hi amorra! Així, per les bones! Me l’ha tret dels morros i m’ha deixat allà, a terra, sobre les restes d’un got trencat. Trencat com aquest país! ... La gent ja no té maneres, ni respecte pels que vàrem ajudar a aixecar aquest país destruït, desfet, ple de polls i saquejat pel comunisme i la maçoneria, i que vàrem convertir en un lloc net i ple d’alegria! ... Ens estan arruïnant miserablement, però encara queden homes que tenim fe en Déu: catòlics, apostòlics i romans! ... Visca Cristo Rey! (94)²⁰

²⁰ “Things have changed so much in this country. I am not a racist, but I have never liked people from other places. Thieves! ... How do they call this, now? Multicultural conflicts... Yes! You scum! How would those undocumented trash know who am I and what have I done for this country! Even locals have forgotten! ... These Latin-Americans have no mercy! One of them comes, pushes me away and starts sucking! Just like this! He took

Ricard begins his rant with the stereotypical apophatic claim “No és que sigui racista”, followed up by racist clichés: he reduces immigrants to merciless, undocumented thieves who know nothing about the country they are living in and who want to impose their own culture. Amidst the dramatic heat, he comes out as a man of faith who helped the country after some previous devastation. Which *country* is he talking about: Spain or Catalonia? And which *devastation*? By the way he opposes himself to “communism” and “masonry”, using the same words dictator Franco employed against his political rivals, it can be deduced that Ricard was supporting the absolutist regime in Spain. Later on, he admits he has always supported “els que han estat al davant, del color que siguin” [“those in charge, no matter their ideology”] (99), hinting his metamorphosis to a center-right voter of *Convergència i Unió*, the conservative party who stayed in power in the Catalan region from their first democratic elections after the dictatorship, in 1980, until 2004.

Ricard ends up his outburst after the aggression by chanting “Visca Cristo Rey!”, used by the *requetés*, the paramilitary pro-Fascist Christian organizations during the Spanish Civil War (and, ironically, echoed by the attackers who boycotted the performance of *Gang Bang*). He blends Catalan and Castilian, suggesting a malleable national identity, albeit always conservative and rooted in faith, to Catholicism –and even to F. C. Barcelona, as the mash up of anthems suggests during the golden shower. In this regard, Ricard, as a character, exposes the hypocrisy within the traditional, Christian, and conservative strati of Catalan society: *Gang Bang* seems not to *reclaim* the nation but to disclose the perversity of those who managed to discreetly transition from the Spanish dictatorship to a conservative democratic

it [the stranger’s dick] from my mouth and he left me lying on the ground, over the pieces of a broken glass. Broken like this country! ... People have no manners anymore. They show no respect for those who helped lift up this destroyed country, devastated, full of rats and sacked by communism and masonry. We transformed this country into a clean place, full of joy! ... They are ruining us miserably, but there are still men of faith in God: Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman! ... Hail Christ the King!”

Catalanism, while embracing the laic ideals of F. C. Barcelona: a criticism directed towards part of the middle-class Catalan bourgeoisie, whose true nation, the *imagined community* they really belonged to, was welfare.

What happens, though, after provocation? Does this unfolding of erotic desires also bring a transformative potential? Is there, as Brad Epps claims, an “ethics of promiscuity”, kindred with what Paco Vidarte describes as “ética marica”, which would have the potential to challenge, through desire and affect, the paradigms of heteronormativity?

Gang Bang navigates around the idea of an intersectional queer community, one that brings together men (and, in the case of *La llum*, also women) from different political and social backgrounds, united by a desire around which a cultural discourse has emerged²¹. In the first chapter of his highly influential *A History of Gay Literature* (1998), Gregory Woods states that, for decades, gay activists have attempted to articulate “a sense of a cultural continuity and an international community of shared sexual interest” (7). Woods builds his discourse from a clear Anglo-Saxon positioning, and his ambitious “history of gay literature” fails, in my view, to intertwine this perspective with other non-Anglo gay traditions –a more demanding enterprise that should transcend mentioning Cavafy, Gide, Pasolini, and the other *usual suspects*²². However, and even if Woods’s discourse inserts itself within an identity politics, it does not totally differ, in its conceptual articulation of community, from Vidarte’s queer approach, which claims for a “LGBTQ solidarity” to face what he defines as a “voltage drop” within queer activism (4).

²¹ As a play that takes place in an “only men” sex bar, it might seem quite problematic to find female characters. Written under Teatre Nacional de Catalunya’s Projecte T6 to promote contemporary Catalan dramaturgy, the play had to be performed by the actors of the T6 company. In order to use all the actors he had at reach, Josep Maria Miró had to sacrifice verisimilitude.

²² For instance, in the case of literature written in Spanish, Woods briefly mentions Reinaldo Arenas, Federico García Lorca, Virgilio Piñera and Manuel Puig, but fails to mention Luis Cernuda, Jaime Gil de Biedma, Pedro Lemebel, Néstor Perlongher, or Severo Sarduy, among many others. Woods’s newest book, *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World* (2016), is written, in my view, from the same univocal and limited perspective.

The queer community, here, emerges as a more inclusive alternative to the heteropatriarchal institution of the family. Didier Eribon speaks in terms of “intergenerational solidarity ... between older gay men and the younger ones that may help to escape from their social or familial surroundings”, and become substitutes of their biological parents, by teaching them what their traditional families could not: to survive in a world that has been built to hate them (31-32). In the recent West End and Broadway hit *The Inheritance* (2019), Matthew Lopez constantly explores the idea of the queer familial community substituting for the biological one: “So many of us were never given a healthy example of what it means to be homosexual. Which means, of course, no one ever taught us how to be ourselves, how to love, how to accept love. We couldn’t find it in our cultures and so we had to find it in each other. Clandestinely, fearfully” (228). In Lopez’s play, a queer rewriting of E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910), Forster himself appears, as a phantom mentor (who, at the same time, reflects upon his life in the closet, and the life-long writing of *Maurice*, his posthumously published novel), and the characters of three different generations teach each other while they build and destroy different kinds of relationships²³.

The boundaries between friendship, mentorship and intimacy shatter. In queering the idea of the family, its categories are also queered, including the taboo of incest, a notion with obvious Freudian resonances and one of the codes that articulate the traditional family. In their anthology of queer mentees writing about their literary mentors *Who’s Yer Daddy?*, Jim Elledge and David Groff coin the notion of “literary progenitorship” to argue for the complexities of queer mentorship, that blends creativity, affect, education, and sometimes

²³ In the epilogue of his memoir *Returning to Reims*, Didier Eribon addresses a similar topic when recounting how his queer connections helped him attain the academic position that he had been deprived from by his social origins. “A solution presented itself thanks to resources I encountered within the gay subculture. Gay cruising does allow for a certain amount of mixing between classes”, he writes (229) –and these words echo Samuel Delany’s arguments against gentrification in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. Thanks to one of his connections and the “phenomena of solidarity and of mutual assistance” that cruising entails (229), Eribon got in touch with a journalist from the French newspaper *Libération*, and started writing for them, something that granted him the exposure he needed in order to publish the books that brought him back to the academic sphere.

also physical intimacy²⁴. Back to *The Inheritance*, there's an enlightening moment, at the end of Part I, in which Lopez writes about Eric, his protagonist, as he mourns the loss of an entire generation due to the AIDS pandemic:

He thought of all the men who died in those years and what they might have become, what the world would look like today had they been allowed to end their story on their own terms. Eric wondered what his life would be like if he had not been robbed of *a generation of mentors, of poets, of friends and, perhaps even lovers*. Here, finally, he felt the past that he could not summon inside his family's home. Eric felt the presence of the men who died here. He could feel Walter [his friend and mentor], too – *his loving, guiding presence*. Eric breathed and filled his lungs with the past. It stretched before him now, *limitless* – the past and the present, *mingling together* inside this house, inside him. (146-47, my emphasis)

In the original production of the play (performed in first London's West End and then on Broadway), twenty different actors appeared from every door of the theatre house and crossed the orchestra on their way to the stage, to greet Eric. The stage note, in the text, reads: "Suddenly, the various rooms of the house start to fill with young men, each bathed in their own spectral light. The house is filled with ghosts." (147) This opens up a crevice, an impossible moment of queer utopia, made possible –and turned into an extraordinary catharsis for the audience– thanks to the creative power of the performance²⁵. By virtue of the theatrical

²⁴ Elledge and Groff play with the erotic connotations of the gay "dad-son" fantasy, which also adds to the complexities (and contradictions) of the queering of families.

²⁵ In his review for *The New York Times*, Ben Bratley defines this sequence as a "bravura" and writes: "I challenge any theatregoer with a heart not to cry during the sun-saturated scene that concludes the first half of 'The Inheritance'". In a more personal note, I want to add that this reflects exactly my own experience when I saw both parts of *The Inheritance* on Broadway, on December 11, 2019.

device, past and present merge and generate a unique (and impossible) moment of intergenerational, interconnected community.

By contrast, *Gang Bang* shows the impact of homophobia within the traditional family. Soon after Pere enters the bar in search of his missing son, Josep—the other older man in the room, interpreted by the same actor playing Ricard—joins him in conversation. Josep, Adela's father and the owner of La llum, suffers from Alzheimer's disease. He recalls having a son and a daughter—although he does not recognize her anymore, and he rejects her “com si fos morta” [“as if she were dead”] (67). Both Josep and Pere represent, here, the disintegration of the family bonds in La llum, a place in the underground where a different (a queer) way of structuring kinship emerges.

Both men feel the need to defend the institution of the family, however imperfect and deceiving. In the same conversation, Josep tells Pere that he finds “admirable ... Que hagis vingut a buscar el teu fill en un lloc com aquest” [“admirable ... Coming to get your son in a place like this”]. Later in the conversation, he admits that children are always disappointing but still defends the idea of the (traditional) family, in spite of all its imperfections: “La família és la tragèdia més antiga que existeix, però *cal preservar-la*. Això és el que has vingut a fer aquí” [“Family is the oldest tragedy, but *we have to preserve it*. This is what you came to do here”] (67, my emphasis). Pere has come to La llum, indeed, trying to redeem the actions that dissolved his own family. In *Families We Choose*, the pioneer essay on the conflict between traditional families and queer kinship, anthropologist Kath Weston argues for the eclectic, yet cohesive, emergence of alternative familial bonds within the queer community. Queer families articulate unconventional forms of motherhood, fatherhood, and lineage, which sometimes even leave precarious traces in the way society manifests its order, such as obituaries. Weston writes: “Death notices ... were sometimes written by lovers, and included references to friends, former lovers, blood or adopted relatives (usually denominated as

‘father’, ‘sister’, etc.)” (110). *Families We Choose* inevitably relates some of the late works by Michel Foucault, like a well-known late interview published in English under the title “Friendship as a Way of Life”, and included in the last volume of his *Dits et écrits*. In this interview, Foucault proposes a reformulation of what queer desire might represent to society (in what could be read as a sort of post scriptum to his *History of Sexuality*). To Foucault, the truly revolutionary part of queer relationship is not sexual intercourse, but what he defines as “friendship” –a term that Foucault rescues from the catalogue of euphemisms to name the relationships between men or between women, and that, consequently, is fraught with connotations that take the word beyond its heteronormative usage and link it with what Weston denominates “kinship”, a feeling of community. Friendship, according to Foucault, defies in a profound way the conventions, built upon the linear progression of the cycle marriage–progeny. Foucault claims:

I think that’s what makes homosexuality ‘disturbing’: the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself. To imagine a sexual act that doesn’t conform to law or nature is not what disturbs people. But that individuals are beginning to love one another – there’s the problem. The institution is caught in a contradiction; affective intensities traverse it which at one and the same time keep it going and shake it up. (137)

Foucault enunciates a kind of alternative familial bonds. As Didier Eribon (disciple and official biographer of Michel Foucault) argues, “[g]ay as well as lesbian sociability is founded on a practice, even a ‘politics’, of friendship, on the necessity of making contacts, meeting people who could be friends, and slowly building a circle of chosen relationships” (25). The stories in Weston’s study cases (all of them from the Bay Area) argue for these

alternative families of choice: “Gay or chosen families might incorporate friends, lovers or children, in any combination. Organized through ideologies of love, choice, and creation, gay families have been defined through a contrast with what many gay men and lesbians ... called ‘straight’, ‘biological’ or ‘blood’ family” (27).

In *Gang Bang*, Pere represents the collapse of the traditional family when the queer element erupts. He comes to La llum searching for his biological son to ask for forgiveness, but his son is already gone. Instead, he finds a shadow from the past, someone who could have been his son –even though, in the end, the author decides not to provide Pere the opportunity he is looking for. In the last section of the play, Pere and Moi, the shadow, the mysterious young man who has given himself up to anyone who wanted to take him, finally meet face to face. The author, at this point, partially breaks with the theatrical expectations of the audience: Moi happens not to be his son, although he knows Pere, because he used to be his student. Moi, whose real name is Jordi, tells his former teacher that he had always been attracted to him, and that he should have approached him:

MOI: T’hauria d’haver fet això al despatx.

PERE: Tenies catorze anys!

MOI: I què?

PERE: El meu fill deu tenir la teva edat. Per què em somrius d’aquesta manera? Per què també somrius així? Com somreia el meu fill!

MOI: No he somrigut. T’ho deu haver semblat.

...

MOI: Hauries pogut fer-me el que haguessis volgut.

PERE: També t’hauria fet un desgraciat.

MOI: Un desgraciat?

PERE: Com ho vaig fer amb el meu fill. Amb ell sí que em vaig atrevir. (102-3)²⁶

This is the final revelation in the play, as well as the ultimate collapse of the traditional family. Pere not only kicked his biological son out of his house; he also took advantage of him physically. However, what could have been an anagnorisis of tragic dimensions, in the specific milieu of the play it gets dissolved in an almost anecdotic moment floating in the final stasis of the play. Toward the end of *Gang Bang*, as the night comes to an end, both the plot and the characters reach the point of exhaustion, and the play seems to fade away as the lights of the bar go up and reveal a desolate landscape: “un espai absolutament gèlid i miserable. Les parets del local ensenyen totes les seves cicatrius, descuit i mals acabats” [“a totally gelid and miserable space. The walls of the bar show all their scars, the wearing out and the carelessness”] (96), Miró writes as a final stage direction. Paradoxically, as the lights gain in intensity and illuminate the stage, La llum becomes everything but luminous: it is seen again as an organic body, just like it happens in the beginning of the second act, after the tower of the Sagrada Família penetrates the walls of the bar; now, conversely, the body is a wasted, “miserable” space that shows all its “scars”. It might work as a metaphor of Moi, a vulnerable body that finally takes center stage, desolated and abandoned after the desire of the clients has been fulfilled. As their name suggest, and as Brad Epps underscored, dark rooms might just be made to be left in the dark.

26

MOI: I would have done that to you at your office.

PERE: You were fourteen!

MOI: So what?

PERE: My son must be around your age. Why do you smile at me like this? Why do you smile the same way? The way my son smiled!

MOI: I haven't smiled. You must have imagined it.

...

MOI: You could have done whatever you desired to me.

PERE: I would have made you miserable.

MOI: Miserable?

PERE: As it happened to my son. With him, I dared.

Within these wasted walls, Pere and Moi have their aforementioned final, anticlimactic conversation, before Moi abandons both La llum and his former professor. Adela also realizes, as the lights go up, that the lover she has been waiting for is not going to show up: she is left alone with her senile, demented father. Pere's son also never shows up, and his expectations (the ones Josep Maria Miró builds by creating Moi and not having him crossing with Pere until the end of the play) are not going to be met. Adela gets ready to take Josep, her father, who has managed to sneak in the bar one last time, back to their apartment. As it happened the other scenes in which he appeared, Josep holds a wounded dove in his hands: one last Catholic symbol rises amidst the bleak landscape after the battle. As he is leaving the stage, Josep notices that the ceiling of the bar is leaning. "Fins i tot hi ha una petita esquerda" ["There's even a small crack"], he notices (106). Defeated, Adela acknowledges that "les esquerdes sempre acaben creixent" ["cracks always get bigger"] (106), but Josep reads the crack as a final possibility of change, coming from an outside world where time keeps going by: "Per força ha de passar alguna cosa... Alguna cosa ha de canviar... Allà a fora alguna cosa està canviant per començar alguna cosa millor" ["Something is surely going to happen... Something has to change... Out there something is changing to start something better"] (107). As Bernat Dedéu notices in his introduction to Josep Maria Miró's complete works, Miró's plays are sprinkled with those moments in which characters wonder if, or have the hope that, things (abstract, unspecific *things*) are happening or are going to happen. "The fact that *things still happen*", writes Dedéu, "does not only mean that the machine of history proposes new ethic challenges ... but also that it makes a dramatic environment possible, one where ethics are not only plausible, but necessary. The fact that *things still happen* ... implies that there are new situations that we have still not faced in a

genuine manner: it's the world of the unexpected" (12, his emphasis)²⁷. This is the final crevice of hope, of *things happening* outside, that is literalized onstage. It can be read, however, as a normative kind of hope: once the queer characters have left the stage, once La llum is stripped from its erotic potential, Adela, Anna, Maria Teresa, Pere, and Josep –the religious woman, and the characters who represent traditional familial bonds– are the ones staring at the wall, hoping that the crack they see truly means something: “Si una torre de la Sagrada Família ha pogut entrar com si res per un minúscul forat de la paret, per què no hauríem de confiar que un colom pugui passar per aquesta esquerdada?” [“If a tower of the Sagrada Família could easily enter through a minuscule hole in the wall, why wouldn't we trust that a dove could escape through this breach?”] is the last sentence of the play (107). These last moments could provide more traditional utopian reading: it could be claimed, in the end, that only those traditional characters carry the potential to disrupt the sexual presentness in La llum –and that hope, only achievable through the religious symbols of the Sagrada Família and the dove (the Holy Spirit who, as an agent of God, is also a part of that holy family) resides outside of these walls. Conversely, it could be argued that queer characters in *Gang Bang* do not need an external, unachievable faith in order to unfold a queer temporality: their utopian promise unfolds through the performing (understood, here, both as a representation of the scenic event and as a gesture, something that happens and that could or could not be “theatrical”²⁸) of erotic kinships.

Gang Bang makes explicit a whole catalogue of fetishes and sexual practices (Víctor, in fact, makes a list of them on page 99); Moi's body is used indiscriminately by anonymous clients. In the universe of fantasies and of fluid exchange encapsulated within *Gang Bang*, a

²⁷ Dedéu briefly mentions *Gang Bang* in his introduction, albeit in a vague manner, omitting any reference to homosexual desire and refers to the events in La llum as “moral perversion that can only be exercised in silence” (12).

²⁸ Throughout her research, Diana Taylor provides more detailed explanations of the different (and sometimes overlapped) kinds of performance within and without the scenic event. See, for instance, “Opening Remarks” (12-13).

phantom wanders around the scene. *Obscene* as it is, it's not explicitly mentioned throughout the play, and it could be easily overlooked by the audience and the readers²⁹. And yet, a few Model (Queer) Spectators could detect him hiding in the bar, overhearing conversations between the clients, going upstairs and exploring the rooms where erotic desires are fulfilled. In its ubiquitous yet discreet presence, it covers every corner in the room, and yet we can't see it: its phantasmagorical figure is ignored by the characters in the play. It functions as the silent reverse of the desires unfolding in the play: fantasy and phantom, etymologically related, are intrinsically united.

The phantom, the shadow, the invisible client, is HIV/AIDS.

It seems, at least, surprising that a play that dwells in the exploration of the horizons and boundaries of queer male sexuality would completely obliterate the HIV virus, which, for decades now, has inevitably materialized in almost every physical interaction (either conversational or physical) between gay men. The Argentinian writer and activist Néstor Perlongher, Brad Epps's object of study in his "Ética de la promiscuidad", radically altered his own narrative of promiscuity after the emergence of the virus in an international sphere – from a celebratory view of orgiastic encounters as a metaphor of the new freedoms to a more desolated approach to sexuality ("Ética" 151).

When privately asked about this omission, the author, Josep Maria Miró, stated that "*Gang Bang* talks about many things: the commodification of bodies, capitalism, etc. ... I did not want to write a play talking explicitly about homosexuality" (Audio Message, 29 Jan 2020). Miró acknowledges, nonetheless, making a conscious decision regarding the absence of HIV in the play: "I thought that, if I wrote some dialogues about HIV, I would create a certain pedagogy that I was not interested in. Especially because I think we are in another

²⁹ Here, I am bringing back the notion of the "obscene" already described in the first chapter of this dissertation, as well as in my essay "Ética de lo obsceno".

chapter in history, that has nothing to do with HIV in the 1980s or 1990s.” However, he made the decision to place plates with condoms and lube on stage, so the characters would have the chance to go and get some whenever they went *hunting* in the darkrooms upstairs. “We developed these ideas through acting: some of the characters would grab a condom, some wouldn’t. In this regard, we wanted to reproduce a real scenario”, Miró explains. “I wanted to introduce a framework that was not pedagogic, or politically correct, but of a sexuality that has changed. I wanted to talk about other things, and I made that choice consciously”, he adds³⁰.

These words encompass a few inevitable contradictions and misconceptions. The strategy of minimizing a homosexual theme to aim for a more “universal” appeal has been a recurrent recourse for those who feared that addressing queer themes would “label” them as genre artists. As Paul Julian Smith affirms, in the interviews after the release of *Law of Desire* (1987), Pedro Almodóvar argued that his film, a semi-autobiographical work that featured a turbulent triangle of desire between three men, did not specifically address homosexual issues, but “desire itself” (“Laws” 171). Also, a number of gay and lesbian writers, when asked about the existence of LGBT literature, tend to articulate their answer by making reference to the same cliché: gay and lesbian literature does not really exist; only good and bad literature exists³¹.

