Choreographing the Silence

Women Dancing Democracy in Post-Franco Spain

by

Eva Aymamí Reñé

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts
Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
University of Surrey

Supervisors:
Melissa Blanco Borelli
Matthew Wagner

August 2015
71,456 words
©Eva Aymamí Reñé 2015
Declaration of Originality

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

Signature:

Date: August 2015
Abstract

This thesis comprises a critical exploration of female dance performances in the recent democratic history of Spain. It discusses democratic Spain’s relationship with the memory and forgetting of its repressive dictatorial past. In the aftermath of Francoism (1939-75), Spain transitioned to a democratic system without confronting those responsible for the repression of the previous regime. This tacit sociopolitical agreement, known as the Pact of Silence, imposed a process of collective amnesia on Spain. As a way of breaking the pact of silence, this analysis traces the development of gender values, under the effects of this social oblivion. My research suggests that this collective historical amnesia has had direct repercussions on the construction of feminine identity in post-Franco Spain. My methodologies depart from a critical dance studies perspective, and borrow from contemporary semiotics and post-structural criticism to analyse dance pieces as socially encoded discursive practices that generate meaning. Through their choreographies, a democratic generation of female choreographers, Anna Maleras, Avelina Argüelles and Sol Picó, have opened up possibilities for discussing the female body’s relationship with historical silence, offering choreographic tactics to vanquish the national amnesia.
Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my two supervisors Melissa Blanco Borelli and Matthew Wagner for their support and generosity in sharing their insights about my research. The pertinent questions they posed helped to frame the scope of this research and make my analysis more rigorous. They have channelled the quality of my work, and have been an inspirational guidance.

I would like also to thank the three choreographers featured in this research. They have given me the opportunity to join their lives, their teams and their way of seeing dance. This research would not have been possible without their generosity: Anna Maleras, Avelina Argüelles and Sol Picó and her team.

I am likewise grateful to my colleagues in the School of Arts, University of Surrey. Sharing the process of becoming a scholar with them has been of immeasurable help. I would specifically like to thank the members of the reading group who believed in sharing and discussing our intellectual capital: Jocelyn, Jinny, Melina and Connie. I extend my thanks to my other PhD accomplices: Manrrutt, Laura, and Betina, for their insights in every research week. I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Departmental Fellowship of the School of Arts at the University of Surrey.

Sincere thanks to my family: to the memory of my father, my siblings, Àngel and especially to my mother Àngels for her strong belief in me, and my sister Laia for accompanying me in life and showing how similar and at the same time different we can be. I could not have managed this research project if I did not have the encouragement and support of my close friends in Barcelona, Los Angeles, Japan and my recent and very important friends in England.

Finally, a special mention goes to my partner Vincent who has been my deepest emotional and intellectual support since I decided to pursue this project. I am, and always will be, grateful for his sincere company, his endless patience, and his strength in assisting me with this project; without his determined readings and challenging questions I would probably not have accomplished the submission of this thesis. This work is dedicated to Vincent Barlier.
## Table of Contents

Declaration of Originality ................................................................. ii
Abstract ................................................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements .............................................................................. iv
Table of Figures .................................................................................. vii
A Note on Translations ......................................................................... viii

### Chapter 1. Introduction: Situating Dance .............................................. 1
- Dancing Ghosts .................................................................................. 1
- Political Ghosts ................................................................................. 4
- Historical Context ............................................................................ 6
- Research Questions ........................................................................... 10
- A Note on Moving Bodies ................................................................. 14
- The Body and Corporeality ............................................................... 15
- Movement Analysis ........................................................................... 17
- Dance as Political ............................................................................ 19
- Theoretical Foundations: The Problem of Memory ......................... 22
- Theoretical Foundations: Choreographing Power and Resistance .... 26
- Theoretical Foundations: Politicising Gender .................................. 30
- Structure of The Thesis .................................................................... 34

### Chapter 2. Choreographing El Pacto del Silencio ................................ 37
- I. Choreographing Memory ............................................................... 41
- II. Choreographing Amnesia ............................................................. 49
- III. Moving Identities ....................................................................... 59
- Modernization and Commodification .............................................. 59
- Disenchantment ............................................................................... 62
- Responses to The Amnesty Law ...................................................... 65