About the other remarks by Josep Maria Miró, I would say that many works in different disciplines have managed to address HIV and AIDS and not being pedagogical or politically correct, as I argued in chapter one of this dissertation. And the fact that the impact

³⁰ WhatsApp private conversation with Josep Maria Miró, January 29, 2020.

³¹ As the always lucid Alberto Mira says, “I think it’s strategically important to speak about categories, and gay literature is a category. If gay literature does not exist, I think it is important to make it exist”. In this regard, see Rafael Mérida Jiménez’s *Mujer y género en las letras hispánicas*, page 265. The Colombian writer Giuseppe Caputo claims, in an interview by Ferran Bono for *El País* in 2017 (shortly after the publication of his successful gay novel *Un mundo huérfano*), that gay literature does not exist for the same reason that “heterosexual literature does not exist” –which falls into the false symmetry of mainstream versus subalternity. The debate about the existence of “gay literature” is ongoing, but few scholars seem to have that severe reluctance about labels when discussing national literatures.

of the virus has shifted (albeit only in Western countries, and only for the privileged classes) does not imply that the HIV/AIDS crisis is over. Indeed, I believe artists have the ethical responsibility of giving visibility to debates about important issues, most particularly in a case like *Gang Bang*, a play that features (even if under the pretense of creating, through the presence of religious and national codes such as flags, medals, doves, capitals, a tower from the Sagrada Familia, and a dove, a non-realistic context fraught with symbology) verbal and physical manifestations of desire and sexuality. As I argued earlier, visibility in the arts is key in the fight against stigma. The capacity to provide that visibility in a non-pedagogical manner depends, mostly, on their own talent as artist.

I previously mentioned that Ramón H. Rivera-Servera described the dance club as an experience in which he witnessed the unfolding of queer communities “in almost religious reverence”. I argue that, mostly through the characters of Víctor and Ricard, Josep Maria Miró’s *Gang Bang* does not only provide a criticism of the Catholic church as a two-faced institution that condemns homosexuality when visible (for instance, in lesbian and gay lifestyles) while functioning as a refuge for repressed homosexuals and allowing sexual encounters as long as they are kept in secrecy; he also invests queer kinship—in this case, through non-normative sexual expressions—with a mystic aura. It is precisely through the emergence of the AIDS pandemic that the articulation of the (homo)erotic experience through shifts to the realm of the metaphoric in the work of artists like Perlongher. In his formerly mentioned essay on the Argentinian writer and activist, Epps questions the idea that “the ethical answer to the new dangers sexuality carries should imply a ritualized process of religious ascension” (“Ética” 156). What is at stake here is not the ethical nature of promiscuity in these texts, but how it is articulated. Needless to mention, mysticism and eroticism have a rich dialogical history in the Spanish literature, from San Juan de la Cruz to Fray Luis de León or Santa Teresa de Jesús. Through its *vía unitiva*, the Spanish *místicos*

aspired to transcend the self and project the body towards a divine union with God that broke the boundaries of here and now. In this articulation of the idea of *experiencing-beyond*, mysticism and queer utopianism find each other. After the rhetorical (and metaphysical) question at the very end of *Gang Bang*, Josep Maria Miró decides to finish the play with an inversion of the traditional stage note: instead of fading to a final darkness, the author takes his play to a final “light” with divine resonances, one that also projects the experience of spectatorship, after sharing a theatrical display of queer pleasures and fantasies, to the realm of the sacred.

2. Queer Trojan Horses in Guillem Clua's *Smiley*

Bar Bero, the gay safe haven in *Smiley*, by Guillem Clua (2012), is a very different kind of space compared to *Gang Bang's* La llum. At Bar Bero (a pun with the name Vero, one of the partners of the bar, and “barbero”, since the space where the bar stands used to be occupied by a barber shop) there are no hidden upper levels. No darkrooms await: everything here is (literally) luminous, available at plain sight. There are no fetish parties scheduled, no dress-code is required: the stage of Guillem Clua's romantic comedy seems to mimic the standard outline of a gay bar of Barcelona's Gaixample, a diaphanous, homonormative place that can be seen from the outside and whose only purpose is to provide a meeting point for gay men and other allies to socialize.

The title of the play, *Smiley*, makes reference to the emoticon with a smile used in text messaging. The smiley emoticon appears twice in the play, to indicate the unfolding of affective promises in the beginning of a relationship. The first one is at the beginning, when Àlex, in a voice message destined to his former lover, describes the first message he sent to him: “Amb una emoticona et deia gràcies per una altra nit perfecta, et deia que volia repetir demà mateix, et deia que ja et trobava a faltar, que després de molt de temps havia trobat algú amb qui encaixava, amb qui podia riure, amb qui no em fa vergonya plorar al cinema, amb qui em sento sexi, graciós, intel·ligent” [“With an emoticon, I was telling you I wanted to repeat it tomorrow, that I was already missing you, that after so long I'd found someone I could really relate to, who I could laugh with, who didn't make me feel embarrassed for crying at the movies, who I could feel sexy, funny and intelligent with”] (278)³². *Smiley* begins with a romantic premise: Àlex sends his long voice message, by mistake, to the wrong

³² I take the Catalan quotations from *Smiley* (and the page numbers) from Guillem Clua's *Teatre Reunit* (see bibliography). The English translations are, in this case, by Marion Peter Holt.

recipient. Bruno is waiting at the end of the line. Coincidence or destiny? Moved by romantic impulses, Bruno and Àlex decide to meet, only to find that they are completely different from each other. And yet, the pressure to fulfill their affective desires (illustrated by the Japanese legend of the invisible red thread that unites people who are destined to be together) inspires, or forces, them to explore the romantic possibilities of their encounter.

In this regard, *Smiley* seems to pursue a clear, simple goal: to construct a gay love story that replicates the narrative of classic Hollywood romantic comedies³³. Nothing queer in this aim –actually, quite the opposite. By all appearances, the play comfortably abides to a homonormative discourse, one that is quite frequent in most of the countries that have passed laws for egalitarian marriage. In these terms, *Smiley* would have a queer disruptive potential similar to Cam and Mitchell, the couple in ABC’s situation comedy *Modern Family* (2009–2020) –that is: none. But is there something more to find if the surface of the text (and the Barcelona performance) is scratched? Could the play function as a theatrical event that undermines the system of normativity in which it inscribes and creates what queer theorist David Vilaseca would point out as its own conditions of possibility (*Queer Events* 4)? In my view, there’s more to the play: I argue that, throughout this pleasant, normative, and self-affirming narrative, queer crevices emerge to open up cracks that might allow us to glimpse a certain queer utopian potential. This is what, in a conversation for the Catalan theatre journal (*Pausa*), Clua refers to as *Smiley*’s “Trojan horse” (see “Malaltia”). This, of course, raises a number of questions. Can a play like *Smiley* reconcile both the newly mainstreamed Catalan LGBT community and the queer reaction to the inscription of gay rights into the paradigms of heteronormativity? Can commercial theatre disrupt moral values and shake an audience by means of an apparently innocuous plot? Can a happy-ending comedy work as a *queer event*,

³³ In this regard, the different mentions to the classic comedy *Bringing up Baby* (dir. Howard Hawks, 1938) throughout the play, Àlex’s favorite film and the present he gives to Bruno on his birthday in order to tell him that he still loves him, seems very illustrative.

following (and queering) French philosopher Alain Badiou's conceptualization of "event" (*Being* 225-26)?

The debate on this concept takes place in the discussion around what happens with the notion of subjectivity. I would like to explore if characters like Àlex and Bruno, in *Smiley*, can be brought into being (become subjects) and create what we've already called, again referencing Vilaseca, a queer event that disrupts the social, political and symbolic paradigms in both fiction and reality. Finally, I would suggest that this event projects itself into (and depends on) futurity, linking with notions such as queer optimism (following both Berlant and Snediker), articulating the idea of queer failure as developed by Jack Halberstam, and going one step further than Sedgwick's "Queer and Now" pointing to Muñoz's idea of queer utopias, as well as what Freeman defines as the "Queer and Not Now".

The first version of Clua's *Smiley* discreetly premiered in the Torneig de Dramatúrgia, a modest dramaturgic contest in Girona's Temporada Alta Festival, on October 24th, 2011. The text, actually, did not fare well in the tournament. It was defeated in the first round by the play that eventually won the contest: *El crèdit*, by Jordi Galceran. The Torneig de Dramatúrgia has been one of the multiple initiatives of the last years to promote the creation of the new Catalan drama, and it has proved quite successful. Its formula has been replicated in Madrid and Latin America, and at least four of the plays that competed in that first edition of the Torneig went on to enjoy a successful commercial life afterwards. These plays are *Smiley*, Cristina Clemente's *La nostra Champions particular*, Pere Riera's *Red Pontiac*, and the already mentioned *El crèdit*, the most successful one alongside Clua's play: a comedy starred by prominent actors Jordi Bosch and Jordi Boixaderas that stayed for two seasons in Barcelona's Sala Villarroel and has seen several other national and international productions.

After its short life in Girona, Guillem Clua rewrote and expanded the text, and *Smiley* moved to Barcelona's modest Sala FlyHard, a small venue in the working-class Sants neighborhood, far from the mainstream theatre districts. Premiered officially in November 2012, the play didn't seem to totally fit in the artistic program of the theatre, which at the time focused on alternative plays written by semi-unknown yet promising authors. What was a gay romantic comedy with a clear commercial drive, written by one of the most well-known Catalan playwrights of his generation, whose ambitious epic play *Marburg* had already been a success in the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya and whose plays had been premiered in the US and throughout Europe, doing in this venue? Certainly, the small scale of the production, which was written for two actors (in order to fulfill one of the requirements of the dramaturgic contest in Girona), fit within the pocket-sized venue of the FlyHard. Aside from this, this placement could even feel misleading.

Predictably, the success of *Smiley* was immediate: the audience ventured to Sants to see the play and it sold out almost every show for more than two and a half months, including an extended run. After that success, the play caught the attention of Teatre Lliure, one of the two public theatres in Barcelona, which hosted the production for another month. It then headed to the Club Capitol, a commercial venue in the heart of the touristic spot of Las Ramblas, where it was performed intermittently until March 2015, more than three years after the opening. After its seasons in Barcelona, the production went on tour around Catalonia: all in all, *Smiley* enjoyed a truly exceptional run in the Catalan theatre scene. In September 14, 2015, the Spanish production of *Smiley* was premiered in Madrid's Teatro Lara. As of January 2020, the play has enjoyed the following national and international productions: Santiago de Chile, Chile (Sala Ladrón de Bicicletas, 2014); San Juan de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico (Teatro Coribantes, 2016); Athens, Greece (Theatre Abaton, 2016); Limassol, Cyprus (Versus, 2017); Balearic Islands, Spain (El Somni Produccions, 2017); Naples, Italy (Nuovo

Teatro Sanità, 2017); Montevideo, Uruguay (Teatro Solís, 2018); Lima, Peru (Centro Cultural Ricardo Palma, 2018); Miami, USA (Studio28, 2019); New York, USA (Repertorio Español, 2019); and Caracas, Venezuela (Centro Cultural BOD, 2019). There have also been staged readings of the play in New York City (2014) and in Berlin (2015)³⁴.

In just a couple of seasons in Catalonia, the show managed to transition from a local festival to an alternative venue, a public theatre, and a private commercial stage. That can give us a few clues to understand some of the subtleties that make *Smiley* a chameleonic and essential text of Catalan drama and to the play's bet on visibility and integration of the gay and lesbian culture into a broader domain, plus a presentation of some of the challenges this might pose regarding a queer exploration of the play. Each theatre had its own targeted audience, and in all of them *Smiley* proved its success. In an alternative venue, the play could function as an exercise of appropriation of a language (the one of the classical comedies) as a device to write a gay relationship. Something that could be defined as a sort of queer re-conceptualization. In a public theatre, where the play reached a broader scope of audiences and enjoyed the prestige of one of the most respected theatrical institutions in the country, *Smiley* would serve as a sort of political statement (as well as an affirmation of identity politics) written and performed years after the egalitarian marriage and adoption law was passed, in a moment when the conservative parties were taking over, again, the government in both Spain and Catalunya. And in a commercial theatre, it could function *just* as a romantic blockbuster performed for the delight of the kind of audience seeking entertainment in the theatres of Las Ramblas, the touristic heart of Barcelona. In fact, the play shared the venue with comic monologues and improvisation shows.

³⁴ In the stage reading of the play in New York City, Guillem Clua changed its subtitle, from "A Love Story" to "A Barcelona Love Story", to acknowledge the different references to Barcelona (gay) locations. However, when *Smiley* started its theatrical run outside Barcelona, most of the versions of the play changed those references for equivalent ones in the cities that the play was premiered. For instance, in the Spanish version, the play makes reference to gyms and neighborhoods in Madrid.

Since the text can be read in multiple ways, it can legitimately be expected that this multiplicity would be able to materialize in all three venues: part of the audience would assume *Smiley* as a love story on the alternative stage, and some spectators can feel the disruptiveness and the activism of the message in the commercial theatre. The queer event can come to the surface anytime. Clua, openly gay himself, created a device that, disguised as a comedy, could insert itself easily into the mainstream to alter the status quo. In our conversation for the journal (*Pausa.*), when I asked about how *Smiley* could change the way straight people think about the LGBT community, Clua admitted that the comedy “is not a play that, *at first sight*, questions their point of view [about gays]” (my emphasis). However, there is something else, some kind of latency, the potentiality of an event that needs a close reading of both text and performance to uncover. As Clua mentions in the same interview, “the play shows other affective options” that pose, disguised in the comedic device, subtle questions to the straight audience. “In this sense, I think about *Smiley* like a Trojan horse: I use the elements of the romantic heterosexual comedy, I place them in our city, and the spectators come out pleased. And here we are, we already have the horse in the room, and in the meantime, I can tell a queer story”, Clua adds. If, following José Esteban Muñoz’s utopian statement, “Queerness is an ideality” linked with both desire and futurity (*Cruising 1*), in this chapter I want to argue that *Smiley* opens some queer crevices in the fictional construction.

From the moment the audience of the original production of *Smiley* entered the performance venue³⁵, the disposition of the seats, some of them integrated on stage as stools in Bar Bero, the gay bar where most of the action takes place, created the possibility of a disruption. There was no boundary between the stage and the audience: the fourth wall was intentionally missing, and the audience became, by the power of metonym and metatheatre, *habitués* of the Barcelona gay scene and active participants in the performance. *Smiley*

³⁵ At least the two first venues in Barcelona where the play premiered: Sala FlyHard and Teatre Lliure.

provided the experience of queerness to any theatregoer: being male, female, straight, gay, and of any age or condition (Figure 11). The self-consciousness any teenager feels the first time need or curiosity leads him to a gay bar was exported, in the intangible flux of a theatrical affect, to audience members who had never before experienced the discomfort of those furtive ventures. By being *on stage*, straight females and males were, through affect and performativity, *queered*: they were led to feel the uneasiness of being observed (in this case, by the audience) and directly addressed (by the actors) that echoed the discomfort of stepping into a queer bar for the first time (a blend, often, of excitement, guilt, curiosity, kinship, and shame).

Clua played with the excitement of an audience that directly participated in the intrinsic universe of the play; that, following Rancière, played an “active part” in the performance –one that queered the theatrical liturgy. Unable to escape its inscription into the political debates, *Smiley* seemed to set a joyful statement. The immediate success of the play was widely celebrated by the theatre sector and most of the gay and lesbian audience during the consolidation of what could be called the official inclusion of gays and lesbians into the legal sphere, thanks to gay marriage and adoption –but also amidst a recession in social and political rights after the conservative party ascent back into power. In 2004, Spain had become the third country in the world to pass the egalitarian marriage law, and the social rights scene made another radical shift in a country in which having a sexual attraction to people of your same sex was considered both a pathology and a crime less than thirty years before. Spain was witnessing a high-speed race towards the inclusion of the LGBT collective into a paradigm of legal rights and obligations. However, are we really talking about the entire collective? Or, following Alfredo Martínez, is homosexuality in Spanish politics and culture a concept fraught with instability (*Escrituras* 11-23)?

Essential voices of queer theory in Spain, such as the previously mentioned Paco Vidarte, felt that this benefit also brought a bigger defeat. According to Vidarte, those rights were only a mask of artificial tolerance. It permitted the entrance to the spheres of power to a small part of the LGBT group only under the condition they replicate the heteronormative conventions, and leaving behind those who would threaten those conventions (that is, for instance: the elder part of the community; trans, intersex, and gender-queer folks; queers who searched for different kinds of relationalities beyond the monogamist couple models; dykes; people living with HIV or AIDS). Thus, this shift had split the heterogeneous LGBT community between those who could be incorporated to the structures of power (even at the high cost mentioned before) and those who exceeded those structures and were therefore left behind. Solidarity and rebellion are concepts that Vidal brings up in his wake up call *Ética marica* (2007). The breach between *gays* and *queers* had not been quite so obvious before³⁶.

Where does a play like *Smiley* fit to this debate? At a first glance, the comedy could comfortably fit as a subcultural gay product for the normative group. Bruno and Àlex, the two protagonists of the play, comfortably adapt as accepted, normative members of the gay community, aiming to *find the one* and to establish a formal, *normal*, monogamous relationship³⁷. Both have steady jobs that give the audience information of who they are: Àlex is an entrepreneur who owns a gay bar, and Bruno is an established architect. Their bodies, and the way they dress, also mirror the different clichés I have already mentioned: Àlex is a

³⁶ At this point, I don't wish to introduce the debate between gay marriage and the reaction against it by queer, anti-normative subjects and associations, which would take me far from my object of study. I do want to say, though, that I don't fully agree with the portion of queer activism and academia (Warner, Muñoz in the United States; Vidarte in Spain) that has fiercely opposed egalitarian marriage by stating that it diverted the attention from more important matters. Actually, statistics show that those countries that pass egalitarian marriage acts end up having less cases of violence against LGBT subjects (including trans folks). I see both fights (for egalitarian marriage and for the rights of those subjects who don't fit into normativity) as complementary, and not oppositional. In this regard, I believe that Didier Eribon's 2004 journals, published under the name of *Sur cet instant fragile...*, perfectly show the complex nuances between both debates.

³⁷ Even if Bruno and Àlex are the two characters of the play, the actor who plays Bruno performs other minor impersonations: the different men Àlex meets on the dating phone app Grindr, and Pablo, Àlex's Argentinian lover after he and Bruno break up.

handsome built young man who is always wearing tank tops (or appears shirtless) to show his body, whereas Bruno is a thin, more mature man, who dresses in elegant but casual shirts.

However, something in this conformity to normative structures does not go smoothly in the play. Arguably, *Smiley* seems to create the conditions for the emergence of an event: one that unfolds through a sort of melancholic identification. A queer melancholy manifested through disruptions and moments of estrangement, the first one of which takes place through a procedure that works both in narrative and performative levels: the (queer) metalepsis.

Redefined for the modern narratology by Gérard Genette, the concept of metalepsis refers to “the transition from a narrative level to another one” (289). It takes place whenever a narrative instance transgresses its diegetic level and interferes with a superior or inferior level established in a narrative hierarchy. Pirandello exported this figure into theatre in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), and the breaking of the fourth wall allowed the characters to move over the limits of fiction, acknowledging spectators and making them active agents of the theatrical liturgy (Rancière, *The Emancipated* 272). Throughout *Smiley*, where, as I have already pointed out, the shared space between stage and the audience functions as a strategy of inclusion, a metaleptical process unfolds whenever Àlex and Bruno turn their eyes (as well as their text lines) towards the audience, asking for their approval or, at least, for their acknowledgement.

It can be (and has been) argued that metalepsis is a queer figure. It creates a conflict, a metaphysical short-circuit, a narrative estrangement that demands an explicit effort and the acceptance of a new, fragile, strange and unpredictable order of things by all the agents involved. As Freccero suggests, “the reversal signified by the rhetorical term metalepsis could be seen to embody the spirit of queer analysis in its willful perversion of notions of temporal propriety and the reproductive order of things. To read metaleptically, then, would be to engage in queer theorizing” (2). Scene five of *Smiley*, the one that takes place moments after

the two characters have sexual intercourse for the first time, is a clear case of this disruptive and queer metalepsis. Àlex and Bruno share the experience of their passionate and contradictory erotic encounter with the audience, transformed into regular attendants to the bar or into close friends of the characters.

ALEX: I volia demostrar-li que en el fons era com tots els altres i que, per més malament que li caigués, a la mínima s'estaria abaixant els pantalons.

BRUNO: I volia demostrar-li que un tio com ell no em feia tremolar les cames. Volia esborrar-li la seva estúpida arrogància de la cara.

ALEX: Volia fer-li empassar el seu insuportable aire de superioritat.

BRUNO: Volia fer-li veure que no cal un cos perfecte per follar com Déu mana.

ALEX: Volia demostrar-li que al llit tota la seva intel·ligència no serveix de res.

BRUNO: Volia insultar-lo.

ALEX: Volia humiliar-lo.

BRUNO: Escopir-li a la cara.

ALEX: I follar-me'l fins que em supliqués que parés. (289-90)³⁸

Words fill the stage. Words that speak about wild, kinky sex –a sort of encounter that seems to contradict the codes of romantic comedies and bring us to the universe depicted in

38

ALEX: And I wanted to show him that basically he was like all the rest, and no matter how dumb he thought I was, he'd be unzipping his pants the minute he had a chance.

BRUNO: And I wanted to show him that a guy like him didn't make me sweat. I wanted to wipe that stupid look of superiority off his face.