### Chapter 3. Historicising The Dancing Body ........................................ 70
- I. Liberating The Female Body: Early Modern Dance in Spain ........ 71
- The Forgotten Bodies of Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà ............ 74
- II. Female Bodies at War ................................................................. 82
- The muted Dance Scene ................................................................. 84
- The Republican Female Body ......................................................... 85
- The Fascist Female Body ............................................................... 87
- III. The Re-Establishment of The Domestic Body (1934-75) ......... 88
- The Feminine Section ..................................................................... 90
- The Use of Dance ........................................................................... 93
- How Chorus and Dances Collected The Dances ......................... 94
- Ideology ......................................................................................... 97

### Chapter 4. Introducing Modern Dance: Maleras’ Narrativity .............. 102
- I. In Theory, Constructing a Narrative ............................................ 104
- II. Embodying New Techniques ....................................................... 109
- Liberating Movements ................................................................... 112
- Blossoming Dance Creations ......................................................... 119
- III. Dancing in Silence ................................................................... 125

### Chapter 5. The Construct of The Democratic Woman: Argüelles’ New Subj ectivities ................................................................. 132
- I. Collective Movements, Heura ..................................................... 133
Table of Figures

Figure 1. The Spanish Parliament. El País, Hemeroteca Digital Archive ........................................56
Figure 2. Tórtola Valencia by Bolaños. Museu de les Arts Escèniques .................................76
Figure 3. Tórtola Valencia, La Serpiente. Museu de les Arts Escèniques .....................77
Figure 4. Aurea Sarrà dancing at the Dionysius Temple. Biblioteca Nacional de España ......79
Figure 5. The Republican People's Army Heroine. Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation ........85
Figure 6. Manufacturing war materials. Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation ..............................86
Figure 7. Federica Montseny. Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation .............................................87
Figure 8. Guía de la Buena Esposa, 1953. Archivo General de la Administración ..........92
Figure 9. Coros y Danzas, Toledo 1953. Fundación Joaquín Díaz ....................................94
Figure 10. Moderno Jazz. Anna Maleras Archive ...............................................................117
Figure 11. Program First Mostra de Dansa Independent. Museu de les Arts Escèniques ......121
Figure 12. Performance Review, Dansa 79, 1982. ARCA Archive .....................................130
Figure 13. Paralels, at Teatreneu, 1989. Museu de les Arts Escèniques ..........................158
Figure 14. Kiss my Cactus. National Theatre of Catalonia Archive ....................................178
Figure 15. The Lake of Flies. Sol Picó Archive .................................................................187
A Note on Translations

The use of Catalan, Spanish and English

The names of Catalan and Spanish organizations, associations and festivals are initially written first in the original language (Catalan or Spanish) in italics, and the English equivalent in brackets, for example: Institut del Teatre (Institute of the Theatre). Subsequent references to the organization are in English only.

Newspaper titles are written in the original language in italics. Names of theatres and dance companies are written in the original language in roman type.

All translations from Spanish quotes are mine. These free translations try to capture the central meaning of the text. For reference, the original Spanish version of any quote from a published text is placed in a footnote.

The transcriptions of the interviews with Anna Maleras and Avelina Argüelles are written in English only, in Appendices B and C respectively.
Chapter 1. Introduction: Situating Dance

Dancing Ghosts

In 1977, two years after Francisco Franco, the dictator of Spain, died, the Grup Estudi Anna Maleras (Study Group Anna Maleras) presented, among other choreographies, Guernica'37 at the First Mostra de Dansa Independent (First Independent Dance Showcase). With the name and year of the Basque city that received bombing by the fascist side during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), this short piece brought to Spanish audiences the memories and horror of civil war in a period of time in which civil society and politicians had agreed to forget the recent dictatorship that governed the country (from 1939 to 1975). As an anonymous critic wrote in the Spanish dance magazine Dansa 79,

“This choreography that we have seen on many occasions always captivates the audience because of the emotional charge it entails. We hear the words of Neruda’s poems, the memory of the terrible massacre [at Guernica in 1937] is in everyone’s minds, but it is the dancers who will transmit the emotion to us most vividly, with their ragged and desperate movements, just as they subsequently ensure that the feeling of hope is reborn in all of us. The details of the black headscarf which all the female dancers wore was perfect, as it underlined their identity with the people.

('Crítica, IV Mostra de Dansa,' 1982, p.12)\(^1\)

This choreography by Guillermo Palomares is among the few pieces of that time that directly tackles the horrors of the Civil War and consequently, of the dictatorship. The dancers emulate the bombing of the city of Guernica to the soundtrack of bombs, jumping with raised fists. In 1977, when Spain was preparing to approve an amnesty law, which would affect the responsibility of the dictatorship, and was approving a suggested oblivion of the horrors of the Civil War and the dictatorship, this choreography pushed those memories forward into

---

\(^1\) My translation of the original text in Spanish: ‘Esta coreografía que hemos visto en repetidas ocasiones, siempre capta al público por la carga emocional que entraña. Oímos las palabras de los poemas de Neruda, en las mentes de todos está el recuerdo de la terrible masacre, pero quien nos transmitirá la emoción de forma más viva serán los bailarines, con sus movimientos desgarrados y desesperados, al igual que después lograrán, que en todos nosotros, renazca el sentimiento de la esperanza. Idóneo resultó el detalle del pañuelo negro que llevaban en sus cabezas las bailarinas, pues subrayó la identidad con el pueblo.’
the minds of Spanish audiences. *Guernica’37* staged those memories, which had been repressed during the transition to democracy in the interest of a peaceful democratic government.

The other pieces presented in the First *Mostra*, for example, did not deal with the memories of the recent history of Spain: *Amb Jazz (With Jazz)*, a choreography by Anna Maleras, *Espirituals*, a choreography by Viola Maristany and *Floating*, a choreography by Gerard Collins, among others. As modern dance at that time was enough of a force for modernization, all of these choreographies were taken as innovative and challenging to the previous conservative values in dance preponderant during Francoism.

During most of Franco’s dictatorship (1939-75), modern dance had very little influence in Spain. The Spanish pioneers of modern dance, mainly Aurea de Sarrà, Josefina Cirera and Tórtola Valencia, had previously gone into exile or died during the Civil War. The ideas of modern dance\(^2\), consisting of women claiming a space for femininity outside the domestic sphere, were in direct contradiction to the traditional values that Franco’s regime imposed on female bodies and domesticity. Modern dance appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century as a response to the restrictions and codified vocabulary of ballet. As such, this new dance form allowed women to dance alone on stage without the presence of a male partner, bringing freedom of movement, independence and possibilities of choice to newly empowered western women. Although the fascist regime did not directly oppose the values of modern dance, its own ideology was antithetical to what this modern art form represented. Docility, domesticity and motherhood were the main values that the totalitarian regime in Spain aimed to impose on

\(^2\) The term ‘modern dance’ can be a confusing term. In this text it refers to the early twentieth century dance form that emerged in Europe and the United States as an expression of rebellion against classical-codified ballet forms. Theories of Human movement and expression, Der Moderne Tanz, were being discussed in the German speaking world at the beginning of the twentieth century, with pioneers such as German choreographers Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban. Dance critic John Martin started the discussion of modern dance in the US in the 1930s with his book *The Modern Dance*. Mark Franko (1995) and Ramsay Burt (1995) simultaneously critique the standard narrative of dance modernism, arguing that previous historical approaches ignored the potential of understanding social and political representations through dance, as part of a failure to understand representations of gender.
women. A woman annexed to the domestic sphere did not fit with the image of the modernist woman, who had revolutionized the dance scene, claiming a new space for women on stage, in other ways than the delicate ballerina. Individual creativity, individual expression and the search for new forms of movement were modern dancers’ tools of work, and were in direct opposition with the values supported by the regime. Franco’s regime emphasised mainly traditional dance forms such as folklore and flamenco, over the academic genres of ballet and modern dance.