ALEX: I wanted to make him swallow that nauseous, holier-than-thou look on his face.

BRUNO: I wanted to show him that you don't have to have a perfect body to have good sex.

ALEX: I wanted to show him that all his intelligence didn't mean a thing in bed.

BRUNO: I wanted to insult him.

ALEX: I wanted to humiliate him.

BRUNO: Spit in his face.

ALEX: And fuck him until he begged me to stop.

Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*. Spit, insult, humiliate, and fuck: it is worth wondering if this is the kind of scene one would expect to find in a romantic blockbuster or if it might raise the phantoms of the kind of sex that does not belong to a heteronormative discourse. After the collapse of the fourth wall, the spectators are forced into the very nature of the encounter: by explicitly acknowledging their presence on stage, the actors force the audience to stay focused, aware of what is going on. Disguised as pillow talk, the violence of the linguistic exchange is brought to the very surface of the queer event.

Heteronormative romantic comedies might display some innocuous flirting, some mild manifestations of affection (mainly hugs and kisses), but sexual explicitness is definitely out of their conventions. In this regard, they seem to mimic the de-sexualization of normative relationships. Following Foucault, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “the natural laws of matrimony [as the ultimate expression of the inclusion into the norm] and the immanent rules of sexuality began to be recorded on two separate registers” (*History* 40). This conceptual *divorce* between marriage and sexuality suggests, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, that “this silent, normative, un-interrogated ‘regular’ heterosexuality may not function as a sexuality at all” (“Queer” 10). Consequently, the new, homonormative gay and lesbian discourse ascribed to the sphere of power after the implantation of egalitarian marriage is also de-sexualized, to displace the border between the norm and the outcasts to the sexualized-other, now secluded into the sphere of the queer-other. At first, *Smiley* seems to fit comfortably as a mild “love story” –as Guillem Clua labels it in the subtitle of the play. However, the sprinkling of explicit sexuality throughout the narrative, exploring a variety of relational possibilities such as open couples, promiscuity, and kinky sex, among others, suggests otherwise. All these elements emerge violently to create a sort of ontological breach in the romantic conventions. When Àlex finally acknowledges that Bruno is not going to call him after their first date and their subsequent break-up, he tries to forget him through random

sex, provided by the well-known smartphone app Grindr.

ÀLEX, *al públic*: Total, que van passar setmanes i vaig intentar treure'm el Bruno del cap.

No tenia cap sentit que hi pensés tant.

Si ni tan sols m'agradava!

Si era un pocapena i un nyicris! I un pedant!

L'última persona amb la que volia passar un minut de la meva vida era ell!

Afortunadament, al meu iPhone tenia l'aplicació perfecta per oblidar-me del Bruno i de qualsevol altre home: una aplicació tan eficaç en casos d'emergència, que només li falta estar ficada en una urna de vidre amb un martell al costat.

La seva icona és inconfusible: una calavera negra sobre fons groc.

I el seu nom és inoblidable: Grindr!

...

Grindr és una aplicació per a telèfons mòbils. Ve a ser com GayRomeo (n'hem parlat fa una estona) però en aquest cas els perfils estan ordenats per proximitat.

És a dir, que l'usuari que és més a prop teu, surt en primera posició a la llista, cosa que estalvia temps en cas que vagis més calent que una gossa en zel.

Si vols, pots quedar amb algú en deu minuts, però no has de deixar que la pressa et domini. No ser prou específic amb el que busques pot tenir conseqüències catastròfiques en el moment de la cita. (294-95)³⁹

39

ÀLEX, *to the audience*: In short, weeks passed and I tried to get Bruno out of my head. I didn't even like him all that much.

He was snotty and out of shape and a know-it-all!

The last person I'd want to spend a minute of my life with would be him.

Fortunately, my iPhone had the perfect app for forgetting Bruno, and any other man: an app so effective in emergency cases that it should have a fire extinguisher for an icon. Instead, it has a black skull on a yellow background. You can't confuse that icon. And its name is unforgettable: Grindr!

...

Even if every potential erotic encounter ends up in a comic failure (the Grindr scenes are amongst the funniest ones in the show, and Clua uses these moments to enumerate in a hilarious manner a taxonomy of the fauna one can find surfing the app, from the kinky guy to the effeminate boy looking for an uber-masculine type, not to forget the closeted married man or the pathologically timid guy), Àlex opens the door to casual sex and one-night stands. A range of sexual possibilities dramatically unfolds on stage, even if disguised as a parody. Therefore, queer performativity cancels the un-sexing tacit agreement of the homonormative paradigm. In this regard, Clua mentions in our conversation for (*Pausa.*),

Actually, in one occasion someone criticized the moment when both characters break up and Àlex tries to forget Bruno by logging on Grindr. This person told me that, in a fictional piece, this could not happen, because the fact that he would go to bed with other men suggested that Àlex did not really love Bruno. For many people, the romantic ideal that does not discern sex from love makes impossible that someone creates a profile on Grindr to forget someone else, or just to have fun. So, yes, there's an element in the play that people assume because it works as a comic trick, and that breaks with some stereotypes when you see it in the performance.

For similar reasons, the collapsing of the wall that separates the stage from the audience is not a playful and gratuitous metatheatrical device. It functions as a metaphoric breakdown that destroys pre-established normative conventions and brings up a new

Grindr is an app for cell phones. It's a lot like GayRomeo, we talked about that a while back, but in this case the profiles are arranged by proximity.

That is, the user who's closest to where you are appears in first place on the list, something that saves time in case you're as horny as hell. If you want, you can meet up with someone in a few minutes, but you shouldn't let your eagerness influence you too much. Not making it clear what you're looking for can have catastrophic consequences for the date.

(dis)order of things. Aside from the moments already mentioned, in which the spectators are acknowledged by the characters, there are several small scenes in the play where the fourth wall breaks and the plot comes to a halt. Those moments are preceded by a “ding”, which in the Catalan production imitated the sound a smartphone makes when receiving a message through the gay cruising app Grindr, suggesting that this is a moment of impasse, an instant when everything happening needs to be temporarily abandoned for the urgent promise of pleasure. These “dings” open up what the text describes as “clarifications for the heterosexuals in the audience”: moments in the text when the characters (or the actors, because in this metatheatrical halt the separation between actor and character blurs) address the spectators in order to explain places, objects, concepts related to the gay socio-cultural universe in Barcelona: The Gayromeo website, the Circuit parties, poppers, etc. By these clarifications, again, the text opens the experiential door to the straight audience and queers them by making them accomplices and subjects of knowledge.

However, that kind of language (the one necessary to fully understand the nuances of *Smiley*) needs to pause the unfolding of events in order to provide further explanations “for the straight audience”. Even if Clua employs these moments to provide comic relief, it can be argued that a sort of queer melancholia underlies these gaps. Freudian psychoanalysis identifies melancholy as an unfinished process of grieving caused by the identification with the object (“Mourning” 249). In the particular context of *Smiley*, I argue that there is a certain melancholic flux in the imbalances created by the assimilation of the gay and lesbian subjects into the spheres of cultural and social centrality –and also, that this melancholia pertinently underlines the inevitable challenges and contrasts this process of integration presents regarding the loss of subalternity. In “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia”, David L. Eng and Shinhee Han readjust the Freudian concept as a convenient tool to interpret depression, feelings of loss and other reactions regarding the everyday experience of the Asian American

community. The last case they address is Nelson's, "a first-generation Japanese American student who immigrated from Osaka to New Jersey when he was five", and who has been struggling with "depression associated with identity conflicts regarding race" (684-85). Nelson's depression is caused, mainly, by the impossibility to communicate in English without an accent that highlights the immigrant origin of his family. Nelson craves social integration and passing, but his accent inevitably highlights his condition of subject-other.

Michael Warner queers Homi Bhabha's idea of "colonial mimicry" –the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite ("Of Mimicry" 126)– to argue that, in their attempts to fight against discrimination, part of the gay and lesbian community sacrificed social and erotic particularities in order to blend with the mainstream (*The Trouble* 8-11), in a sort of "normative mimicry". As David Halperin famously claims, "queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with normal" (*Saint Foucault* 62, author's emphasis), although attempting to fix queerness "by definition" could be read as a contradiction with such an unstable object of analysis. It seems clear, however, that the idea of *normal* has deserved a substantial amount of attention in queer theory (as well as in queer activism). In their recent, albeit problematic, genealogy of the normal, historians Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens incorporate these queer debates in a longer tradition of anti-normativity (2)⁴⁰. Guillem Clua's *Smiley* tacitly participates in these debates by mimicking, in a conflictive and frustrating manner, heteronormative conventions: Bruno and Àlex constantly find themselves in the obligation to stop the play, constantly failing to integrate their narratives without the need for translation. These halts show, again quoting Eng and Han, "a partial success as well as a partial failure" (677): they serve to provide

⁴⁰ In their book, Cryle and Stephens argue that "The concept of the normal as we know it today dates no earlier than the mid-twentieth century" (351), therefore subtly contesting Foucault's genealogy of prisons and other institutions for discipline. However, they build their argument by claiming that "Normal" does not appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary* until 1848 – which, as Samuel A. Chambers proves, is a blatant mistake, since the word already appears in that dictionary in 1598.

information and shorten emotional distance with the straight members of the audience, but at the same time they underscore the epistemological gap with them. Heteronorm, here, functions as an ideal that cannot be completely achieved by the newly assimilated gay couple, in constant need to justify themselves. I argue that the partial failure of these attempts, even if formulated in a comedic tone, generates an implicit structure of mourning. In the case of the LGBT community, this mourning includes those cultural and social roots that made them queer (the Other) and that are required to be left behind: the aforementioned ethics of promiscuity and/or sexual freedom, language conventions (gender mixing, codified nicknames for the other members of the community, etc.), cultural references, and so on. Following Freud's theory of mourning, this loss is worked through an emotional investment to a new object, such as, in this case, the heteronormative society.

Every halt in the play where Bruno and Àlex find themselves in need for a queer metalepsis to collapse the division between fiction and reality, to break the fourth wall, to clarify and translate for the straight audience, serves to reveal the impossibility of total identification. Their aspiration to accommodate their relationship to the straight order of things is constantly disrupted, for there is a constant need to translate queer codes and culture marks for the audience. Therefore, an inevitable *otherness* of the diverse nature of gay desire emerges; one that can be regarded as an inversion of what Butler defines as a "melancholy gender", in which homosexuality, as seen in the play, naturalizes itself by assuming the same structures of heterosexual affection, but nevertheless it can be observed how these structures bring to the surface the impossibility of total communication⁴¹. Consequently, desire in *Smiley* does not operate as a source of panic, but as the inevitable mark of difference. The way the event unfolds, thus, can be of a melancholic nature, since melancholia is, in part,

⁴¹ Cfr. Butler (*The Psychic* 139). It can also be noted that this incorporation of homosexuality would collapse the whole structure of melancholy in Butler's essay unless there is a suppression of sex (and desire) in homosexual nature. As we have seen, this is not the case in *Smiley*.

regarded as the result of an unsatisfactory investment that sets the other away from mourning. Bruno and Àlex invest in heteronormativity but, just as the case of Nelson in Eng and Han's article, the impossibility of a direct (*straight*) communication within *Smiley* is exemplified by the constant collapse of the narrative conventions throughout the play. Queer metatheatricality, here, faces a constant negotiation between the comedic strategies and a certain anxiety.

In *Cruel Optimism* (2008), Lauren Berlant describes the anxieties generated by life in the present. She states that the present is firstly lived affectively, as “what makes itself present to us before it becomes anything else, such as an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we can look back” (4). The present would be a never-ending concatenation of ordinary activity, but there is always the possibility of the emergence of something worth noticing –a “situation” that unfolds and will have the ability to become an “event” when we look at it retrospectively.

If present life, according to Berlant, contains this idea of potentiality, theatre tends to unfold as pure activation. The audience seeing a show shares the disclosed present-ness of the play with the actors onstage, but it is a present with a different quality: it is a *pertinent present*. Everything on stage needs to make sense. Every prop, every element on the set design, needs to have a purpose. As Chekhov wrote on several occasions, “One must never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn't going to go off. It's wrong to make promises you don't mean to keep” (Goldberg, *Russian Literature* 163). Some playwrights, especially in contemporary theatre, play with the expectations of the audience –as it happened in the beginning of the highly acclaimed (and also fiercely criticized) post-dramatic production of *F.R.A.U.*, by Albert Arribas and Albert Belasch, in Festival Grec 2016: during the first hour and a half of this seven-hour show, the stage was taken over by the three actresses who basically cleaned everything, challenging the spectators' endurance to wait for something

meaningful to happen while reinforcing (yet through a complex parodic reading) the stereotypes of machismo. However –and that is precisely what justified such a performance in *F.R.A.U.*, as well as what innervated many spectators–, it can be argued that theatre, unlike Berlant’s notion of present, is fraught with *pertinence*: every scene holds the promise of taking the spectators *somewhere*. Therefore, in theatre audiences experience the necessary (and again, pertinent) unfolding of events, both in a Badiouian and in a Massumian way: as a drama that emerges powerfully in open situations (Badiou, *Being* 52) and as something that actually governs that situation (Massumi, *Politics* 183).

The majority of theatrical devices, then, distribute throughout the scenes the (expected) disruptions in the unfolding of the plot we can call situations. The gun on the table will be fired somewhere in the play, as it happens, for instance, in Henrik Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and in Maria Irene Fornes’s *Fefu and Her Friends* (1977). If the show does not comply with this horizon of expectations, the audience will experience a certain disappointment, or the feeling that something has not been completed. In a way, as spectators, our temporality moves forwards as much as backwards: we are constantly counting down to the moment where the expectations each play lay on us will be met, and match our past knowledge of the rules that set the engine in motion. Genres, here, play a crucial role. In a tragedy, the experienced theatregoer will be waiting for the admonishing of the choir (such as it happens in Sophocles’ classic tragedies, in the popular song that keeps repeating in Lope de Vega’s *El caballero de Olmedo*, or in modern ones such as Arthur Miller’s *A View from The Bridge*, through the character of the narrator/lawyer), and will find relief in the final anagnorisis. Similarly, romantic comedies also have their own horizon of expectations. What happens when, as it can be stated in the case of *Smiley*, those expectations of a romantic “happily ever after” are, if not broken, at least queered?

Following the conventions of the comedy, *Smiley* relentlessly progresses towards a

happy ending. The invisible red thread that, according to the Japanese legend mentioned in the beginning of the play as a premonition, connects Àlex and Bruno, is ultimately supposed to bring them together. However, even at the end of the play, sealed with the final reunion of the lovers and a passionate kiss, an estrangement can be noticed. It is an estrangement whose nature is linked with the notion of temporality. The premises of the genre lead the plot toward “happily ever after”. The final kiss indicates that, indeed, happiness awaits for the couple. But what about the “ever after”? Prior to the final meeting of the lovers, Àlex leaves a message in Bruno’s voicemail: “Jo no sé si tu i jo tindriem un bon final... Pero podem tenir un principi. Si tu vols” [“I don’t know if you and I would have a happy ending... But we could have a beginning. If you want”], he says before he hangs up the phone (303). Àlex is not sure about the reliability of the romantic comedy conventions. So far, the audience has been able to observe a canvas inhabited by open couples and Grindr hookups. A different pattern of relationships that eventually break up or adapt to new practices that would not fit into the heteronormative conventions:

BRUNO: Tinc amics gais que fa anys que estan junts.

ÀLEX: I són parella oberta.

BRUNO: Sí... bé, no tots.

ÀLEX: Les lesbianes no compten.

BRUNO: Ah. Llavors sí, tots. (281)⁴²

42

BRUNO: I have gay friends who’ve been together for years.

ÀLEX: And they have an open relationship.

BRUNO: Yeah... well, not all of them.

ÀLEX: Lesbians don’t count.

BRUNO: Oh. Then yes, all of them.

These kind of relationships (open, promiscuous, precarious) set the framework of a normative failure. As Jack Halberstam argues in *The Queer Art of Failure*, “success in a heteronormative, capitalist society equates too easily to specific forms of reproductive maturity combined with wealth accumulation” (2). The combination of normative coupling and lineage works as the fundamental cell of the Western societies (marriage and reproduction, generation after generation). In this regard, the mainstream culture tends to reinforce the narrative of normative relationships: man-meets-woman-and-they-live-happily-ever-after. Whenever egalitarian marriage is implanted, this narrative slightly varies to include “man-meets-man” and “woman-meets-woman”, but the rest of the premise stays as it is. Non-normative, queer forms of relationality that don’t adjust to these paradigms are considered, in contrast, social failures. “Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style”, claims Halberstam, before adding that

failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods. ... And while failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life. (3)

By performing random potential erotic encounters via Grindr, by building a relationship focused in the present and not invested in the expectations of a happily ever after, *Smiley* performs a social failure, one that queers the normative timeline of coupling and lineage. This failure opens up the possibility to explore other affective modes, to imagine, again following Halberstam, “not some fantasy of an elsewhere, but existing alternatives to

hegemonic systems” (*The Queer Art* 89).

These queer (failed) relationships break with the normative conventions of a (straight) timeline. They transport us to a world in which temporality and precariousness play a critical part. In *Smiley*, the final union of Bruno and Àlex subtly questions the expectation of a common life that will last forever. In other words: the end of *Smiley* is not about a “happily ever after” but about a “happily now, and we’ll see what happens next”. In the words of Àlex, it’s not about *endings*, but about *beginnings*, since the expectations toward the ending have slightly evolved. There is still, of course, room for hope, but also an acceptance of other potentialities⁴³. Back to the foundational sentence for José Esteban Muñoz’s idea of queer utopia, “[q]ueerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing” (1). Futurity, in any normative comedy, is based on a paradigm of optimism. Conversely, a queer comedy like *Smiley* needs to twist the nature of that optimism and create a new horizon of possibilities in which happiness is not necessarily detached from casual sex, threesomes, open couples, and an eventual reconceptualization of the relationship into friendship. The community of affects –a community, too, of pleasure (Rodríguez, *Queer Gestures* 10-11)– that results from this future is not fixed. Unconstrained from the happily-ever-after of the (straight) comedy, a queer happy ending points towards an optimism that has to do with an open and *interesting* future, following Snediker reformulation of Berlant’s *optimism* (3). This is a kind of projection that moves along the thin line that divides the conventional future of the comedy happy ending and the crevices that emerge and that, again, disrupt them and generate new affections that embrace a different, queer optimism. Fictional conventions alter, eventually, the cruelty of the heteronormative happy ending optimism (Berlant, *Queer Optimism* 1-6).

⁴³ I think about the opposition, as articulated by Agamben’s reading of Aristotle, between potentiality and actuality. Potentiality thought as the possibility of becoming but also the window to nonbeing (178-181).

Smiley ends the same way as it begins: with a voice message. This one, however, is left to the right person: Bruno calls Àlex from the airport and tells him that he has finally decided not to board the flight to Buenos Aires with his Argentinian boyfriend. He is, instead, choosing him –a new beginning with an unforeseen future. The final turn of the events confirms the expectations of the audience (the two lovers had to reunite, as the Japanese legend promised). And yet, by the mentioning of the uncertainties *beyond* the narrative arc that is about to reach an ending, there is a potential (and queer) re-reading of romantic conventions.

Ultimately, *Smiley* does not reject the possibility of love, even in a romantic, slightly normative version. However, the play also unfolds a potential altering of those conventions fixed during centuries by heterosexual politics and arts. Clua's comedy follows, by necessity, the genre conventions –therefore, it moves within the boundaries of normativity. Discrimination, otherness, queerness, are not mentioned once in the play. Àlex and Bruno are figures of assimilation, and yet, they are constantly interrupting the natural (heteronormative) order into which they have been recently incorporated to bring to the surface moments of tension and disruption. *Smiley*, a gay comedy, ends up queering the audience, the theatrical forms and social and activist conventions. Instead of pursuing this from the perspective of the outcasts, the emergence of the queer event, in this case, erupts from within the system and creates an alternative, unexpected catharsis that wraps up the promise of a queer optimism attached to utopist aspirations. The final, logical, expected kiss of the two lovers is more than a *happy* ending. It is an *interesting* ending, an acceptance of a queer future, the moment that confirms the possibility of the queer event itself, which, by virtue of the metalepsis, the audience share in an active way, for they have been included in the ontological frame of reference.

3. The Rightful Mourning (A Coda on Safe Spaces)

In our conversation for the theatre journal (*Pausa.*), Guillen Clua comments on the transition between *Smiley*'s queer optimism and the sense of urgency that sparked the writing of his play *L'oreneta* (*The Swallow*, 2017):

If you think about it, you realize that when part of the [LGBT] community gets the legal rights they were looking for (in this case, marriage and adoption as the symbol of total equality) they make the mistake of believing that everything has been accomplished and that it's time to relax. We all fell into a certain self-satisfaction, in this shared feeling that we were heading to the right place. And then, suddenly, Orlando happens.

The June 2016 terrorist attacks at the Pulse Bar in Orlando dragged Guillem Clua back to the computer: "One year earlier, I would have never thought of writing a play to remind people that the hate towards the LGBT community still exists. That made me think that I might be interpreting the [commercial] success of *Smiley* in a too naïve and optimistic manner", he admits.