Only during the last years of the dictatorship was there any receptiveness to modern dance. The progressive decomposition of the regime, combined with the economic growth of the country, allowed more contact with the foreign aesthetic styles that burst into the country after the Dictator’s death. Modern dance entered into Spain in 1967 when Anna Maleras opened her dance school in Barcelona. She had studied in Cannes at the school of Rosella Hightower, with jazz teachers such as Walter Nich and Vanoye Aikens (who was a member of Katherine Dunham’s company). Maleras created her school Estudi de Dansa Anna Maleras (Dance Studio Anna Maleras) in Barcelona, with the objective of bringing new tendencies in dance to Spain that the country was unfamiliar with. Later on, Carmen Serna opened a school in Madrid. She was a Spanish dancer trained in the US. She came to Madrid aided by Carl Paris, a former dancer of Alvin Ailey, and teacher of Graham technique and jazz. Modern dance was thus introduced into Spain gradually. During the transition to democracy in Spain (1975-82), the lack of contact with modern dance during the previous regime, and the new techniques that broke with the codified vocabulary of ballet and flamenco, made modern dance become contemporary dance in Spain, a broader term that would include all forms of new dance such as post-modern dance and contact improvisation. In the

---

3 As was clear in some of the common speeches that Pilar Primo de Rivera gave, ‘women were devoid of any creativity’ (Primo de Rivera, 1944). Pilar Primo de Rivera was the daughter of Spanish dictator General Miguel Primo de Rivera, who imposed a dictatorship in Spain 1923-1930. She was also the sister of Antonio Primo de Rivera the founder of the Spanish Phalange in 1930s. She was a member and director of the Feminine Section of the Phalange, from where she guided women’s indoctrination during the dictatorship of Franco.

4 Rosella Hightower was an American dancer who became popular in Europe and created a school in Cannes, France.
Spanish society of the early democracy, from 1975 to 1980, this new embodied art form became an excellent driving force for modernization. As the dictatorship had imposed limitations on citizens’ movements, such as censorship on free speech and political ideas, modern dance brought new language and vocabulary that allowed for moving in a new and different way, breaking the previous limitations on the body.

**Political Ghosts**

At 6.21 pm on 23 February 1981, Colonel Antonio Tejero and a group of civil guards entered the Spanish Cortes with guns. They burst into the chamber while parliament was electing Spain’s first democratic president following the death of Franco in 1975. Tejero and the armed civil guards held the entire members of the parliament hostage. Supported by other members of the Spanish army, this *coup d’état* aimed to impose a fascist dictatorship on Spain again.

This attempted coup foregrounded the political ghosts that were haunting the democratic process. For seventeen and a half hours Spanish society experienced what the return to a non-democratic regime could mean. This attempted *coup d’état* brought back the fear that the democratic process would revive the ideological oppositions of the Civil War. However, the majority of the political class opposed the coup; some passively and others actively confronted Tejero and resisted his orders. The opposition of Juan Carlos I, the King of Spain, to the *coup d’état* also led to this group of insurgents failing. However, this attempted *coup d’état* demonstrated that Spain still showed symptoms of political anxiety in the process of becoming a democratic country.

When an authoritarian government comes to an end, successor regimes have to decide what to do with the individuals and organizations linked to the previous regime, whether collaborators should be tried or penalized, and whether victims should be compensated. However, in Spain, those responsible for the previous regime, the collaborators and former fascist politicians, were not punished or tried.

---

5 The role of Juan Carlos I leading Spain to a democratic regime has been controversial from its origins, as he was crowned King of Spain during Franco’s dictatorship.
after Franco’s death. Surprisingly, there have been no trials to judge those responsible for deaths, torture and repression. Instead, the Spanish transition was led by a successor government to the Francoist apparatus which pursued a policy of consensus. As the scholars Paloma Aguilar (Aguilar, 2001), Juan Ramón Resina (2000) and Madeleine Davis (2005) note, it was thought that reinforcing the opposition to the memory of the dictatorship would not facilitate a social consensus about democracy at that time. The dictatorship’s legitimacy rested on its triumph in the Civil War in 1939 and the ‘peaceful’ dictatorship era which followed. For this reason, Aguilar (2002) suggests that a process of transition to democracy carried out against the dictatorship would have reactivated memories of a fragmented Spain during the Civil War.

Spain’s way of dealing (or not dealing) with its repressive past has most often been characterized as a deliberate, but largely tacit, agreement to ‘forget’ the past, a pact based upon an erasure of memory. The Pacto del Silencio (Pact of Silence) was first mentioned by the journalist José Antonio Gabriel y Galan in the opinion section of the newspaper El País on 20 February 1988 (Gabriel y Galan, 1988). The article, appeals to a secret pact from 1976 between Franco’s government, led by Juan Carlos I and president Suárez, and the democratic parties in exile, which agreed to enforce a generalised amnesty for Franco’s politicians and collaborators, in return for the installation of a democratic government in Spain. Gabriel y Galvan labels this secret agreement as the Pact of Silence, since there was no public record of it at the time. Afterwards, historiographers and hispanists such as Resina (2000), Salvador Cardús i Ros (2000), Aguilar (2002, 2001) and Labanyi (2002) among others, followed Gabriel y Galan in studying the persistency of the silence in the Spanish transition. The silence on the actions of the dictatorship, these authors argue, has imposed a collective amnesia regarding the memories of repression and trauma; an amnesia that still persists today in democratic Spanish society. This collective amnesia is understood as the collective forgetting of the actions of the past. This amnesia affected perceptions of the previous regime, creating new euphemisms that, for example, would cause the real nature of the dictator Franco to vanish, by referring to him as ‘the head of the previous regime’ instead of ‘the dictator’ (Gabriel y Galan, 1988). This euphemism carries
connotations of oblivion with regard to the real connotations of repression and terror inflicted by the dictatorship. Simultaneously labelled as the pact of oblivion, the pact of silence created a ghost of those memories repressed, which would haunt democratic Spanish society. The term oblivion entails something that is remembered but forgotten; instead, I conceptualise this agreement of not talking about the memories of the past as something that is present in Spanish society, but that has not been talked about. For this reason, in this study, I refer to this pact as the Pact of Silence only.

This research investigates how this political amnesia of the democratic times, and the ghosts it created have shaped the dance scene in Spain, as well as how the dance scene might have been a space from which to articulate concerns about this collective amnesia. Dance, as an expressive art form of non-verbal communication, offered a less threatening vocabulary with which to talk about those silenced matters. Specifically, this study focuses on how female bodies on stage would dance about silence, fear, forgetting and memories of Spanish history.

**Historical Context**

The Spanish transition to democracy comprises the era when Spain moved from Franco’s dictatorship to a democratic state. The transition is considered to have begun when Franco died on 20 November 1975 and continue through the political process of celebrating elections in 1977, the later Spanish Constitution of 1978, the failure of an attempted coup by Colonel Tejero on 23 February 1981 and the electoral victory of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party, PSOE) on 28 October 1982.

My use of the term ‘Spanish society’ or ‘Spain’ is not an attempt to universalize the whole Spanish society as a unified body. Rather, I understand Spanish society as a composite of different bodies, a heterodox collective with diverse reactions to institutionalized decisions and laws. The Spanish philosopher Manuel Cruz (Avance: Pequeñas grandes historias - La Sexta, 2013) has recently warned about the ease of Spanish citizens. Referring to Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 1967), Cruz alerted Spaniards to the dangers of individuals becoming a uniform mass of spectators of the spectacle. This spectacle is, for
Cruz, the political life of Spain, in which citizens cannot participate or modify. Instead, citizens just observe as a passive audience of entertaining events. With this metaphor, Cruz calls for the possibilities of resistance that can be articulated by anybody. Other elements of social culture have been researched at length (Montero, Gunther, Torcal and Menezó, 1998), such as the disaffection and political apathy of Spanish citizens, who, perhaps as a consequence of an imposed silence, do not feel compelled to become involved in the political life of the state and simply observe that life through what is being said in the media. Nonetheless, when using the term ‘Spanish Society’, I refer to an eclectic mass society, a heterodox collective that may respond differently to the politics of spectacle, involving diverse, individual and grouped resistant actions.

Franco’s death left Spain at a crossroads. With the Caudillo gone, even the most conservative defenders of Francoism realized they would have to make some concessions to the democratic claims inside and outside the country (Preston, 2004). There was hope that the passage to a democratic regime might be managed peacefully and without blood.

To understand the difficulties that Spain faced during this transition to democracy, it is necessary to briefly review the different regime changes during the twentieth century in the country (chronology of Spanish political trends is available in Appendix A). Additionally, we should understand the division of the two oppositional Spains that will be recurrent in this study: the extremely Catholic, fascist and conservative one against the anarchist and communist side. Both sides confronted each other during the Civil War of 1936-39. During the transition to democracy, the politics of consensus would try to please both sides.