Written with this feeling of urgency, *L'oreneta* takes the shape of a dialogical combat between Ramon, a young gay man, and Amèlia, an older woman, the only two characters on stage. In the Spanish premiere, directed by Josep Maria Mestres (with Félix Gómez as Ramon and Carmen Maura as Amèlia), the set design was simple and realistic, and it did not change throughout the play: "Una sala àmplia decorada amb cura. Predominen els mobles antics, potser provinents d'alguna herència, combinats amb gust amb uns altres de més moderns i barats. Fotografies familiars ben emmarcades damunt d'una calaixera. Molts llibres i molts

àlbums de fotos” [“A large, carefully decorated sitting room. Most of the furniture is old, perhaps inherited; it has been tastefully combined with less expensive, modern pieces. Framed family photos are arranged on top of a sideboard. The shelves are full of books and photo albums”] (459). The stage was also lit in a neutral way: the focus of the production relied on the actors and the words.

L’oreneta begins when the young Ramon visits Amèlia, a strict and veteran vocal coach, under the pretext of wanting to learn a song for the upcoming memorial service of his mother⁴⁴. The true motivation of Ramon’s visit, however, is to convince Amèlia to attend a memorial service in honor of Amèlia’s son, Dani, who was murdered one year before in a terrorist attack that killed dozens of people in a gay bar. The narrative of *L’oreneta* is organized in a simple way. It progresses through various revelations sprinkled across the play, which configure its narrative arc. Ramon confesses to Amèlia that he knew her son, Dani. He says they had studied at the same school but were not in touch anymore. Ramon, who at first had denied even knowing about the terrorist attack, now admits that he was friends with Dani. Then, the audience knows that Dani managed to film the shooting before he died (and the images became viral). We learn, through Ramon, that the terrorist attack was motivated by homophobia. Ramon then says he was at the bar the night of the attack. He then admits that he had come to the bar with Dani –he had lied when he said that they were not in touch anymore. Ramon soon reveals that he and Dani were boyfriends. We learn that Dani saved Ramon’s life the night of the attack. Ramon then reveals that they were engaged. Amèlia admits that Dani had come out to her that day, and she preferred to ignore her son. Ramon

⁴⁴ In the first English translation of the play, which I use here for quotations and references, the names of the characters are changed compared to the Catalan and Spanish versions of *L’oreneta*: in the English translation of the text, Ramon is Ray, and Amelia, Emily. Tim Gutteridge, author of the translation for the London premiere, claims that he decided to transfer the events from Spain to England because the play itself “is based on an action that has been transferred” (“When Swallows” 108), and that implies adapting all the cultural references, from the names of the character to TV programs. The decision is, needless to say, highly problematic, especially when we consider the omissions of the original version regarding the ethnic origin of the victims that we will address in these pages. Also, some Spanish references remain unaltered, such as the mention of Lorca’s *Sonnets of Dark Love*, not changed, for instance, for Oscar Wilde.

finally tells Amèlia that Dani had left a letter forgiving her –which takes us to the ending of the play, when Ramon and Amèlia sing a song together.

I believe it is pertinent to write a coda for this chapter to briefly address *L'oreneta*, which takes us back to the beginning of this section: to the need to create queer performative utopias, and also to its dark reverse, the utter brutality of invading and destroying (literally, and symbolically) queer safe spaces. Even if the play takes place one year after the tragic events, the gay bar where the terrorist attack took place emerges as a true phantom space, an absent collective character that projects a shadow that affects the whole plot, in the same ways Lorca's Pepe El Romano or Beckett's Godot keep the theatrical machineries in motion in *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Waiting for Godot*, respectively. The evident references to the Pulse shooting, even if they are not explicit within the play (Clua does not specify where the plot is set), resonate throughout the performance. Furthermore, the author unequivocally states in his personal website that the play is “directly inspired by the terrorist attack at the Pulse Bar in Orlando”, and he wrote an epilogue for the published version of *L'oreneta* where he recalls what happened on June 12, 2016, claiming that the sinister episode “was the most violent and deadly attack on the LGBT community in the country's history”, and pointing out that, one month after the tragic event, “the FBI announced it had no reason to believe that the massacre had been motivated by hatred of homosexuals” (202).

In its direct connection to the Pulse massacre, however, the play presents a partial and problematic reading of the event. As Spencer Kornhaber specifies in the beginning of his interview with Ramón Rivera-Servera for *The Atlantic*, “The discourse following the attack at Pulse nightclub has focused largely on terrorism, guns, religion, and homophobia. But this was an attack on a very specific kind of event: a queer Latin night” (“After Orlando”). In *L'oreneta*, Clua fails to make references to the intersectional targets of the perpetrator: the victims were not only queer, but also Latinx. Clua's emphasis on the homophobic nature of

the attack paradoxically invisibilizes the xenophobic motivations of the murderer, and, as Rivera-Servera rightfully points out in *The Atlantic* interview, “the story has been taken up by mainstream LGBT organizations” (and voices, as it is the case). This omission becomes even more problematic when one of the topics the play addresses is who is entitled to mourn for the dead. Interestingly enough, Amèlia, the homophobic mother, complains that the LGBT community has taken over the right to grieve:

Us passeu la vida exigint respecte, igualtat, les mateixes lleis, els mateixos drets, us voleu casar, voleu adoptar nens i ho aconseguíu. Teniu la grandíssima sort d’haver nascut en un país que us permet viure com desitgeu, formar les vostres famílies, divertir-vos a les vostres festes, les autoritats tanquen el centre de les ciutats perquè pugueu muntar les vostres manifestacions i les vostres desfilades i ens demaneu als altres que ho respectem. I ho fem. La majoria ho fem, perquè som gent civilitzada. Ho acceptem, fins i tot ens n’alegrem per vosaltres i seguim amb les nostres vides, perquè entenem que vivim en una societat plural i que aquest respecte mutu ens fa millors. Però un dia de sobte passa l’impensable i algú decideix destruir això. Algú que ens detesta, a vosaltres per existir i a nosaltres per permetre-ho, decideix agafar un arma i matar cinquanta persones. I què feu vosaltres? Què feu? Vosaltres, que fa una estona us omplíeu la boca d’igualtat i respecte, no pareu de dir «aquests són els nostres morts, no els vostres», com si el vostre dolor fos millor que el meu. Doncs que et quedi clar que no ho és. No ho és. Em sap molt de greu que et sentis atacat, que un desequilibrat hagi volgut fer mal a la teva comunitat, però jo he perdut el meu únic fill i no et permeto que em diguis com haig d’entendre la seva mort. (471-72)⁴⁵

⁴⁵ “You spend your lives demanding respect, equality, the same laws, the same rights, you want to marry, you want to adopt children. And you get all those things. you have the immense luck to be born in a country that allows you to live how you want to, to have your families, to celebrate your festivals. The authorities close down streets so you can have your demonstrations and you ask the rest of us to respect you. And we do. Most of us do,

As it usually happens with privileged perspectives, by only highlighting the homophobic component of the attack, Guillem Clua erased the hatred towards the precarious Latinx community. When, in an email exchange, I asked Clua about this partial perspective, he stated that

It's true that I did not take into account the racial specificity when I wrote the play. Or, at least, it was not its central axis. Curiously enough, in the first drafts of the text this issue was more explicit. I am bringing back this paragraph –which I erased in the final version of the play– that I considered too visceral as I was editing the text. I think this could lead to interesting considerations:

RAMÓN: No, no es suficiente. No es suficiente. La muerte de su hijo no le da derecho a escupir sobre la memoria de los otros que murieron esa noche. Lo siento si no fueron unas víctimas perfectas. Seguramente todo el mundo se habría sentido mucho mejor si el famoso chico del vídeo hubiera sido un joven modelo, blanco, futbolista, universitario de clase media y muy heterosexual, con su novia de toda la vida, su anillo de prometido y su misa de los domingos. Pero no fue así. El famoso chico del vídeo resultó ser maricón, como casi todos los demás. No sabe cuánto lo siento. Lo siento si no quedaron bien en los informativos de *prime time*. Lo siento si tuvieron que ver las caras de gais, negros, sudacas, camioneras o transexuales a la hora de la cena.

because we're civilized. Then one day the unthinkable happens and someone decides to destroy it. Someone who hates us. Who hates you for existing and hates the rest of us for permitting it. So he grabs a gun and kills fifty people. And what do you do? What do you lot do? Just yesterday you couldn't stop talking of equality and respect, and now, all of a sudden, all we hear is "these are our dead, not yours", as if your pain was better than ours. Well, you can take it from me that it isn't. Not at all. I think it's terrible that you feel attacked, that a madman wanted to harm your community, but I've lost my only son and I won't let you tell me how I should understand his death."

¿Y sabe lo que más siento? Que a la gente como usted todas esas caras les dieran menos pena porque en ningún momento sintieron que fueran de los suyos.⁴⁶

In this response, Ramon exposes a more intersectional landscape of the Pulse victims. As I think about why I took this paragraph off the final version, I recall that I did not want the spectator to have the opportunity of accusing Amelia of being a racist. I simplified the multiethnic reality of the Pulse victims because the debate should not focus on Amelia's homophobia (or racism or classism), but on her lack of capacity to empathize with her dead son. However, I was never conscious that this would imply the erasure of the Latinx reality off the true events the story was inspired in. In a way, I decided to narrow the spectrum of the topic I was addressing and I left others out, as a conscious dramaturgic decision –but also, maybe, unconsciously, because I am a cisgender, non-racialized man⁴⁷.

In order to solve this gap, Clua is currently working on adapting the play for the American productions. In these versions, for instance, Ramon will self-identify as Latinx. “I am well aware that I wrote *L'oreneta* feeling like a victim of the attack and what it supposed for the LGBTQ community that I belong to. Therefore, my writing was visceral. I guess the lack of distance from the specific events made me forget other communities that were also

⁴⁶ Guillem Clua sent me this paragraph in its Spanish version. Since the piece was finally cut off the text and there was no English translation available, in this case I provide the translation.

“RAMÓN: No, it's not enough. It's not enough. The death of your son does not give you any rights to spit on the memory of the others who died that night. I am sorry if they were not perfect victims. Everybody would have surely felt much better if the famous video guy would have been a young white model, a soccer player, middle-class guy with university education, and very heterosexual, with his longtime girlfriend, his engagement ring and his Sunday mass. But it was not the case. The famous video guy happened to be a faggot, like almost anyone else. You have no idea how sorry I am. I am sorry if the prime time news were not as shiny as they could have. I'm sorry you had to see the faces of gay boys, black boys, Latinos, butch lesbians or trans folks at dinnertime. And you know what am I especially sorry about? That people like you did not experience any sorrow, because you did not feel that they belonged to your community.”

⁴⁷ Email from Guillem Clua to Isaias Fanlo, January 21, 2020.

victims”, he admits in our exchange⁴⁸. Clua’s words coincide with Rivera-Servera’s considerations in his interview for *The Atlantic*: “This [taking up the tragedy by LGBT organizations] is a difficult thing to put forth because they equally shared in the vulnerability and the trauma of the incident, and I don’t want to minimize that experience from them”, he argues (“After Orlando”).

L’oreneta is a work of fiction that departs from a terrorist attack in a bar that targeted the Latinx and the queer community. *Gang Bang* is a work of fiction whose set design, in the shape of a queer club, suffered a real attack from homophobic spectators in the middle of one of the performances. Both cases, being very different from each other, share the articulation of a response towards hate. “The Swallow”, the song that Ramon and Amèlia finally sing together in the last scene of *L’oreneta*, suggests the possibility of building a bridge between two antagonistic positions, and therefore working together for a world in which love overcomes hate⁴⁹:

El món somriu de nou.
Es torna a sentir viu.
L’estol d’ocells revifa.
I omple l’ànima d’estiu.
El cel està replet
de promeses de veritat,
de carícies i futur
mentre sigui al teu costat.
És l’oreneta que torna a la llar.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ This final song was purposely written for the play. Guillem Clua asks that each production of *The Swallow* creates their own score for these lyrics.

És l'oreneta que torna a volar.
I traça entre els núvols
dibuixos de plomes
i crida i somriu
i el fred s'esmicola.
És l'oreneta que et va trencar el cor
i ara et porta l'amor.⁵⁰

As it happens in Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*, the promise of a better life, in the last moments of the play, takes the shape of a bird. In Miró's play, the remaining clients invest their hopes in the possibility of the dove being able to escape the constrained, decadent world of La llum through the crack in the wall. Inversely, in *L'oreneta*, the return of the swallow marks the beginning of the spring and the blossoming of better, warmer times. In his free translation of the song, Tim Gutteridge decides to erase the word "future", present in the original version of the lyrics. Futurity, however, seems to be a critical idea here, as the opening of a crevice of possibilities that is left latent, unfulfilled, once the performance ends. In this regard, the ending of *L'oreneta* recalls *Smiley's* queer ending, with Bruno promising Àlex a beginning, and the acceptance of a future that is open and uncertain. One that, unlike

⁵⁰ The world springs back to life
The frost begins to thaw
The wind and rain of winter
Will trouble you no more
The sky whispers sweet promises
Of summer yet to come
The swallow darts and dances
And she offers up her song.
here comes the swooping swallow, returning to her home
here comes the swooping swallow, as if she'd never flow
her feathers drawing pictures
All across the sky
She banishes the cold
With her laughter and her cries
here comes the swooping swallow, who in autumn flew away
And she kisses you again.

normative romantic comedies, does not necessarily imply a happily-ever-after. The future is not static, in these cases: the swallow that brings hope will eventually depart when colder times arrive, and love stories mutate, and even end. Utopias are on the other side of the crevice: aspirations in the horizon, always *beyond*.

As for the attack during the performance on *Gang Bang*, the show continued after a brief pause. When the actors went back onstage, they were warmly received by the audience, who gave them a sustained ovation. If a cliché such as “the show must go on” has a genuine meaning, it is about how crucial the role of performance can be in order to enact possibilities. As Jill Dolan states, “we can’t measure the effectiveness of art as we can a piece of legislation” (*Utopia* 20), but performance has the capacity to “resurrect a belief or faith in the possibility of social change” (21). Proceeding with the performance after the attack against the staging of *Gang Bang* was a matter of accepting the responsibility of hope. “The present ... is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and ‘rational’ expectations”, writes José Esteban Muñoz (*Cruising* 27). In experimenting this toxicity, *Gang Bang* had become more than a play: it was transformed into a performative act of collective resistance against hatred. One that projected itself towards a horizon of possibilities. The temporary manifestation of a queer utopia.

EPILOGUE: AFTER THE SHOW

No matter how long the play is, no matter how intense, how truthful, how post-dramatic and skeptical about the links between performance and fiction, theatre is a perishable event. As it has a beginning, it has an end: a moment in which the lights go up and the staging pact between all agents is broken. Eventually, the performers go back to their dressing rooms, and the spectators head back to the streets. There's an inevitable sense of futility or, as Badiou writes, of precariousness:

“The fact that precariousness belongs to the essence of theatre is something that we rediscover after each representation when, back in the street, the feeling of a bitter dispersion comes over us while we search for words to retain a moment longer what was a feast for thought, an ordeal of conviction, which suddenly threatens to become nothing more than a jarring and lacunary ensemble of painted bodies and excessive voices.” (*Rhapsody* 111)

Badiou, here, seems to overlook the performative quality of what happens outside the stage. As Stephanie Merrim brilliantly points out in her study of the colonial territories, the city spectacularizes the experience of citizenship, from the sumptuous cathedrals to the street festivities, in order to articulate discourses of power and domination. Merrim argues for the spectacular qualities of the Baroque colonial cities that exceed any theatrical representation¹. In other words, the Baroque machinery operated on the theatrical stages as well as on the streets: it was critical to keep the citizen in awe.

¹ Merrim coins the notion of the Spectacular City, a “composite of elements” that “both shapes and facilitates the telling of stories that cut across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of colonial Spanish America” (2). “Via wonder”, she writes, the “Old World Spain labors to contend with the menacing tides of change” growing amidst the creole population (14, my emphasis).

In the postmodern urban territories, saturated with a diverse array of citizens from different genders, ethnicities, and class origins, these discourses are fragmented, polyphonic, and anarchic. The age of information is also the age of excess in the amount of media and social media, blogs, websites, and video channels that provide all kinds of data, both true and false. In the era of fake news, discourses still overflow the stage and spectacularize the streets in a promiscuous, unfiltered manner, inevitably partial in our perception. For those *back in the street* in the third week of October, 2019, after seeing one of those innocuous commercial comedies in Teatre Borràs, in Barcelona's Plaça Urquinaona, the spectacle that awaited was nothing short of Baroque grandiloquence: burning containers, improvised barricades, smoke, chaos, and policemen chasing young masked protesters amidst bonfires of discontent. The sentence against the separatist leaders who promoted the 2017 referendum on the independence of Catalonia was out, and it was a severe one: the Spanish Supreme Court had found them guilty of sedition and misuse of public funds, and nine of the leaders were sentenced to nine to thirteen years in prison. The verdict sparked turmoil all over Catalonia, with Plaça Urquinaona being the *zone zero* of the conflicts. Through the smartphone app Telegram, the platform Tsunami Democràtic (which had over 400.000 subscribers in January 2020) orchestrated a wide range of protests that seemed to articulate, beyond the revolt caused by a sentenced that many considered unfair, a broader and more abstract collision of dissatisfaction².

Maybe there is no absolute separation between the stage and what we call real life, but it is on the stage where we can see this unfolding of events through the perspectives, the filters, and the conventions of fiction. Through those instants of utter illumination, theatre might offer the spectators a way to *read* life. However, the number of theatrical experiences

² In her self-described post-modern poem *Excepción* (2020), Elisabeth Duval departs from the Barcelona protests in order to draw a chaotic and hopeful canvas of desire, death and survival amidst the fires and the collapse of an idea of Europe: “dime cuál es la ciudad que detrás de la transición modélica se quiebra y reforma y estalla” [“tell me which is the city that breaks, remodels and explodes after the exemplary *transición*”], she writes (54).

that touch and change the audience is limited, and it depends on the subjectivity of the spectator. “I can’t assure myself that any given experience at the theater will bring me one of those exquisite moments in which I feel charmed, challenged, and reassured,” admits Jill Dolan (5). Marvin Carlson speaks in more transcendent terms when he claims: “I also have now and then experienced moments of such intensity that they might be called epiphanies. . . . Such moments of apotheosis are not everyday occurrences, of course” (211).

This dissertation began as a tribute to the queer cathartic experiences I have experienced during my years as a theatregoer and theatre professional –the *queer crevices* that I have mentioned throughout these pages. My intention was to provide a theoretical background and an analysis of recent works that have shaped the imagination of a segment of the Catalan society. However, as this research progressed, I realized that, even more important than acknowledging the merits of those plays, it was critical to detect and point out what was lacking: to adjust my gaze in order to see what had been addressed in a too-normative manner, or what had directly been left out from the stage.

For instance, when I was doing my research on HIV and AIDS narratives in Catalan (and Spanish) theatre, I came to realize the precariousness of artistic representations of an epidemic whose medical and social consequences had been far from irrelevant in the Iberian Peninsula. Besides a few translations of foreign plays (mainly Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America* and Copi’s *Una visita inoportuna*) and Guillem Clua’s *Marburg*, the presence of HIV and AIDS on the mainstream Catalan stages was non-existent. I searched thoroughly in several archives: SIDAstudi, Casal Lambda’s Armand de Fluvià Archives, Barcelona’s Institut del Teatre, and the archives of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, and found that theatre references to HIV/AIDS were almost completely absent. All this might give the erroneous impression that the AIDS epidemic was irrelevant in Catalonia (and also in Spain). Why this absence occurred was a question that I addressed in the first chapter of my

dissertation and, more specifically, in the book chapter “Ética de lo obscuro: la gentrificación del sida en las artes escénicas”, published in a volume that addressed the presence of HIV and AIDS in the Hispanic and Latinx cultures.

Another example: after crossing my readings on transgender theory and my conversations with transgender activists and theorists from both sides of the Atlantic with my research on Catalan plays with trans narratives, I realized that most of those creative works presented structures and characters that were incapable of escaping a binary paradigm; one that, in many cases, has carried damaging consequences for the trans community. In the second chapter of this work, I thought it was important to address this problematic issue, and point out the rare occasions that theatrical fiction and structure succeeded in overcoming those binary constructs.

Working with contemporary authors and plays entails the responsibility to make our research useful in an immediate manner. A work motivated by ethics must not only pose a problem, but also to act upon it, to try to help solving it, even if in a modest way. Hence, while I was carrying my research, I shared my concerns in talks and public debates that took place in different spaces in Barcelona, such as Teatre Lliure or the Barcelona LGBT Center; I published articles in theatre journals as well as in more generalist media in both Catalan and Spanish. I also engaged in open conversations with playwrights and creators, some of which were also published. All this in order to foster a more committed and consequent queer gaze over current topics.

By the time I'm completing this work, newer plays that address transgender subjects, such as *Transbord*, by Sebastià Portell (2018) or *Raphaëlle*, by the company La Conquesta del Pol Sud (2019), have made emphasis in a non-binary, more fluid stage rendering of trans narratives: I am grateful for our ongoing conversations with Portell and Eugenio Szwarczer, from La Conquesta. Also, Guillem Clua decided to incorporate a crucial AIDS narrative (and

one set in Catalonia) in his last play, *Justícia*, a major work that opened at the Sala Gran of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in February 2020. I address this play, and the debates around HIV and AIDS, in my prologue for Guillem Clua's compilation of his works *Teatre reunit*, published by Arola Editors, under the auspice of Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, in 2020.