The twentieth century in Spain started with a major economic crisis and subsequent political instability. The monarchy of Alfonso XVIII, who governed from 1902, accepted General Primo de Rivera’s coup d’état in 1923 that established a military dictatorship (1923-31). During this period, freedoms and rights were suppressed. The difficult economic situation and the fast growth of Republican parties pushed Primo de Rivera to submit his resignation in 1930. The King called elections in 1931 and the victory of the Republicans established the
Second Spanish Republic. During the Second Republic, Spanish society and politics turned towards a radicalization of the left and the right wings. In 1936 soldiers from the colony of Morocco, under the leadership of General Franco, rose up against the Republican government leading to the start of the Civil War (1936-39). Spain remained divided into two zones: one under the authority of republican government: progressives, communists, trade unionists and, in general, all defenders of the democratic regime, and the other controlled by the insurrectionists, also called the Nationalists: traditionalists, landowners, the Catholic Church, the military and the fascists. The help of the fascist regimes of Germany and Italy for the Spanish fascist insurrectionists was more consistent than that of the Soviet Union and Mexico for republican Spain. Raging until the eve of World War II in 1939, the Civil War ended with the defeat of the Republic and the imposition of a fascist dictatorship on 1 April 1939, which lasted until the death of General Franco in 1975.

Franco and his political advisers had planned a monarchical succession to the regime, and for this purpose Juan Carlos I of Borbón was named head of state in 1969. With the return of the monarchy to Spain, after Alfonso XIII abandoned the country in response to its republican democratic will in 1931, the regime wanted to ensure its continuation after the dictator’s death. For this purpose, Franco appointed admiral Luis Carrero Blanco as Prime Minister of Spain in 1973 to be a second heir besides the king, as it seemed a matter of time until Carrero Blanco would succeed the ailing dictator who was already experiencing health problems. However, the plans of Franco had to change when, six months after being made Prime Minister, Carrero Blanco was assassinated by the Basque terrorist group ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna). Since Carrero had become the most powerful figure in Spain in Franco’s absence, his death was instrumental in the transition towards a democratic government in Spain (Tusell Gómez and García Queipo de Llano 1993). His successor, the new Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro,

---

6 At the end of the Civil War, Spain was so ravaged that when the 2nd World War began a couple of months later General Franco decided Spain would not participate in it. Despite an official position of neutrality, during the war, Spain simultaneously sent troops to fight alongside the German Nazis, La División Azul, and on the other hand sent dissidents to the concentration camps of Mauthausen and Auschwitz.
promised liberalizing reforms, such as the right to form political associations. However, the executions of political prisoners in 1974 already showed his unwillingness for liberalization (Preston, 2004). Arias Navarro could not balance the extreme right’s fears of political openness and the left’s claims for democracy.

In the first eighteen months after the death of Franco in 1975, the Francoist former government negotiated minor concessions with democratic sectors to start changing the dictatorship into a democratic government. Even though the new King chose to keep Arias Navarro as prime minister, the illness and death of Franco exposed the minister’s weakness and further eroded his authority. Arias Navarro resigned on 1 July 1976. Juan Carlos I named Adolfo Suárez as the new prime minister, with the mission of dismantling Franco’s dictatorship and creating the basic political apparatus for a democratic regime. The new government aimed at operating within the regime’s legal system, thus avoiding the possibility of a second right-wing military intervention. Suárez began the legalization of political parties such as the Communist Party, which had been operating in exile. At the same time, other parties were created, such as Unión de Centro Democrático (Centre Democratic Union, UCD) led by Suárez himself, the PSOE, and Alianza Popular (AP), which was created by Manuel Fraga, the Minister of Tourism and Information during the Franco regime (Gunther, 2011). On 15 June 1977 Spain held its first democratic elections since 1936 and the centre-party UCD led by Adolfo Suarez, won the elections. Major support was given to political parties perceived as “moderate” by the electorate (UCD and PSOE). Nevertheless, the majority of the votes punished the more radical parties, those forces that reminded Spanish society of the extreme past in the Civil War, namely the Communist Party (PCE) and at the opposite extreme, the Fascist political forces (AP). These moderate results determined the most important pacts of the transition, the creation of the constitution in 1978, and the decentralization of Spain into autonomous communities (dissipating the Basque and Catalan federalist claims through a Spain comprising regions with some degree of autonomy).

Between 1979 and 1981, the UCD proposed several democratic changes to the government; however, the different ideologies within the party, from conservatives to liberal capitalists, made it difficult to present a cohesive political
programme and Adolfo Suárez resigned as president in January 1981 (Preston, 2004). Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo was appointed at that moment to lead the country until the anticipated call for elections in 1982. Tejero’s attempted coup of February 1981 came during this period of uncertainty. As the coup was unsuccessful, the democratic process in Spain continued. On 28 October 1982, the general elections took place under the shadow of military intervention, but the third elections gave a majority to the PSOE. Felipe González was the president of Spain until 1996 when the Popular Party (PP), the new coalition of Alianza Popular and the Catholic right, won the elections. To date (2014) these two political parties have alternated in power, presenting different approaches to the recuperation of memories. The PSOE have supported policies of remembrance, creating the Law of Recuperation of Historical Memory in October 2007. On the contrary, the PP has systematically dismantled the policies approved for remembrance.

Research Questions

This thesis is a critical exploration of what happened during the transition to democracy in Spain with a particular focus on dance companies and female choreographers. It takes into consideration the historical events and processes that have shaped the current Spanish dance scene. Indeed, it is a study of how history has informed cultural practices and how Spanish society, and Spanish female artists in particular, has negotiated aspects of feminine identity within their choreographies.

The urgency to modernize society and incorporate Western aesthetics did not leave enough time for the performance scene to deal with the problems of the past dictatorial regime. In Dismembering the Dictatorship, The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy, Juan Ramón Resina (2000) frames this issue by asking: why did Spanish society choose to forget the past? Nowadays there are a few choreographies, as I will analyse later, that deal with the confusion and manipulated construction of identities in contemporary Spain. My research questions the relationship between dance and collective memory by asking: How do dancing bodies engage with a nation’s historical-political past to prevent a
process of forgetting? How do dancing bodies provide an arena for discussing political identities? How do choreographic practices offer possibilities to talk and remember the oppressed memories of history? How has the Pact of Silence impacted the gendered body in choreography?

I acknowledge my own involvement in this research, first as a native of Barcelona and a participant on the scene as a professional dancer, and second as a witness to the events I describe. By acknowledging myself as another social actress in the scene, like Pallabi Chakravorty in her book Bells of Change (2008), I strategically alternate between the roles of ‘native’ and ‘researcher’ without losing the perspective of my own position within the structure of dance studies in academia. I am a native of Spain, a contemporary dancer with a background in Social and Cultural Anthropology, and therefore I believe it is useful to begin by positioning myself in this research.

First, I would like to note my involvement with the conservatory of dance in Barcelona, which allowed me to meet the main figures participating the introduction of modern dance in Spain. Pioneer Anna Maleras has always refused to participate in the public conservatory. However from her private dance school she offered workshops and intensive courses, which the main dance institutions always recommended. The conservatory of dance had among its teachers’ major figures in the development of dance in Barcelona and Spain: Avelina Argüelles, for example, who was the introducer of the Limon technique in Spain, taught such a technique there. These two figures, Maleras and Argüelles, are two of the three key studies in this thesis. Second, when I arrived at the Institut del Teatre (Institute of the Theatre) dance conservatory in Barcelona, I chose to specialise in contemporary dance. At that moment in 1997, contemporary dance included systems and methods of modern dance as well as post-modern dance. In our physical and theoretical training we embodied the history of modern dance, starting with the Graham technique during the first years and ending with post-modern dance in the final year of our professional training. Conversely, very little was done to define our own national history; maybe there was not enough time for a historical perspective to cover Catalan and Spanish dance pioneers. However, the situation of modern dance as a discipline has not changed since. Dance has
remained in the conservatoires, focusing on technical instruction, unable to create academic discussions on its sociopolitical dimension. Finally, it was my parallel higher education in History and Anthropology that provided a framework to support my critical thinking and discussion of the sociopolitical dimensions of Catalan and Spanish dance.