I'm happy to see how other voices and other narratives have permeated in the Catalan stages. And yet, there's still a long way to go. I wonder, for instance, what possible rationale could justify the scarcity of lesbian narratives in contemporary Catalan (and Spanish) drama. And –most especially– why, in a tradition that includes remarkable women voices such as Helena Tornero, Marilia Samper, Cristina Clemente, Clàudia Cedó, or Marta Buchaca, the only notorious recent works that address love and desire between women have been written by men: Marc Rosich's play *Rive Gauche* (Sala Muntaner, 2011, commissioned by the company Q-Arts Teatre), which fictionalizes the relationship between Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach; Narcís Comadira's *L'hort de les oliveres* (Sala Gran, Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, 2016), a decadent portrait of a bourgeois Catalan family whose matriarch, Felicitat Pons, eventually declares having had a lifetime lesbian love affair; Marc Angelet's *Life Spoiler* (Sala FlyHard, 2017), a science-fiction thriller –featuring two women– about a social media app that allows users to see where what will happen with their lives seven years from their present day; and Josep Maria Miró's *Temps salvatge* (Sala Gran, Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, 2018), which features a homonormative lesbian couple in a suburban community threatened by a foreign presence. The absence of a major queer lesbian narrative needs to be addressed as a true anomaly in a cultural scenic tradition as prominent as the one that has flourished in Catalonia.

Racial representations are even more absent on the Catalan stages, in spite of Aznar Soler's impression that “the background conflict that the presence of immigrants from the

Maghrib and of other language, races and cultures pose to the Catalan society on the 21st century ... has been formulated, each time with more rigor and in a deeper way, in the Catalan written theatre” (quoted in Buffery “Les altres”, 264, my translation). According to Helena Buffery, “Catalan theatre has both attempted to present a mirror to the changing makeup of contemporary Catalan society and begun to expose and critique the limits of Catalan identity” (264), and it has done so by embracing the voices of immigrants and descendants of immigrants, as well as accepting and developing the image of Barcelona as an international enclave. Buffery analyzes Manuel Molins’s *Abú Magrib*, Ramon Gomis’s *El mercat de les delícies*, and Carles Batlle’s *Temptació*, as plays that depict the experience of immigration from North Africa to Spain; and Lluïsa Cunillé’s *Barcelona, mapa d’ombres*, Sergi Belbel’s *Forasters*, and Rodolf Sirera *Raccord*, as how otherness penetrates, troubles and modifies Catalan identity with the problematizing of language uses and the introduction of multiculturalism and multiethnicity. Even if most of these plays indeed introduce new voices that potentially deconstruct and reformulate normativity in Catalan culture and society, and even if many of these texts have had a significant importance in Catalan dramaturgy, all these plays have been written by white (and, except for Cunillé, male) playwrights. Racial diversity remains largely absent in contemporary Catalan drama³.

³ In May and June 2013, the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya staged *Llibertat!* (1900), a not so well-known play by Santiago Rusiñol. *Llibertat!* tells the story of Jaumet Negre, a boy of color who is given as a present to a Catalan small town by one of the neighbors, an *indiano* (a man who migrated to the colonial America in search of fortune and came back wealthy to Catalonia) that came back to town for a visit. Jaumet is considered harmless as he grows up and is given the same education as any other kid. However, the moment he proposes to Florentina, the young woman with whose family he grew up, he becomes an ungrateful danger, for he wants to incorporate his black blood within the lineage of the traditional Catalan family –and therefore symbolically contaminate the Catalan purity. The adaptation of the play that was staged in the TNC, with dramaturgy and direction by Josep Maria Mestres, transported the third and last act to a contemporary Catalonia (for instance, the journalists worked with iPads), in an attempt to show that some of the issues laid out by Rusiñol still prevailed –part of the Catalan society, in spite of believing that it is open and does not have prejudices, still resists the ultimate proof of permeability: the mixing of fluids.

Even if *Llibertat!* has deserved some critical attention by Alfredo Sosa-Velasco or Jeffrey K Coleman, the queering presence of Martinet, Jaume’s friend and comrade, has been so far overlooked. In the final moments of the play, Jaume is unsurprisingly forced to leave –“A buscar una pàtria nova. Vaig allà on em vulguin bé o em matin d’una vegada.”, he says. Martinet, disappointing with the hypocrisy of his hometown, decides to leave with him.

The debate on racial representations was the protagonist of a meaningful episode in recent times, when pertinent questions sparked around the polemic decision to cast a white actor to perform the role of Belice in the last Catalan production of Kushner's *Angels in America*. The show, directed by David Selvas and premiered in Teatre Lliure's main stage, Sala Fabià Puigserver, in 2018, received as much praise as criticism for the insensitive, tone-deaf casting decision. As I claimed in an article published in the cultural internet site *Núvol*, "To whitewash the only black character in a play that has been criticized for invisibilizing the suffering of the African-American community during the AIDS epidemic is, I believe, a colossal, unjustifiable mistake" ("Tenim un problema"). The polemic about the whitewashing of Belice, however, fostered an extremely productive debate about the absence of racialized narratives in Catalan drama, and motivated the foundation of Tinta Negra, the first association of racialized theatre professionals in Catalonia⁴. Also, several plays have been written feeding from the energy of the polemic, such as Silvia Albert Sopale's *Blackface* (Sala Fénix, 2019) and Denise Duncan's *Negrata de merda* (Teatre Tantarantana, 2019), *El combat del segle* (Sala Beckett, 2020) and *Banzo, el susurro de las ancestras* (upcoming project).⁵

How does a tradition fill these gaps? How can these anomalies be corrected? The answer to these inquiries is complex and needs to be addressed from different perspectives.

MARTINET: Perquè no sabeu tenir-ne. I si en tinguéssiu no les sabríeu fer anar. Seríeu una altra màquina que duríeu a les espatlles. Fuig, home primitiu, fugim d'aquesta terra corcada i busquem la terra ideal on tots poguem redimir-nos.

EL NEGRE: Tens raó. (*Tristament.*) Adéu, poble! T'estimava com un fill, i tu m'has fet de madrastra. (*En Martinet li agafa la mà i comencen a sortir.*)

This departure, hand in hand, opens up a crevice for a contemporary queer reading: Martinet and Jaume need to get out to a different spatiality to find a positive resolution to their own happiness. The queer possibilities of this (queer?) utopian projection would deserve a further insight.

⁴ There is a similar organization in Madrid, The Black View, founded and directed by Armando Buika.

⁵ Moreover, the story of *Angels* at Teatre Lliure has a coda that dignifies the polemic. In the Premis Butaca 2019, the most prestigious Catalan theatre awards, *Àngels a Amèrica* won in the category of best production of the year. When David Selvas, the director, came out to get the award, he publicly assumed the responsibility of casting a white man for a black role, recognized his mistake, and formally renounced to the award. Earlier in the gala, that took place in June 2019 at Mercat de les Flors, the collective Tinta Negra had read a manifesto debunking the invisibilization of black subjects and narratives in the theatre premiered in Catalonia.

Conversations still need to be provoked, questions still need to be raised, revisions still need to be made. These debates need to engage different agents within the cultural sector: playwrights, of course, but also producers, critics, activists, and scholars. The results, also, need to be attractive to audiences.

In this regard, my dissertation could also be contemplated as a utopian approach to the subject. When addressing how some try to measure political theatre by its influence in the “real world”, Jill Dolan claims that “the experience of performance, the pleasure of utopian performative, even if it doesn’t change the world, certainly changes the people who feel it” (19). As a theatre scholar, a theatre professional and a theatre-goer, I certainly believe in the transformational potential of the scenic arts –of Theatre with capital T, which Badiou describes in opposition to ‘theatre’. Throughout this work, I set out to spark a dialogue between what is displayed onstage (or, at least, what we might glimpse in these texts bound to be staged) and the effects and affects that those theatrical moments might potentially reveal. Performative queerness might be perceived in those crevices that I have tried to signal, but it seems to always project itself into a potential futurity. “[W]e must always be future bound in our desires and designs”, writes José Esteban Muñoz in his conclusions to *Cruising Utopia*, the last book he published before he prematurely passed away, at 46. “[Q]ueerness is not yet here but it approaches like a crashing wave of potentiality”, he adds (185). What happens *beyond* the theatrical event is more than important: it is paramount in order to fully embrace queerness. *Smiley* ends up suggesting that the final scene is just the beginning of something, and Clua decides not to leave his spectators contemplating a blunt horizon fraught with happily-ever-after narratives. The leap of faith, here, consists in acknowledging that there are no certainties, no promises. The same occurs in the final moment of *Limbo* by Les Impuixibles, when Albert finally comes to terms with his transgender, non-binary persona, and is finally ready to meet someone; the sun that caresses his face in the very end of the play

is the warm promise of a future that is, if not happy, at least *interesting* –recalling, once again, Snedliker’s and Berlant’s reconceptualization of optimism.

As spectators, we don’t get to see *what happens next*: we enter the realm of the not-yet-here. We can, however, dream, speculate, discuss. Leaving the theatre venue does not only conjure this feeling of precariousness that Badiou describes; I’d rather think about this witnessing of the event, as Dolan writes, in terms of hope. Queer crevices allow us to glimpse into the horizon of a better society, but we might be able to see more clearly if we explore the possibilities that this dialogue entice. Hence, my work aspires to provide other perspectives through which we can explore the transformative potential of queerness. Just as “theatre” is not only a textual play, but also its staging, set design, lighting, props, or its performance, I argue that the scenic arts are also shaped by the way each spectator reads them, the reviews they get, the discussions they can provoke in different levels, from street conversations to academic forums.

It’s not a paradox. In the era of egalitarian marriage and LGBT adoption, homophobia (in its different ramifications) is clearly on the rise. According to the platform Observatori contra l’Homofòbia, the aggressions motivated by hatred against the LGBT community have doubled in 2019, transgender individuals being the most vulnerable members of the collective⁶. The time to relax and enjoy equality is not here –and it does not seem that the fight for justice and human rights will ever be over. In his *Ética marica* (2007), Paco Vidarte reminds us that the fight is ongoing. In *Nos acechan todavía* (2019), Ramón Martínez’s most recent book (albeit too derivative of Vidarte’s, often simplistic in its identity politics, and utterly unspecific in its activist proposals), he claims that “Egalitarian Marriage has been one of the best things that could have happened to lesbian, gays, and bisexuals in our country, but it is also one of the worst things that could have happened to our social movement: the

⁶ According to the official website of Observatori contra l’Homofòbia (“Recursos”) and an interview of its president, Eugeni Rodríguez, in the radio station RAC1 (“L’Observatori”).

ancestral curse of the answered prayers” (31). Martínez warns the readers that “[f]acing the totalitarian homophobic, transphobic and biphobic [sic] thinking, it was necessary to generate a theoretical discourse that would help analyze and denounce discrimination, and, then, attempt to make it hegemonic, try to make our way of thinking the majoritarian thinking option” (35). It is, I believe, critical to negotiate a more fluid and productive dialogue between queer activists, queer cultural innovators, and queer theory – three agents that have traditionally been reticent with each other. I celebrate those rare moments in which the boundaries between academia, creativity and activism fade. Most of those moments take place on a stage: Lauren Berlant’s public readings of *The Hundreds*, her collection of experimental poems co-written with Kathleen Stewart; or José Esteban Muñoz’s and Jack Halberstam’s active participation in performances by the artists they study. Such events inspired my own musical-textual performance with Clara Peya, based on Pedro Lemebel’s poem-manifesto “Hablo por mi diferencia” (in the first SeyPey Night for equality and justice, in Barcelona, January 2019).

Lemebel’s radical provocation also ends up with utopian promise:

A usted le doy este mensaje

Y no es por mí

Yo estoy viejo

Y su utopía es para las generaciones futuras

Hay tantos niños que van a nacer

Con una alita rota

Y yo quiero que vuelen compañero

Que su revolución

Les dé un pedazo de cielo rojo

Para que puedan volar⁷. (*Loco afán* 97)

This utopia, as Lemebel states, will (perpetually) unfold for the future generations, but we can't help envisioning it from a present. And we are surrounded by the ghosts of the past – the lost generation shattered by AIDS that Matthew Lopez showcased in *The Inheritance*, and to which Aimar Pérez Galí addresses his utopian letters in *The Touching Community*.

Blissfully, I have been surrounded by those ghosts from the moment I started my research to the present day, as I write the final words of this work. Pedro Lemebel, of course, as well as José Esteban Muñoz. But especially, David Vilaseca, a promising scholar and writer whose life violently ended in February 9, 2010. Vilaseca and I started an intense email exchange in 2009, after he published his memoir *L'aprenentatge de la soledat* (which was posthumously republished in 2017, with a second part of his personal diaries, in *Els homes i els dies*, to great acclaim). Our exchange, which mostly covered topics such as queer theory, queer activism, academia and creativity, was abruptly interrupted less than a year later, when a truck ran him over as he was riding his bike in the streets of London. His ideas, however, still linger: my imaginary dialogue with him has continued until this moment.

I would like to think of this research as a belated answer to some of my exchanges with Vilaseca. He knew there was something critical, important, about looking at things from a multiplicity of queer perspectives. Indeed, I have been blessed, paraphrasing *Angels in*

⁷ I'm giving this message to you
And it's not because of me
I am old
And your utopia is for future generations
There are so many children that will be born
With a broken wing
And I want them to fly, compañero
And that your revolution
Gives them a red piece of the heavens
So that they might fly.
(Translation by Sergio Holas-Véliz and Israel Holas Allimant)

America, with “more life”, but these words are, ultimately, not only mine. We are responsible of carrying with the weight of our predecessors, and keep them alive in our imaginary conversations. Because, if we make the effort to explore the utopias that expand beyond our time and space, we will discover they are looking back at us from the horizon.

Chicago–Barcelona, January 2020.

APPENDIX



Figure 1: A storm is coming. A scene in Act One of Guillem Clua's *Marburg*. © David Ruano.



Figure 2: *The Touching Community*, by Aimar Pérez-Galí, at San Sebastián's La Tabakalera. © Jordi Surribas.



Figure 3: La fragilitat dels verbs transitius. © Josep Aznar.

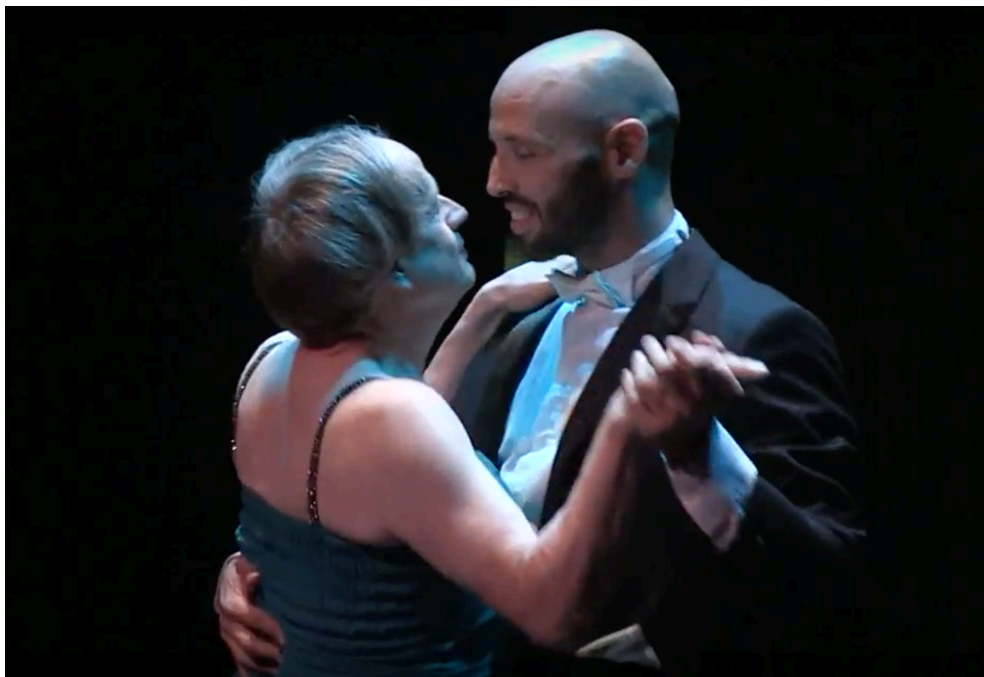
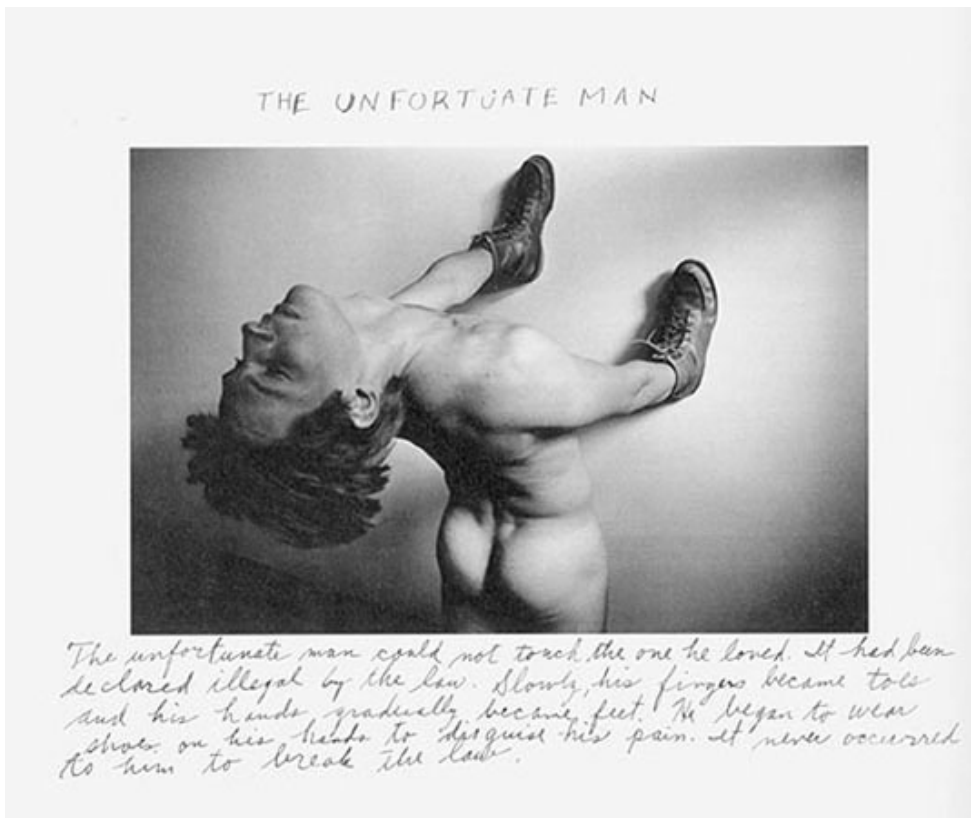
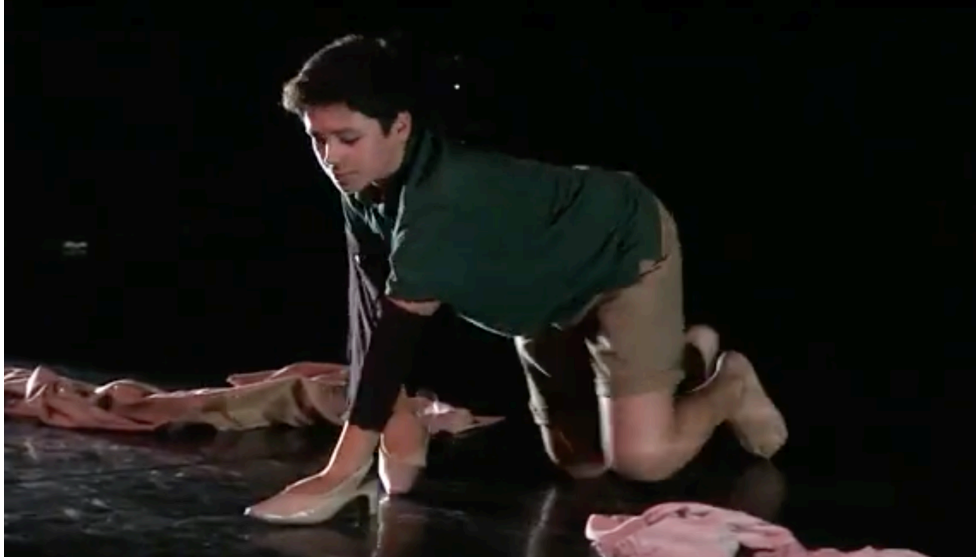


Figure 4: Dancing impasse in *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius*. Screenshot from the recording of the show.



Figures 5 & 6: The unfortunate boy in *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius* (screenshot) and “The Unfortunate Man” by Duane Michals.



Figures 7 & 8: Bandages: *La pell escrita* (© Genia Badano) and promotional photo of *Limbo* (© Kiku Piñol).



Figure 9: Roberto G. Alonso as the Mature Woman. *A mi no me escribió Tennessee Williams*. © Guillem Pacheco.



Figure 10: A scene of Josep Maria Miró's *Gang Bang*. © David Ruano.



Figure 11: A moment of intimacy with the audience in Guillem Clua's *Smiley*. © Roser Blanch.

WORKS CONSULTED

- “20 minuts amb Roberto G. Alonso.” *Tria* 33, March 28, 2017.
<http://www.ccma.cat/tv3/alacarta/programa/20-minuts-amb-roberto-g-alonso/video/5659134/>
- @ramonmartz. “¡Venga, ideas, ideas! Si tuiérais que señalar cuáles son los grandes problemas que tiene el movimiento LGTB actualmente, ¿cuáles diríais?” *Twitter*, 8 Aug 2018, 12.59 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ramonmartz/status/1026966130953515009>
- AAVV. *L'estat de la LGBTI-fòbia a Catalunya*. Observatori contra l'homofòbia, 2016.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B55Mn9w1EgUTd2lldHh5UnJCckk/view>.
- Abirached, Robdert. *La crisis del personaje en el teatro moderno*. Publicaciones de la Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, 1994 [1978].
- Acebrón, Julián, and Rafael M. Mérida, editors. *Diàlegs gais, lesbians, queer / Diálogos gays, lesbianos, queer*. Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 2007.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities: Collected Essays on Philosophy*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford UP, 1999.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, 2004.
- . *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke UP, 2006.
- . *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke UP, 2010.
- . *Willing Subjects*. Duke UP, 2014.
- Alesmael, Khaled. *Selamlık*. Leopard Förlag, 2018.
- Aliaga, Juan Vicente, and José Miguel G. Cortés. *De amor y rabia. Acerca del arte y el sida*. Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, 1993.
- . *Identidad y diferencia. Sobre la cultura gay en España*. Egales, 1997.
- . *Desobediencias. Cuerpos disidentes y espacios subvertidos en el arte en América Latina y España: 1960-2010*. Egales, 2014.
- Alonso, Robergo T. “Presentació.” Program of *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius*. Grec Festival de Barcelona, 2016.
- Alvarez, Lizette; Richard Pérez-Peña. “Orlando Gunman Attacks Nightclub, Leaving 50 Dead.” *The New York Times*, 12 June 2016.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/13/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting.html>

- Amo Valero, Julia del, et al. *VIH: la investigación contra la gran epidemia del siglo XX*. Instituto de Salud Carlos III - Libros de la Catarata, 2017.
- Aparicio Maydeu, Javier. *El desguace de la tradición: en el taller de la narrativa del siglo XX*. Cátedra, 2011.
- . *Continuidad y ruptura. Una gramática de la tradición en la cultura contemporánea*. Alianza Editorial, 2013.
- Araneta, Aitzole, and Sandra Fernández Garrido. "Transfeminist Genealogies in Spain". Translated by Michael Brasher. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 3, no. 1-2 (May 2016), pp. 35-39.
- Armengol, Joaquim. "Marburg o la fi del món." *El Punt*, 29 May 2010, p. 31.
- Arriola, Aimar, et al. *Anarchivo Sida*. www.anarchivosida.org.
- ., editor. *Anarchivo Sida*. Tabakalera, 2017.
- "ARTAIDS America." *AlphaWood Gallery*. <http://www.alphawoodgallery.org/exhibition/art-aids-america/>
- Auden, W. H. *Collected Poems*. Edited by Edward Mendelson. Faber and Faber, 1976.
- Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham. Continuum, 2005.
- . *Rhapsody for the Theatre*. Translated by Bruno Bosteels, with the assistance of Martin Puchner. Verso, 2013.
- Babel*. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006.
- Balló, Jordi, and Xavier Pérez. *El mundo, un escenario. Shakespeare, el guionista invisible*. Anagrama, 2015.
- Barthes, Roland. *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*. Éditions du Seuil, 1977.
- Batlle, Carles. "De l'opacitat i la transparència a *Desig*." (*Pausa*.), 9-10 (September - December 1991), pp. 41-47.
- . "Abans de la pluja." Sergi Belbel, *Després de la pluja*. Lumen / Teatre català contemporani. Els textos del Centre Dramàtic, 1993, pp. 9-20.
- . "Apunts per a una valoració de la dramaturgia catalana actual: realisme i perplexitat." (*Pausa*.), 17-18 (October - December 1994), pp. 25-47.
- . "La realitat i el joc." (*Pausa*.), 20 (January 2005), pp. 67-74.
- ., and Francesc Foguet, editors. *L'escena del futur. Memòria de les arts escèniques als països catalans (1975-2005)*. Argumenta, 2006.

- Baker, Rob. *The Art of Aids. From Stigma to Conscience*. The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994.
- Barranco, Justo. "Tàrrega hace teatro bajo un puente. *A mí no me escribió Tennessee Williams* triunfa en la Fira de Teatre al Carrer." *La Vanguardia*, 11 Sept 2016, p. 62.
- Barrena, Begoña. "Global y disperso." *El País*, 1 June 2010, p. 49.
- Bauml Duberman, Martin, et al. *Hidden from History. Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. New New American Library, 1989.
- Be, Carlos. "M de Mujer." *La fragilitat dels verbs transitius*, Working manuscript, 2016.
- Beam, Joseph; Essex Hemphill. *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*. Redbone Press, 2007 [1991].
- Belbel, Sergi. *Després de la pluja*. Lumen / Teatre Català Contemporani. Els textos del Centre Dramàtic, 1993.
- Benach, Joan-Anton. "Viajes a Marburg." *La Vanguardia*, 21 May 2010, p. 41.
- Benedict-Jones, Linda, editor. *Storyteller. The Photographs of Duane Michals*. Carnegie Museum of Art / DelMonico Books - Prestel, 2014.
- Benet i Jornet, Josep Maria. "Del desert a la terra promesa: 40 anys de literatura dramàtica a Barcelona." *Catalan Review*, Vol. 18 (1), 2004, pp. 231-36.
- Bergmann, Emilie L., and Paul Julian Smith, editors. *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*. Duke UP, 1995.
- Bernini, Lorenzo. "The Ordeal for Humanity: LGBTI Asylum Seekers in Europe Facing the Limits of Human Rights." *AboutGender. International Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 7, 2015, pp. 177-89.
- Berlant, Lauren. *The Queen or America Goes to Washington City. Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Duke UP, 1997.
- . *Cruel Optimism*. Duke UP, 2011.
- . *Desire / Love*. Punctum Books, 2012.
- ., and Lee Edelman. *Sex, Or The Unbearable*. Duke UP, 2014.
- ., and Elizabeth Freeman. "Queer Nationality." Michael Warner, editor. *Fear of a Queer Planet. Queer Politics and Social Theory*. The U of Minnesota P, 1993, pp. 193-229.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Harvard UP, 1995.
- . *Is The Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*. U of Chicago P, 2010.

- Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *October*, 28 (Spring 1984), pp. 125-133.
- Blackmore, Josiah, and Gregory S. Hutcheson, editors. *Queer Iberia. Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*. Duke UP, 1999.
- Blanco, José Joaquín. "Ojos que da pánico soñar." *Función de medianoche. Ensayos de literatura cotidiana*. Ediciones Era, 1981, pp. 180-189.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon. The Books and School of the Ages*. Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- Bobes, María del Carmen. *Teoría del teatro*. Arco Libros, 1997.
- Bollen, Jonathan. "Queer Kinesthesia: Performativity on the Dance Floor." Jane C. Desmond, editor. *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage*. U of Wisconsin P, 2001, pp. 285-314.
- Bonany, Manel. *La pell escrita*. Working manuscript, 2016.
- Bono, Ferran. "La literatura gay es universal." *El País*, 29 Jan 2017.
https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/01/29/actualidad/1485713591_228099.html
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. U of Chicago P, 1983 [1961].
- Bou, Enric. "'Decrèpita i teatral?' On Literary Explorations of Barcelona." *Catalan Review*, Vol. 18 (1), 2004. 149-60. Print.
- Boyd, Nan Alamilla, and Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, editors. *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*. Oxford UP, 2012.
- Bratley, Ben. "So Many Men, So Much Time." *The New York Times*. 20 Nov 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/17/theater/the-inheritance-review-broadway-matthew-lopez.html>
- Brecht, Bertolt. "Epic Theatre and Its Difficulties." Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn, editors. *Brecht on Theatre*. Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 38-39.
- Bronski, Michael. "Death and the Erotic Imagination." *Radical America* 21 (March-April 1987), p. 60.
- Brook, Peter. *El espacio vacío. Arte y técnica del teatro*. Península, 1986 [1968].
- . *Más allá del espacio vacío. Escritos sobre teatro, cine y ópera 1947-1987*. Alba Editorial, 2001 [1987].
- Buffery, Helena. "Les altres catalanes: Language, Gender and Otherness on the Contemporary Catalan Stage." *Catalan Review*, 23 (2007), pp. 263-80.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

- . *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge, 1993.
- . *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford UP, 1997.
- . *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2004.
- . *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010.
- Butler Burke, Nora. "Connecting the Dots. National Security, the Crime-Migration Nexus, and Trans Women's Survival." Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, and Sarah Tobias, editors. *Trans Studies. The Challenge to Hetero/Homo Normativities*. Rutgers UP, 2016, pp. 113-21.
- Cachorro (Bear Cub)*. Directed by Miguel Albadalejo. 2004.
- Califia, Pat. *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism*. Seal Press, 2003.
- Cardín, Alberto. *Detrás por delante*. Laertes, 1986.
- , and Armand de Fluvià, editors. *Sida. ¿Maldición bíblica o enfermedad letal?*. Laertes, 1985.
- Carlson, Marvin. "The Theatre Journal Auto/Archive." *Theatre Journal* 55, no 1 (2003), pp. 207-11.
- Casanovas, Jordi. *Una història catalana*. Arola Editors, 2011.
- Casares, Toni. "A Barcelona. Una temporada de teatre local a la Sala Beckett." *En cartell*, 8 (Sèrie "A Barcelona"). Edicions de la Sala Beckett, 2004.
- . "L'acció té lloc a Barcelona?" (*Pausa.*), 20 (January 2005), pp. 34-37.
- , editor. *Sala Beckett, 20 anys*. Arola Editors, 2009.
- Casas, Joan. "Dramaturgia contemporànea en Catalunya..." (*Pausa.*), 9-10 (September-December 1991), pp. 87-91.
- Caserio, Robert L, et al. "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory." *PMLA*, Vol. 121, No. 3 (May 2006), pp. 819-828.
- Castellanos, Jordi. *Literatura, vida, ciutat*. Edicions 62, 1997.
- . "Barcelona en literatura. Imatges en conflicte." *Catalan Review*, Vol. 18 (1), 2004, pp. 131-48.
- . "El clos matern dels clàssics (fragments)." (*Pausa.*), 21 (June 2005), pp. 17-22.
- Castells, Joan. "La tradició i el model interpretatiu català." (*Pausa.*), 21 (Juny 2005), pp. 69-74.

- Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume I*. Blackwell, 1996.
- . *The Power of Identity. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume II*. Blackwell, 1997.
- Castiglia, Christopher, and Christopher Reed. *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*. U of Minnesota P, 2012.
- Cavallé, Joan. “Una mirada al nou teatre català: Deu, o trenta!” (*Pausa.*), 27, Juliol de 2007, pp. 15-18.
- Chacha Enríquez, Mickael. “The T in LGBTQ. How Do Trans Activists Perceive Alliances within LGBT and Queer Movements in Québec (Canada)?”. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, and Sarah Tobias, editors. *Trans Studies. The Challenge to Hetero/Homo Normativities*. Rutgers UP, 2016, pp. 141-153.
- Chaudhuri, Una. *Staging Place. The Geography of Modern Drama*. The U of Michigan P, 1995.
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York. Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1994.
- Chávez-Silvermann, Susana, and Libranda Hernández, editors. *Reading and Writing the Ambiente. Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American and Spanish Culture*. The U of Wisconsin P, 2000.
- Clara Peya, “Oceanes”. *Oceanes*, 2017.
- Clua, Guillem. *Marburg*. Proa, 2010.
- . *Smiley. Una història d'amor*. Edicions Sala Flyhard, 2015.
- . “Malaltia, frivolitat, responsabilitat i transmissió: un diàleg (queer) amb Guillem Clua.” Interview by Isaias Fanlo. (*Pausa.*), nº 40 (2018).
<http://www.revistapausa.cat/malaltia-frivolitat-responsabilitat-i-transgressio-un-dialeg-queer-amb-guillem-clua/>.
- . *La golondrina / The Swallow*. Antígona, 2018.
- . *Teatre Reunit (2002-2019)*. Arola Editors, 2020.
- . “La golondrina. Presentación.” *Página personal de Guillem Clua*.
<https://guillemclua.com/la-golondrina/>.
- Coll-Planas, Gerard, and Miquel Missé, editors. *El género desordenado. Críticas en torno a la patologización de la transexualidad*. Egales, 2010.
- . *La carne y la metáfora. Una reflexión sobre el cuerpo en la teoría queer*. Egales, 2012.

- Comadira, Narcís. *L'hora dels adéus*. Lumen / Teatre Català Contemporani. Els textos del Centre Dramàtic, 1995.
- . *L'Hort de les Oliveres (Una òpera de Catalunya)*. Arola Editors, 2015.
- Comas, Eva. "La Barcelona de ficció (report)." (*Pausa.*), 20 (Gener 2005), pp. 41-54.
- Comparone, Loredana. "Urban Landscape, Global, Capital, and Human Scale in Sergi Belbel's *Després de la pluja*." *Catalan Review* XXX (2016), pp. 345-67.
- Conde-Salazar, Jaime. "El fulgor. Notas para una dramaturgia" Aimar Pérez Galí. *Lo tocante*. Album, 2018, pp. 7-15.
- Córdoba García, David. "Teoría Queer: reflexiones sobre sexo, sexualidad e identidad. Hacia una politización de la sexualidad". David Córdoba, Javier Sáez, and Paco Vidarte, editors. *Teoría queer. Políticas bolleras, maricas, trans, mestizas*. Egales, 2005, pp. 21-66.
- Cosenza, Julie. "The Crisis of Collage: Disability, Queerness, and Chrononormativity." *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 14 (2), 2014, pp. 155-163.
- Cotter, Holland. "Art of the AIDS Years. What Took Museums So Long?". *The New York Times*, 28 July 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/29/arts/design/art-of-the-aids-years-addressing-history-absorbing-fear.html>.
- C.R.A.Z.Y.*, directed by Jean-Marc Vallée. 2004.
- Cremades, Luis, and Vicente Molina Foix. *El invitado amargo*. Anagrama, 2014.
- Crimp, Douglas. "AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism". *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, Edited by Douglas Crimp. The MIT Press, 1989, pp. 3-16.
- Cryle, Peter, and Elizabeth Stephens. *Normal: A Critical Genealogy*. U of Chicago P, 2017.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 1997.
- Cunillé, Lluïsa. *Barcelona, mapa d'ombres*. En cartell, 8 (sèrie "A Barcelona"). L'Obrador de la Sala Beckett, 2004.
- . *Deu Peces*. Edicions 62, 2008.
- De Fluvià, Armand. *El moviment gai a la clandestinitat del franquisme (1970-1975)*. Laertes, 2003.
- De Laurentis, Teresa. "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities." *Differencces: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3:2 (1991), pp. iii-xviii.

- D'Emilio, John. "Capitalism and Gay Identity." *Powers of Desire. The Politics of Sexuality*. Ann Sintow, Christine Stanswell and Sharon Thompson, editors. Monthly Review Press, 1983, pp. 100-113.
- Dean, Tim. *Beyond Sexuality*. U of Chicago P, 2000.
- . "The Antisocial Homosexual." *PMLA*, vol. 121 (3), 2006, pp. 826-28.
- . *Unlimited Intimacy. Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*. U of Chicago P, 2009.
- Delany, Samuel R. *Times Square Red / Times Square Blue*. New York UP, 1999.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Penguin Books, 2009 [1977].
- Derrida, Jacques. *Mal d'archive*. Galilée, 2008 [1995].
- Devor, Aaron H. and Nicholas Mate. "One Inc. and Reed Erickson: The Uneasy Collaboration of Gay and Trans Activism, 1964-2003". Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, editors. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2006, pp. 387-406.
- Discordants*, press dossier. 2014.
- Dolan, Jill. "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative.'" *Theatre Journal* 53 (2001), pp. 455-79.
- . *Utopia in Performance. Finding Hope at the Theater*. U of Michigan P, 2005.
- . *Theatre & Sexuality*. Red Globe Press, 2010.
- Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer. Interpreting Mass Culture*. U of Minnesota P, 1993.
- Duberman, Martin. Editor *Queer Representations Reading Lives, Reading Cultures*. New York UP, 1997.
- Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Beacon Press, 2003.
- Dúo Dinámico, El. "Resistiré." *En forma*, 1998.
- Duprey, Jennifer. "Memory and Urban Landscapes in Contemporary Catalan Theater." Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini, editors. *New Spain; New Literatures*. Vanderbilt UP, 2010, pp. 61-79.
- . *The Aesthetics of the Ephemeral. Memory Theatres in Contemporary Barcelona*. SUNY UP, 2014.
- Duval, Elizabeth. *Excepción*. Letra Versal, 2020.

- Eagles, The. "Hotel California." *Hotel California*, 1976.
- Eco, Umberto. *Lector in fabula. La cooperación interpretativa en el texto narrativo*. Lumen, 1999 [1979].
- Edelman, Lee. "The Plague of Discourse: Politics, Literary Theory, and AIDS." Ron Butters et al., editors. *Displacing Homophobia*. UP, 1989, pp. 289-305.
- . *No future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke UP, 2004.
- Eisenberg, Daniel. "Lorca and Censorship. The Gay Artist Made Heterosexual". *Angélica*. 2. 1991, pp. 121-45.
- Ellenzweig, Allen. "Wounded by Beauty". Linda Benedict-Jones, editor. *Storyteller. The Photographs of Duane Michals*. Carnegie Museum of Art / DelMonico Books – Prestel, 2014, pp. 60-81.
- Elledge, Jim; David Groff. "Introduction: All Our Daddies – and Then Some". *Who's Yer Daddy?: Gay Writers Celebrate Their Mentors and Forerunners*, Jime Elledge and David Groff, editors. U of Wisconsin P, 2012, pp. 3-8.
- Ellis, Robert Richmond. *The Hispanic Homograph. Gay Self-Representation in Contemporary Spanish Autobiography*. U of Illinois P, 1998.
- Eng, David, et al. "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?". *Social Text*. Volume 23 (N. 3-4 84-85, Fall-Winter 2005), pp. 1-15.
- Eng, David, and Han Shinhee. "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia". *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 10:4 (2000), pp. 667-700.
- Enke, Anne. *Transfeminist Perspectives in and beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*. Temple UP, 2012.
- Epps, Brad. "Virtual Sexuality: Lesbianism, Loss, and Deliverance in Carme Riera's 'Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora.'" Emilie L. Bergman and Paul Julian Smith, editors. *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*. Duke UP, 1995, pp. 317-44.
- . "Introduction. Barcelona and Modernity." *Catalan Review*, Vol. 18 (1), 2004, pp. 13-28.
- . "Ética de la promiscuidad. Reflexiones en torno a Néstor Perlhonger." *Iberoamericana*, 5(16), 2005, pp. 145-62.
- . "Retos, riesgos, pautas y promesas de la teoría queer." *Revista Iberoamericana*, 74:225 (Octubre – Diciembre 2008). pp. 897-920.
- . "The Entanglement of Meaning: Illness, Literary History, and Morality in Four Catalan Novels." *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, Vol. 18 (2-3), 2012, pp. 101-27.

- Eribon, Didier. *Reflexiones sobre la cuestión gay*. Anagrama, 2001 [1999].
- . *Une morale du minoritaire. Variations sur un thème de Jean Genet*. Fayard, 2001.
- . *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*. Duke UP, 2004 [1999].
- . *Por ese instante frágil... Reflexiones sobre el matrimonio homosexual*. Bellaterra, 2005 [2004].
- . *Escapar del psicoanálisis*. Bellaterra, 2008 [2005].
- . *Returning to Reims*. Semiotext(e), 2013 [2009].
- Espaliú, Pepe. *Carrying*. 1992, San Sebastián and Madrid.
- . “Retrato del artista deshauciado.” Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés, editors. *De amor y rabia. Acerca del arte y el sida*. Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, 1993, pp. 267-68.
- “Especial La Gauche Divine.” *Televisió Espanyola a Catalunya*. 12 Oct 2006.
<http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/especials-en-catala/especial-tve-catalunya-gauche-divine/3244717/>.
- “Fallece el actor Josep Madern, heredero de Jaime Gil de Biedma.” *El País*, 6 Jan 1994.
https://elpais.com/diario/1994/01/06/cultura/757810802_850215.html.
- “Fantasy.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fantasy>.
- Fanlo, Isaias. *El llibre rosa de gais i lesbianes*. Columna, 2004.
- . “Tenim un problema amb *Àngels a Amèrica*.” *Núvol, el digital de cultura* (29 Oct 2018):
<https://www.nuvol.com/teatre-i-dansa/tenim-un-problema-amb-angels-a-america-56540>.
- . “A favor de la paraula (i el pensament) ‘queer’.” *Núvol, el digital de cultura* (27 Dec 2018): <https://www.nuvol.com/llobres/a-favor-de-la-paraula-i-el-pensament-queer-57812>.
- . “Lo queer como respuesta”. *Revista Contexto*, num. 204 (January 2019):
<https://ctxt.es/es/20190116/Firmas/23897/Isaias-Fanlo-tribuna-queer-LGTB-gays-lesbianas-Maroto.htm>.
- . “Ética de lo obscuro: la gentrificación del sida en las artes escénicas.” Rafael M. Mérida Jiménez (editor). *De vidas y virus. VIH/sida en las culturas hispánicas*. Icaria, 2019, pp. 209-26.
- . “Notes sobre el teatre de Guillem Clua.” Guillem Clua, *Teatre reunit (2002-2019)*. Arola Editors, 2020, pp. 9-14.

- . "Supervivència i utopia en el teatre queer i trans." Marc Rosich, *Teatre trans (i altres textos no normatius)*. Barcelona: Comanegra, 2020, pp. 9-30.
- , and Jeffrey Coleman. "Els invisibles i els silenciats: Algunes reflexions epistolars sobre questions racials i queer en el teatre català". (*Pausa.*), n° 40 (2018). <http://www.revistapausa.cat/els-invisibles-i-els-silenciats-algunes-reflexions-epistolars-sobre-questions-racials-i-queer-en-el-teatre-catala/>.
- Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*. World View Forum, 1992.
- Fernández, Imma. "Cunillé y Albertí se desmelenan." *El Periódico de Catalunya*, 11 July 2015. <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/ocio-y-cultura/20150710/cunille-y-alberti-se-desmelenan-4347314>.
- Feldman, Sharon G. "Catalunya invisible: Contemporary Theatre in Barcelona." Special Cluster: "Barcelona", Brad Epps, editor. *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, no. 6, 2002, pp. 269-87.
- . "Els paisatges del teatre català contemporani: de Benet i Jornet a Cunillé". *I simposi internacional sobre teatre català contemporani*, 55-69. Institut del Teatre, 2005.
- . "Sobre l'aparició i la desaparició: el teatre i Barcelona". (*Pausa.*), no. 20, enero de 2009, pp. 57-68.
- . "Sobre les influències, la tradició i altres ansietats: Alguns dilemes de l'escena catalana contemporània". *Documenta Teatral*, 4. Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 2011.
- . *A l'ull de l'huracà. Teatre català contemporani*. L'Avenç, 2011 [2009].
- . "Contemporary Theatre in Catalonia: A Sotry of Creative Struggles." *Akshar Wangmay*, March 2013, pp. 313-24.
- . "The Catalan Theatre Scene. A Story of Survival." *IT: IN Transit* 24 (February 27, 2014).
- . "L'anar i venir dels dramaturgs catalans: un nou cosmopolitisme." *Visat* 19 (April 2015).
- Fernández, Josep-Anton. *Another Country. Sexuality and National Identity in Catalan Gay Fiction*. Maney Publishing for the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2000.
- . *El malestar en la cultura catalana. La cultura de la normalització, 1976-1999*. Editorial Empúries, 2008.
- . "“No vengo del pasado, vengo de ahora”: VIH/sida y temporalidad." Rafael M. Mérida Jiménez, editor. *De vidas y virus. VIH/sida en las culturas hispánicas*. Icaria, 2019, pp. 227-252.
- , and Adrià Chavarría, editors. *Calçasses, gallines i maricons. Homes contra la masculinitat hegemònica*. Angle Editorial, 2013.

- Fernández, Lluís. *L'anarquista nu*. Edicions 62, 1990 [1979].
- Fernández, Víctor. "Insulto a los católicos sobre el escenario." *La Razón*, 25 March 2011, p. 53.
- Fichte, Hubert. *The Gay Critic*. The U of Michigan P, 1996 [1987].
- Fierstein, Harvey. *Torch Song Trilogy*. Random House, 2018.
- Flotats, Josep Maria. *Un projecte per al Teatre Nacional*. Edicions de la Revista de Catalunya, 1989.
- Foguet i Boreu, Francesc. *El teatre català en temps de guerra i revolució (1936-1939)*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1999.
- , editor. "Radicalment contemporanis? Teatre català del segle XXI." (*Pausa.*), 27, July 2007, pp. 15-18.
- . "La política teatral de la Generalitat republicana (1931-1936): realitzacions i debats." *Catalan Review*, 23 (2009), pp. 171-90.
- Fondevila, Santiago. *José Sanchis Sinisterra. L'espai fronterer*. Edicions de L'Institut del Teatre, 1999.
- Fontana, Josep. *La formació d'una identitat. Una història de Catalunya*. Eumo Editorial, 2016.
- Foster, David W. *Cultural Diversity in Latin American Literature*. U of New Mexico P. 1994.
- . *Sexual Textualities: Essays on Queer/ing Latin American Writing*. U of Texas P, 1997.
- . *Producción cultural e identidades homoeróticas: teorías y aplicaciones*. Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel. "Preface.", in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Penguin Books, 2009 [1977].
- . *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Pantheon Books, 1978.
- . "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), pp. 22-27
- . "Friendship as a Way of Life." *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault (1954-1984)*. Vol. 1. Edited by Paul Rabinow. The New Press, 1997, pp. 135-40.
- Fouz-Hernández, Santiago, and Alfredo Martínez-Expósito. *Live Flesh. The Male Body in Contemporary Spanish Cinema*. I. B. Tauris, 2007.

- . "Identity Without Limits: Queer Debates and Representation in Contemporary Spain". *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 2010, Vol. 10 (1), 2004, pp. 63-81.
- Fradera, Josep Maria. "Dos literaturas para una cultura." *Cultura nacional en una sociedad dividida: Cataluña 1838-1868*. Marcial Pons, 2003, pp. 157-257.
- Freccero, Carla. *Queer/Early/Modern*. Duke UP, 2007.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds. Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke UP, 2010.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia". The Standard Edition of the *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIV (1914-1916): *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, pp. 237-58.
- Frotscher, Mirjam M. "On the Intelligibility of Trans* and Intersex Characters in Contemporary British and American Fiction." Stefan Horlacher, editor. *Transgender and Intersex: Theoretical, Practical, And Artistic Perspectives*. Macmillan, 2016, p. 253-75.
- Gallén, Enric, editor. *Romea, 125 anys*. Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1989.
- . "De la literatura dramàtica catalana, avui." (*Pausa*.), 9-10 (September – December 1991), pp. 24-27.
- García Barrientos, José Luis. "¿Teatro épico hoy? Paradojas radicales y tres dramas en español." *Taller de Letras*, 53 (2013), pp. 51-65.
- Gelder, Ken, and Sarah Thorton, editors. *The Subcultures Reader*. Routledge, 1997.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Cornell UP, 1983.
- Genette, Gérard. *Figuras III*. Lumen, 1989.
- George, David J. "Belbel Rescues a Forgotten Guimerà." *Catalan Review*, 23 (2009), pp. 249-61.
- George, David J. *Sergi Belbel and Catalan Theatre. Text, Performance and Identity*. Tamesis, 2010.
- , et al. "Spanish Theatre Studies: Beyond the Text." *Hispanic Research Journal*, Vol. 19, no. 2, 2018, pp. 108-116.
- Gerdes, Kendall. "Performativity". *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 1, Numbers 1-2 (2014), pp. 148-50.
- Gil de Biedma, Jaime. *Diarios (1956-1985)*. Andreu Jaume, editor. Lumen, 2015.

- Gimeno, Beatriz. *Vejez y orientación sexual*. Fundación 26D, 2014.
<http://www.fundacion26d.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/informe-mayores-lgtb.pdf>.
- Goffman, Erving. *Stigmatized. Les usages sociaux des handicaps*. Éditions du Minuit, 1975.
- Goldberg, Leah. *Russian Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Essays*. Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1976.
- Gove, Dave. *Cruising Culture. Promiscuity, Desire and American Gay Literature*. Edinburgh UP, 2000.
- Graells, Guillem-Jordi; Xavier Febrés. *Institut del Teatre. Els primers cent anys. 1913-2013*. Edicions de L'Institut del Teatre, 2015.
- Green, Jesse. "A Brief History of Gay Theatre, in Three Acts." *The New York Times*, 26 Feb 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/t-magazine/gay-theater-history-boys-in-the-band.html>.
- Greenberg, David. *The Construction of Homosexuality*. U of Chicago P, 1990.
- Greenberg, Jon. "Conferencia." Aimar Pérez Galí. *Lo tocante*. Album, 2018, pp. 218-37.
- Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth, editors. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke UP, 2010.
- Grover, Jan Zita, "AIDS Keywords." Douglas Crimp, editor. *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*. The MIT Press, 1989, pp. 17-31.
- Guasch, Óscar, and Jordi Mas. "Bodily, Gender, and Identity Projects in Spain: From the Transvestite to the Transsexual". Rafael Mérida-Jiménez, editor. *Hispanic (LGT) Masculinities in Transition*. Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 51-63.
- Guillamon, Julià. *La ciutat interrompuda*. La Magrana, 2001.
- . "El gran novel·loide sobre Barcelona." *La ciutat interrompuda*. Anagrama, 2019, pp. 317-463.
- Gutteridge, Tim. "When Swallows Migrate: A Note on the Effect of Relocating the Action of the Play as a Part of the Translation Process." Guillem Clua, *La golondrina / The Swallow*. Antígona 2018, pp. 108-11.
- Halberstam, Jack [Judith]. *Female Masculinity*. Duke UP, 1998.
- . *In a Queer Time and Place. Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York UP, 2005.
- . "Shame and White Gay Masculinity". *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, Nos. 3-4, Fall-Winter 2005, pp. 219-33.
- . "The Politics of Negativity in Recent Queer Theory." *PMLA*, 121 (3), 2006, pp. 823-25.

- . *The Queer Art of Failure*. Duke UP, 2011.
- . *Gaga Feminism. Sex, Gender, and The End of Normal*. Beacon Press, 2012.
- Halley, Janet, and Andrew Parker, editors. *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*. Duke UP, 2011.
- Halperin, David. *Saint Foucault: Toward a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford UP, 1995.
- Hammers, Corie J. "Corporeal Silences and Bodies that Speak. The Promises and Limitations of Queer in Lesbian/Queer Sexual Spaces." Sally Hines and Tam Sanger, editors. *Transgender Identities. Towards a Social Analysis of Gender Diversity*. Routledge, 2010, pp. 224-241.
- Hines, Sally. "Introduction." Sally Hines and Tam Sanger, editors. *Transgender Identities. Towards a Social Analysis of Gender Diversity*. Routledge, 2010, pp. 1-22.
- "HIV / AIDS. Key Facts." *World Health Organization*. <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>.
- Henry, Declan. *Trans Voices. Becoming Who You Are*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017.
- Hernández, Juanse. "Cuando Barcelona también latió a 120 pulsaciones por minuto." *GM: Gehitu Magazine*, no. 102 (2018), pp. 67-69.
- Herrero Brasas, Juan A. *La sociedad gay. Una invisible minoría*. Foca, 2001.
- , editor. *Primera plana. La construcción de una cultura queer en España*. Egales, 2007.
- "HIV/AIDS. Key Facts." *World Health Organization*, 19 July 2018, <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, editors. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge UP Press, 1983.
- Hocquenghem, Guy. *Homosexual Desire*. Durham / London: Duke University Press, 1993 [1972].
- Holt, Marion Peter. "Guillem Clua, Marburg, and Barcelona's TNC". *TheatreForum*, 39 (2011), pp. 66-71.
- Huard de la Marre. "Introducción. Por qué escapar del psicoanálisis." Didier Eribon. *Escapar del psicoanálisis*. Bellaterra, 2008, pp. 13-27.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Rethinking the National Model." Editor Linda Hutcheon, Mario J. Valdés. *Rethinking Literary History: A Dialogue on Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 3-49.
- Interview with the Vampire*. Directed by Neil Jordan. 1994.

- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Random House, 2016 [1961].
- . *Dark Age Ahead*. Vintage, 2004.
- Jones, Chris. "Bieito's 'Camino Real' Puts the Spotlight on Tennessee Williams." *Chicago Tribune*, 12 March 2012. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/ct-ent-0313-camino-review-20120312-column.html>.
- Joves Trans Barcelona. "Què passa amb #MenorsTransTV3?" *YouTube*, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-yKOKDi384OIqUJQtz2iPw>.
- Kellogg, Stuart. Editor *Essays on Gay Literature*. New York / Binghamton: Harrington Park Press, 1983.
- Knopp, Lawrence. "Sexuality and Urban Space: A Framework for Analysis." David Bell and Gill Valentine (Eds.). *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*. London: Routledge, 1995. 149-61.
- Kornhaber, Spencer. "After Orlando: The Singular Experience of the Queer Latin Nightclub." *The Atlantic* (17 June 2016): <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/06/orlando-shooting-pulse-latin-queer-gay-nightclub-ramon-rivera-servera-interview/487442/>.
- Kramer, Larry. *The Normal Heart*. Samuel French, 1985.
- Kunzel, Regina. "The Flourishing of Transgender Studies". *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. Volume 1, Numbers 1-2 (May 2014), pp. 285-97.
- Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America. Part Two: Perestroika*. Theatre Communications Group, 1994.
- "La fragilitat dels verbs transitius." Grec Festival de Barcelona. Barcelona Cultura, 2016. <https://www.barcelona.cat/grec/arxiugrec/en/espectacle/companyia-roberto-g-alonso>.
- La població estrangera a Barcelona. Gener 2017*. Departament d'Estadística. Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017. <https://www.bcn.cat/estadistica/catala/dades/inf/pobest/pobest17/pobest17.pdf>.
- "La revolució dels gèneres. La construcció d'estereotips en la ficció." *Sala Beckett*. <https://www.salabeckett.cat/es/intercanvi/la-revolucion-de-los-generos/>.
- La verdadera naturaleza del amor*. Directed by Denys Arcand. 1994.
- Labanyi, Jo. Editor *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain. Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Lair, Liam Olivier. "Interrogating Trans* Identities in the Archives." Amy L. Stone, and Jaime Cantrell, editors. *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*. SUNY UP, 2015, pp. 233-54.

- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. "Ideologia i teatre postdramàtic." (*Pausa*), 25 (December 2006), pp. 12-17.
- Lemebel, Pedro. *Loco afán*. Anagrama, 2000 [1996].
- "Living with HIV: Challenges in Spain's HIV management." *The Economist Intelligence Unit Service*, 2017,
<http://perspectives.eiu.com/sites/default/files/Living%20with%20HIV%20Challenges%20in%20Spain's%20HIV%20management.pdf>.
- Llamas, Ricardo. Editor *Construyendo sidentidades. Estudios desde el corazón de una pandemia*. Siglo XXI Editores, 1995.
- . *Teoría torcida. Prejuicios y discursos en torno a "la homosexualidad"*. Siglo XXI Editores, 1998.
- .; Fefa Vila. "Spain: Passion for Life. Una historia del movimiento de lesbianas y gays en el Estado Español". *ConCiencia de un singular deseo*, Xosé M. Buxán, editor. Editorial Laertes, 1997, pp. 189-224.
- .; Francisco Javier Vidarte. Editor *Homografías*. Espasa Hoy, 1999.
- London, John. "Contemporary Catalan Drama in English: Some Aspirations and Limitations." *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 17(3), 2007, pp. 453-462.
- . "Catalan Theatre Without Catalan? Plays and Performances: 1939-1945." *Catalan Review*, 23 (2009), pp. 191-209.
- Lopez, Matthew. *The Inheritance*. Faber and Faber, 2018.
- López Rosell, César. "L'angoixa i la por davant les pandèmies." *El Periódico de Catalunya*, 21 May 2010, p. 15.
- Love, Heather. "Queer". *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 1, Numbers 1-2 (2014), pp. 172-76.
- Loxley, James. *Performativity*. Routledge, 2007.
- Llaneras, Kiko. "Así se redujo la homofobia en España." *El País*, 1 July 2017.
https://elpais.com/politica/2017/06/29/ratio/1498727906_306856.html.
- "LLEI 11/2014, del 10 d'octubre, per a garantir els drets de lesbianes, gays, bisexuals, transgènere i intersexuals i per a eradicar l'homofòbia, la bifòbia i la transfòbia." *Generalitat de Catalunya*.
https://portaljuridic.gencat.cat/ca/pjur_ocults/pjur_resultats_fitxa/?documentId=672704&action=fitxa.
- Manoff, Marlene. "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004), pp. 9-25.

- Manrique, Jaime. *Eminent Maricones. Arenas, Lorca, Puig and Me*. U of Wisconsin P, 1999.
- . *Tarzan / My Body / Christopher Columbus*. U of Wisconsin P. 2001.
- Marshall, Tim, editor. *Transforming Barcelona. The Renewal of a European Metropolis*. Routledge, 2004.
- Martí Monterde, Antoni. “Processos d’interliterarietat a Catalunya. El comparatisme de Dionyz Durisin com a proposta per a la literatura catalana.” *Catalan Review XXIII* (2013), pp. 157-72.
- Martín, Luisge. *El amor del revés*. Anagrama, 2016.
- Martínez, Alfredo. *Escrituras torcidas. Ensayos de crítica “queer”*. Editorial Laertes, 2004.
- Martínez, Luciano. Transformación y renovación: Los estudios lésbico-gays i *queer* latinoamericanos.” *Revista Iberoamericana* 74:225 (October – December 2008), pp. 861-876.
- Martínez, Monique. *J. Sanchis Sinisterra. Una dramaturgia de las fronteras*. Ñaque, 2004.
- Martínez, Ramón. *Lo nuestro sí que es mundial. Una introducción a la historia del movimiento LGTB en España*. Egales, 2017.
- . *Nos acechan todavía. Anotaciones para reactivar el movimiento LGTBI*. Egales, 2019.
- Martínez-San Miguel, Yolanda, and Sarah Tobias. “Introduction: Thinking beyond Hetero/Homo Normativities”. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, and Sarah Tobias, editors. *Trans Studies. The Challenge to Hetero/Homo Normativities*. Rutgers UP, 2016, p. 1-17.
- Massip, Francesc. “Malaltia i felicitat.” *Diari Avui*, 21 May 2010, p. 36.
- Massot, Josep. “El secreto de Gil de Biedma.” *La Vanguardia*, 31 Oct 2015.
<http://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20151031/54438506414/secreto-gil-biedma.html>.
- Massumi, Brian. *Politics of Affect*. Polity, 2015.
- McCallum, E. L., and Mikko Tuhkanen. *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*. SUNY UP, 2011.
- McGarry, Molly, Fred Wasserman. *Becoming Visible. An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America*. The New York Public Library – Penguin Studio, 1998.
- McNally, Terrence. *Selected Works. A Memoir in Plays*. Grove Press, 2015.
- Melendres, Jaume. “Una generació mutant.” (*Pausa*.), 9-10 (September – December 1991), pp. 28-30.

- Mecano. "El fallo positivo." *Aidalai*, 1991.
- Melo, Adrián. *El amor de los muchachos. Homosexualidad & literatura*. Ediciones LEA, 2004.
- Mendicutti, Eduardo. *El palomo cojo*. Tusquets, 1991.
- . *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera*. Tusquets, 1994.
- Mejía, Norma. *Transgenerismos. Una experiencia transexual desde la perspectiva antropológica*. Edicions Bellaterra, 2006.
- Mérida-Jiménez, Rafael M. *Sexualidades transgresoras. Una antología de estudios queer*. Icaria, 2002.
- . *Mujer y género en las letras hispánicas*. Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 2008.
- , editor. *Manifiestos gays, lesbianos y queer. Testimonios de una lucha (1969-1994)*. Icaria, 2009.
- , editor. *Minorías sexuales en España (1970-1995). Textos y representaciones*. Icaria, 2013.
- , editor. *Hispanic (LGT) Masculinities in Transition*. Peter Lang, 2014.
- . *Transbarcelonas. Cultura, género y sexualidad en la España del siglo XX*. Edicions Bellaterra, 2016.
- , editor. *De vidas y virus. VIH/sida en las culturas hispánicas*. Icaria, 2019.
- Merrim, Stephanie. *The Spectacular City, Mexico, and Colonial Hispanic Literary Culture*. U of Texas Press, 2010.
- Mestres, Albert. "Universitalitat versus globalització: la localitat a la dramatúrgia catalana actual." (*Pausa.*), 20 (January 2005), pp. 75-78.
- Mira, Alberto. "De lo patológico a lo político: la articulación de la identidad gay en el teatro homosexual". *ConCiencia de un singular deseo*, edición de Xosé M. Buxán. Editorial Laertes, 1997, pp. 225-56.
- . *Para entendernos. Diccionario de cultura homosexual, gay y lesbica*. Ediciones de la Tempestad, 1998.
- . *De Sodoma a Chueca*. Egales, 2004.
- . *Miradas insumisas: gays y lesbianas en el cine*. Egales, 2008.
- Miralles, Esteve. "Barcelona / Ficcions lliures: un primer intent." (*Pausa.*), 20 (January 2005), pp. 38-40.

- . "Prólogo: Paradojas del deseo." *Dramaturgia catalana contemporánea. Antología I*. Edicions de l'Institut del Teatre / Editorial Paso de Gato, 2017, pp. 9-22.
- Miró, Josep Maria. *Gang Bang (Obert fins a l'hora de l'Àngelus)*. Arola Editors, 2011.
- . *El principi d'Arquímedes*. Arola Editors, 2012.
- . *Fum*. Arola Editors, 2012.
- . "Vint anys, de Tuzla a Idomeni". Josep Maria Miró; Lluïsa Cunillé. *Boira / La travessia*. Comanegra, 2016.
- ; Lluïsa Cunillé. *Boira / La travessia*. Comanegra, 2016.
- . *Teatre reunit (2009-2018)*. Arola Editors, 2018.
- Miró, Pau. *Plou a Barcelona*. En cartell, 8 (sèrie "A Barcelona"). L'Obrador de la Sala Beckett, 2004.
- Missé, Miquel. *Transexualidades. Otras miradas posibles*. Egales, 2013.
- . "La vida m'ha sigut més fàcil des que vaig decidir viure-la com un noi." Interview by Lara Bonilla. *Diari Ara*, 26 April 2016. https://www.ara.cat/societat/MIQUELMISSE-sigut-facil-decidir-viure-la_0_1565843412.html.
- . *A la conquista del cuerpo equivocado*. Egales, 2018.
- Moix, Ana María. *24 horas con la Gauche Divine*. Lumen, 2002.
- Molano, Fernando. *Vista desde una acera*. Seix Barral, 2015.
- Moliné, Clara. "La pell escrita. La lluita per la identitat." *Núvol, el digital de cultura*. 30 Nov 2017. <https://www.nuvol.com/noticies/la-pell-escrita-la-lluita-per-la-identitat/>.
- Molloy, Sylvia, and Robert McKee Irvin, editors. *Hispanisms and Homosexualities*. Duke UP, 1998.
- Montero, Oscar. "Notes for a Queer Reading of Latin American Literature." Martin Duberman, editor *Queer Representations Reading Lives, Reading Cultures*. New York UP, 1997.
- Moraga, Cherríe. *Heroes and Saints and Other Plays*. West End Press, 1994.
- Morandeira Arrizabalaga, Julia. "Artxiboarren sukarra / Fiebre del archivo". *Orriak*, num. 3 (2016), pp. 3-5.
- Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality. Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. Howard Fertig, 1985.

- Muñoz, Albert. “Dos espontanis salten a l’escenari del TNC per atacar els actors de *Gang Bang*.” *Betevé, Barcelona Televisió*, 31 March 2011. <https://beteve.cat/cultura/dos-espontanis-salten-a-lescenari-del-tnc-per-atacar-els-actors-de-gang-bang/>.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications. Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. U of Minnesota P, 1999.
- . *Cruising Utopia. The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York UP, 2009.
- Nagoshi, Julie L. et al. “Questioning the ‘Heteronormative Matrix’: Transphobia, Intersectionality, and Gender Outlaws Within the Gay and Lesbian Community.” *Social Development Issues*, vol. 39, no. 3 (2017), pp. 19-31.
- Naredo, José Manuel. “El modelo español y sus consecuencias.” José Manuel Naredo, and Antonio Montiel Márquez, editors. *El modelo inmobiliario español y su culminación en el caso valenciano*. Icaria, 2011, pp. 13-25.
- N. C. “El Papa y una orgía, en el Nacional”. *El Mundo*, 18 Sept 2010, p. 55.
- “Nosotrxs Xomos.” *Televisión Española*, 2018-2019.
<https://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/nosotrxs-somos/>.
- “L’Observatori Contra L’Homofòbia: ‘Els agressors són homes en un 99% dels casos’.” *RAC1*, 19 March 2019. <https://www.rac1.cat/programes/no-ho-se/20190318/461105223227/agressions-homofobes-observatori-homofobia.html>
- Olid, Bel. “República ‘queer’ de Catalunya.” *El crític*, 25 Sept 2017.
<https://www.elcritic.cat/blogs/sentitcritic/2017/09/25/republica-queer-de-catalunya/>.
- Ordóñez, Marcos. *Molta comèdia. Cròniques de teatre 1987-1995*. Edicions La Campana, 1996.
- . “Los virus de Marburg.” *El País (Babelia)*, 12 Jun 2010, p. 22.
- Oremus, Will. “Here Are All the Different Genders You Can Be on Facebook.” *Slate*, 13 Feb 2014. <https://slate.com/technology/2014/02/facebook-custom-gender-options-here-are-all-56-custom-options.html>.
- Orobio de Castro, Ines. *Made to Order. Sex/Gender in a Transsexual Perspective*. Het Spinhuis Publishers, 1993.
- Ozieblo, Barbara. “Affecting the Audience. Gina Gionfrido’s *After Ashley*.” Alfonso Ceballos Muñoz et al., editors. *Violence in American Drama: Essays on its Staging, Meanings and Effects*. McFarland, 2011, pp. 267-278.
- Pallarès, Aída, and Manuel Pérez. *El carrer és nostre*. Raig Verd, 2017.
- Parker, Andrew et al, editors. *Nationalisms & Sexualities*. Routledge, 1992.

- Pecoraro, Gustavo. "La Radical Gai: sobrevivientes que vuelven de la guerra." *Revista Furias*, 3 Dec 2015. <http://revistafurias.com/la-radical-gai-sobrevivientes-que-vuelven-de-la-guerra/>.
- Penney, James. *After Queer Theory. The Limits of Sexual Politics*. Pluto Press, 2014.
- Pérez, Mercè. "L'íos amorosos y orgías en el Teatre Nacional, que reduce sus obras por la crisis". *El País* (Catalan Edition), 18 Sept 2010, p. 5.
- Pérez Galí, Aimar. "Manejar riesgos. Aspectos comunes entre el Contact Improvisation y el VIH/sida." *Paso de Gato*, No. 68, January-March 2017, pp. 78-80.
- . "Presentación personal." *The Touching Community. Mercat de les Flors*, 27 Nov 2017. <https://mercatflors.cat/espectacle/salmon-15/>.
- . *Lo tocante*. Album, 2018.
- Pérez Fernández-Fígares, Kim. "Historia de la patologización y despatologización de las variantes de género." Gerard Coll-Planas, and Miquel Missé, editors. *El género desordenado. Críticas en torno a la patologización de la transexualidad*. Egales, 2010, pp. 97-113.
- Pérez-Sánchez, Gema. *Queer Transitions in Contemporary Spanish Culture: From Franco to La Movida*. State U of New York P, 2007.
- Perlongher, Néstor. *Prosa plebeya*. Ediciones Colihue, 1996.
- Perpinyà, Núria. *La cadira trencada. Teatre català d'avantguarda*. Arola Editors, 2018.
- Petit, Jordi. *25 años más. Una perspectiva sobre el pasado, el presente y el futuro del movimiento de gays, lesbianas, bisexuales y transexuales*. Icaria editorial, 2003.
- . "Reflexiones de presente y futuro para el movimiento LGBT." Talk given in Valencia, 25 Nov 2005. *Grup d'Amics Gais*. http://www.amicsgais.org/documents/Reflexiones_de_futuro-JP.pdf.
- . *Vidas del arco iris*. Egales, 2016 [2004].
- Peya, Clara. "El teatre català està fet per i per a homes blancs." Interview by Isaias Fanlo. *Núvol, el digital de cultura*, 27 April 2018. <https://www.nuvol.com/entrevistes/clara-peya-el-teatre-catala-esta-fet-per-i-per-a-homes-blancs>.
- Peyró, Ignacio. "El Teatro Nacional de Catalunya financia una obra vejatoria contra la Iglesia." *La Gaceta de los Negocios*, 2 March 2011, p. 45.
- . "La Generalitat sufraga una obra furiosamente anticatólica." *La Gaceta de los Negocios*, 2 March 2011, p. 43.
- Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 1993.

- Pile, Steve. "Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities, and Spaces of Resistance." In *Geographies of Resistance*, edited by Steve Pile and Michael Keith. Routledge, 1997, pp. 1-32.
- Plataforma d'Afectats per la Hipoteca*. <https://pahbarcelona.org/ca/pah-bcn/>.
- Poirier, Richard, "AIDS and Traditions of Homophobia". *Social Research*, No. 55, p. 463.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A., and George Chauncey. "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally". *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1999, pp. 439-50.
- Preciado, Paul. *Manifiesto contrasexual*. Anagrama, 2011 [2002].
- . *Testo Junkie. Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in The Pharmacopornographic Era*. Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2013.
- . "Prólogo". Miriam Solá, Elena Urko. Eds. *Transfeminismos. Epistemes, fricciones y flujos*. Txalaparta, 2013, pp. 9-13.
- . "Beatriz Preciado, Some Kind of queer Oracle". *Buffalo Zine*, 2015. <https://buffalozine.com/art/beatriz-preciado-some-kind-queer-oracle>.
- . *Un apartamento en Urano. Crónicas del cruce*. Anagrama, 2019.
- . *An Apartment on Uranus: Chronicles of the Crossing*. Semiotexte / Smart Art, 2020.
- Proal, Juan Pablo. *Vivir en el cuerpo equivocado*. Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2013.
- Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. Columbia UP, 1998.
- Puar, Jasbir K. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, Nos. 3-4, Fall-Winter 2005, pp. 121-39.
- . *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke UP, 2007.
- Puig Taulé, Oriol. "Les perles de Tàrrega." *Núvol, el digital de cultura*. 9 Sept 2016. <https://www.nuvol.com/critica/les-perles-de-tarrega/>.
- Puigtobella, Bernat. "El decàleg de Xavier Albertí." *Núvol, el digital de cultura*. 14 Nov 2012. <https://www.nuvol.com/teatre-i-dansa/el-decaleg-de-xavier-alberti-3950>.
- Pujol, Anton. "El mètode Grönholm o la submissió a les modernitats líquides." *Catalan Review: International Journal of Catalan Culture*, 2006, 20 (1), pp. 131-51.
- . "Ventura Pons y la crónica de un territorio llamado Barcelona." *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, vol. 13 (2009), pp. 61-81.
- . "Map of Shadows: Lluïsa Cunillé's Ontological Rezoning." *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, Vol. 35, 2, 2010, pp. 475-506.

- Quiroga, Alejandro. "Football and identities in Catalonia." Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana, editors. *The Barcelona Reader. Cultural Readings of a City*. Liverpool UP (with the collaboration of Ajuntament de Barcelona), 2017, pp. 163-184.
- Ragué-Arias, María-José. *El teatro de fin de milenio en España (de 1975 hasta hoy)*. Ariel, 1996.
- Ramos Arteaga et al., editors. *Práctica y teoría (marica). Homenaje a Paco Vidarte*. La Página Ediciones, 2011.
- Rancière, Jacques. "The Emancipated Spectator." *Artforum* (March 2007), pp. 271-80.
- "Recursos." *Observatori Contra L'Homofòbia*. <https://och.cat/recursos/>
- Resina, Joan Ramon. *Del hispanismo a los estudios ibéricos. Una propuesta federativa para el ámbito cultural*. Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, 2009.
- Retter, Yolanda et al., editors. *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*. Bay Press, 1997.
- Riambau, Esteve, and Mirito Torreiro. *La escuela de Barcelona: el cine de la Gauche Divine*. Anagrama, 1999.
- Riera, Pere. "La dramaturgia catalana del segle XXI: deu anys d'autories teatrals fidels a l'espectador." *Estudis Escènics. Quaderns de l'Institut del Teatre*, no. 38, Winter 2011, pp. 73-84.
- Rivera-Servera, Ramón H. "Choreographies of Resistance: Latina/o Queer Dance and the Utopian Performative." *Modern Drama*, 47:2 (Summer 2004), pp. 269-89.
- Robinson, Lillian S. "Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 2:1, 1983, pp. 83-98.
- Rocetti, Antonella. "El éxtasis místico." *Archivum: Revista de la Facultad de Filología*. Universidad de Oviedo. 46-47 (1996-1997), pp. 371-407.
- Rodríguez, Juana María. *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*. New York UP, 2003.
- . *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures and Other Latina Longings*. New York UP, 2014.
- Rodríguez Méndez, José María. *Flor de Otoño*. In *Teatro Escogido, Tomo II*. Asociación de autores de teatro, 2005.
- Román, David. *Acts of Intervention. Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS*. Indiana UP, 1998.
- . "Not-About-AIDS". Reinelt, Janele G.; Joseph R. Roach. *Critical Theory and Performance*. The U of Michigan P, 2007, pp. 372-93.

- Rosich, Marc. *Copi i Ocaña, al purgatori*. En cartell, 10. L'Obrador de la Sala Beckett, 2004.
- . *Surabaya*. Arola Editors, 2007.
- . *A tots els que heu vingut*. Arola Editors, 2017.
- . *Teatre trans i altres textos no normatius*. Comanegra, 2020.
- Rubin, Gayle S. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." Henry Abelove et al., editors. *The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader*. Routledge, 1993, pp. 3-44.
- Rubin, Henry. "Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies". *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Vol. 4, no. 2 (1998), pp. 263-81.
- Ruffolo, David V. *Post-Queer Politics*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009.
- Sadurní Balcells, Núria; Joan Pujol Tarrés. "Homonacionalismo en Cataluña: una visión desde el activismo LGTBI*." *Universitas Psychologica*, Vol. 14, no. 15 (2015), pp. 1809-1820.
- Sáez, Javier; Sejo Carrascosa. *Por el culo. Políticas anales*. Egales, 2011.
- Sala, Carles. "La Generalitat paga una obra contra la Iglesia." *La Razón*, Feb 28 2011, p. 32.
- Sánchez, Antonio. "Barcelona's Magic Mirror: Narcissism or the Rediscovery of Public Space and Collective Identity?" Jo Labanyi, editor *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain. Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice*. Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 294-310.
- Sanchis Sinisterra, José. "Introducción a la muestra dramática de El Teatro Fronterizo." (*Pausa.*), 2 (January 1990), pp. 64-65.
- . "El espacio dramático." (*Pausa.*), 8 (July 1991), pp. 45-49.
- . *La escena sin límites. Fragmentos de un discurso teatral*. Ñaque Ediciones, 2002.
- Sandoval, Alberto. "Staging AIDS: What's Latinos Got to Do with It?" Diana Taylor, editor. *Negotiating Performance. Gender, Sexuality, and Theatricality in Latin/o America*. Duke UP, 1994, pp. 49-66.
- . José, *Can You See? Latinos On and Off Broadway*. U of Wisconsin P, 1999.
- Sala, Carlos. "Escándalo anticatólico en el Teatro Nacional de Catalunya." *La Razón*, 21 March 2011, https://www.larazon.es/historico/9437-escandalo-anticatolico-en-el-teatro-nacional-de-cataluna-SLLA_RAZON_365543/.
- Sarrazac, Jean-Pierre. Editor *Lèxic del drama modern i contemporani*. Edicions de l'Institut del Teatre, 2009 [2005].

- Saumell i Vergés, Mercè. *El teatre contemporani*. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, 2006.
- Schechner, Richard. *Environmental Theatre*. Hawthorn Books, 1973.
- Schulman, Sarah. *Stagestruck: Theatre, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay America*. Duke UP, 1998.
- . *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. U of California P, 2013.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men. English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia UP, 1985.
- . "Queer and Now." *Tendencies*. Duke UP, 1993.
- , editor. *Novel Gazing. Queer Readings in Fiction*. Duke UP, 1997.
- . *Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke UP, 2003.
- . *Epistemology of the Closet. Updated with a New Preface*. U of California P, 2008 [1990].
- Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Seal Press, 2007.
- Serra, Laura. "L'esclat de la dramaturgia catalana (en 4 actes)." *Ara Diumenge*, 115 (17 July 2016), pp. 4-9.
- Seton-Watson, Hugh. *Nations and States. An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. Westview Press, 1977.
- Shape of Water, The*. Directed by Guillermo Del Toro, 2017.
- Sherman, Martin. "Marburg. Una introducció." Guillem Clua. *Marburg*. Proa Editors, 2010.
- Smith, Paul Julian. *The Body Hispanic. Gender and Sexuality in Spanish and Spanish American Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1989.
- . *Laws of Desire. Questions on Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film 1960-1990*. Oxford UP, 1992.
- . *Representing the Other. 'Race', Text, and Gender in Spanish and Spanish American Narrative*. Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . *Vision Machines. Cinema, Literature and Sexuality in Spain and Cuba, 1983-1993*. Verso, 1996.
- . "La representación del sida en el Estado Español: Alberto Cardín y Eduardo Haro Ibars". *ConCiencia de un singular deseo*, Xosé M. Buxán, editor. Editorial Laertes, 1997, pp. 301-18.

- . *The Moderns. Time, Space and Subjectivity in Contemporary Spanish Culture*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- . *Contemporary Spanish Culture. TV, Fashion, Art and Film*. Oxford UP, 2003.
- Snediker, Michael D. *Queer Optimism. Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions*. U of Minnesota P, 2009.
- Soler, Esteve. *En contra. 23 contes teatralitzats*. Tres i Quatre, 2013.
- Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. U of California P, 1991.
- Sontag, Susan. *AIDS and Its Metaphors*. Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1989.
- Sorribes, José Carlos. "La historia radical de *Gang Bang* dispara la polémica en el TNC." *El Periódico de Catalunya*, 22 March 2011, p. 59.
- "State of LGBTI-phobia in Catalonia 2016." *Observatori Contra L'Homofòbia*, 2016. https://och.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/THE-STATE-OF-LGBTI-phobia-in-Catalunya_2016.pdf.
- "Statement." *Happy Birthday, Marsha!*, <http://www.happybirthdaymarsha.com/statement>.
- Stone, Amy L., and Jaime Cantrell, editors. *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*. SUNY UP, 2015.
- Stotzer, Rebecca L., "Violence Against Transgender People: A Review of United States Data". *Agression and Violent Behavior*. Vol, 14, Issue 3 (May-June 2009), pp. 170-79.
- Stryker, Susan. "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin." *GLQ. A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Duke UP. Volume 10, number 2 (2004), pp. 212-15.
- . "(De)Subjugated Knowledges. An Introduction to Transgender Studies." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, editors. Routledge, 2006, pp. 1-17.
- ; Stephen Whittle (eds.). *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2006.
- . *Transgender History*. Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008.
- Sullà, Enric. "El debate sobre el canon literario." Enric Sullà (Editor). *El canon literario*. Arco Libros, 1998, pp. 11-34.
- Szpunberg, Victoria. "Tradiciones." (*Pausa.*), 21 (Junio 2005), pp. 53-56.
- Taylor, Diana. "Opening Remarks." Diana Taylor and Juan Villegas, editors. *Negotiating Performance. Gender, Sexuality, & Theatricality in Latin/o America*. Duke UP, 1994. 1-16.

- Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. *10 anys del Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (1996-2006)*. Edicions del Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, 2006.
- . *Programa de la temporada 2010/2011*. Edicions del Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, 2010.
- The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*. Directed by David France, 2017.
- Tóibin, Colm. "A fragile country." Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana (Eds.) *The Barcelona Reader. Cultural Readings of a City*. Liverpool UP and Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017, pp. 131-41.
- Tola, Albert. *Las noches malas de Amir Shrinayan*. In *ADE Teatro*, num. 169 (January – March 2018).
- Tornero, Helena. *Teatre reunit (2008-2018)*. Arola Editors, 2019.
- Tourmaline (Reina Gosset). "Tourmaline on Transgender Storytelling, David France, and the Netflix Marsha P. Johnson Documentary." *Teen Vogue*, 11 October 2017, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/reina-gossett-marsha-p-johnson-op-ed>.
- Tournier, Michel. "Sida y Ozono, ángeles del Apocalipsis". *Celebraciones*. Translated by Luis María Todó. El Acantilado, 2002. 251-52.
- "TRANSaccions." *Mercat de les Flors*. <https://mercatflors.cat/es/ciclesifestivals/transaccions/>.
- Trànsit: menors transsexuals*. Directed by Roser Oliver and Lluís Montserrat. Televisió de Catalunya, 10 April 2016. <https://www.ccma.cat/tv3/alacarta/30-minuts/transit-menors-transsexuals/video/5613571/>.
- Treichler, Paula A. "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification". *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, Edited by Douglas Crimp. The MIT Press, 1989. 31-70.
- Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño*. Directed by Pedro Olea, 1977.
- Valentini, Valentina. "Teatre èpic i nou teatre." *Estudis Escènics. Quaderns de l'Institut del Teatre*, no. 38, Winter 2011, pp. 13-36.
- Van der Meersh, Maxence. *La masque de chair*. Albin Michel, 1958.
- Vazquez Montalbán, Manuel. "Informe subnormal para un fantasma cultural." *Triunfo*, Special Issue, 30 Jan 1971. <https://biblioteca.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-66280/Informe%20subnormal%20sobre%20un%20fantasma%20cultural.pdf>.
- Vidarte, Paco. "El banquete uniqueersitario: Disquisiciones sobre el s(ab)er queer". David Córdoba et al., editors. *Teoría queer. Políticas bolleras, maricas, trans, mestizas*. Egales, 2005, pp. 77-109.
- . *Ética marica. Proclamas libertarias para una militancia LGTBQ*. Egales, 2007.

- Vila Gatus, Jaume. "VIH y sida sin metáforas." Rafael M. Mérida Jiménez, editor. *De vidas y virus. VIH/sida en las culturas hispánicas*. Icaria, 2019, pp. 15-30.
- Vilaseca, David. *Hindsight and the Real. Subjectivity in Gay Hispanic Autobiography*. Peter Lang, 2003.
- . *Queer Events. Post-Deconstructive Subjectivities in Spanish Writing and Film, 1960's to 1990's*. Liverpool UP, 2010.
- . *Els homes i els dies. Obra narrativa completa*. L'Altra Editorial, 2017.
- Vilaseca, J, et al. "Kaposi's Sarkoma And Toxoplasma Gondii Brain Abscess In A Spanish Homosexual." *The Lancet*. March 6, 1982, p. 572.
- Viñuales, Olga. *Identidades lésbicas*. Edicions Bellaterra, 2000.
- , and Ricardo Llamas, editors. *Sexualidades*. Edicions Bellaterra, 2004.
- Warner, Michael. "Introduction. Fear of a Queer Planet." *Social Text*, num. 29 (1991), pp. 3-17.
- . *The Trouble With Normal. Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Harvard UP, 1999.
- Watney, Simon. *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media*. U of Minnesota P, 1987.
- . "The Spectacle of AIDS". *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, Douglas Crimp, editor. The MIT Press, 1989, pp. 71-86.
- Weston, Kath. *Families We Choose. Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. Columbia UP, 1997 [1991].
- "What Are HIV and AIDS?". U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 15 May 2017, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/what-are-hiv-and-aids>.
- White, Edmund. "The Personal Is Political." David Bergman, editor. *The Burning Library. Essays*. Vintage Books, 1995, pp. 367-77.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and The City*. Oxford UP, 1975.
- Williams, Tennessee. *Plays 1937-1955*. The Library of America, 2000.
- Witting, Monique. *The Straight Mind*. Beacon Press, 1992.
- Wolfson, Evan. *Why Marriage Matters. America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry*. Simon & Schuster, 2007.
- Woods, Gregory. *A History of Gay Literature. The Male Tradition*. Yale UP, 1997.
- . *Homintern. How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World*. Yale UP, 2016.

“VIH i sida: 10 xifres que recorden la gravetat de la pandèmia.” *Diari Ara*, 1 Dec 2016.
https://www.ara.cat/societat/VIH-sida-dia-mundial-1-desembre_0_1697230384.html.