The Spanish journalist Joaquim Noguero (Noguero, 2008b), who writes about the situation of contemporary dance in Spain, suggests there is neither a consciousness of collective work nor a collective politics of dance. Veteran generations cannot give space to the young and reckless generations (Noguero, 2008a), because the lack of governmental planning and subsidies has left very little budget for long-established companies, which at the same time cannot survive without governmental help. Therefore, dance is promoted by the private endeavours of entrepreneur creators. Esther Vendrell recently wrote her thesis (2008) on the history of dance in Catalonia and Spain and notes that, during the democratic period, 1992 was the end of the enthusiastic beginning of contemporary dance in Barcelona (Vendrell, 2008). The third generation of creators faces the problem of a shortage. This generation continues to innovate, produce and perform but in a small-scale version. This generation has been left to create small productions that often prioritize expression over production resources (Vendrell, 2007). Alongside my dance training, I studied history and specialised in social and cultural anthropology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Only at university was I confronted, through courses and seminars, with Spain’s recent past. It was in the late 1990s that scholars and academics began to conceive what was later called the ‘Pact of Oblivion’ and the ‘Pact of Silence’ (Aguilar 2001; Humlebaek 2011). These two concepts describe the process that Spain went through in the transition to a democratic system. The pact to forget the dictatorship that would inevitably forget the assassination and repression of dissidents was a Pact of Oblivion that carried with it a Pact of Silence during the transition to democracy and the democratic regime.

7 Following the explanation of Joaquim Noguero (Noguero, 2008b). The first generation of creator-dancers, the pioneers, can be situated in 1975-80, the second generation in the 1980s and the third generation in the 1990s.
In order to consider gendered dancing bodies in different historical and political frameworks, this work focuses on three female choreographers who are paradigmatic of their times, Anna Maleras, Avelina Argüelles and Sol Picó. This thesis aims to analyse how collective historical amnesia has direct repercussions on the construction of feminine identity in post-Franco Spain. By participating in an emergent process of acknowledging the Pact of Silence, this study aims to trace the development of gender values, as well as the consequences of this collective oblivion in the democratic scene. For this purpose, my research focuses first on Maleras’ pioneering work, who reintroduced the first influences of modern dance to Spain in the late 1960s. Secondly, it focuses on the choreographic work of Argüelles, who belongs to the first generation of contemporary dance pioneers that emerged in the art scene at the end of the 1970s. Thirdly, it focuses on Picó, who created her first choreography at the end of the 1980s. The selection of these three figures responds to the historic relevance of their actions in the history of contemporary dance in Spain. Anna Maleras was the first person to re-introduce modern dance into post-Franco Spain, after the 40 years of dictatorship during which no contemporary dance was allowed in the country. Argüelles was a student of Anna Maleras during the introduction of contemporary dance in Barcelona. After dancing with Maleras’ Study Group, she was one of the founding members of Heura in 1978, a choreographic collective of nine female choreographers. However, in 1980 she decided to continue her career as a dancer and choreographer on her own. Argüelles remained a central figure in the dance scene as a choreographer and teacher at the only official modern dance educational institution in Spain until 2000. Her pieces were the first ones to win international awards and underline contemporary topics of gender relationships, memories and power. Similarly, Picó appears in the Spanish dance scene presenting several solo, self-danced and choreographed pieces. In 1996 she joined La Caldera: a choreographic platform of six choreographers and dance companies, which she left in 2000 to continue her career alone. Picó’s figure, simultaneously loved and hated by the critics, makes her case appealing to the study of femininity and modernity throughout her choreographies. The distinctive movement vocabulary and aesthetics of each choreographer made them iconic artists of their
time in Spain. Nevertheless, in the cases of Argüelles and Picó, it is their similar professional paths, joining a collective choreographic group and abandoning it later, and their performances of female realities that provide a vivid illustration of the ways a body can discuss gender conditions during the transition to democracy and the democratic era in Spain. My interest in selecting three prominent figures in the dance scene is due to two things: the choreographic choices in their pieces (including Maleras’ pieces that she performed in rather than created herself), and how the course their careers took exemplifies the different ways that Spanish dance artists, through their teaching and work, engaged with the sociopolitical issues of their times.

**A Note on Moving Bodies**

This study focuses mainly on the city of Barcelona, Spain. I choose Barcelona as the primary city of study for various reasons. Firstly, Barcelona had a leading role in the introduction of contemporary dance to Spain. Anna Maleras was born and raised in Barcelona and founded her dance school in the city, bringing the first foreign modern dancers and teachers to Spain. Therefore Barcelona subsequently had a leading position in the development of this dance form. This city delivers the ideal confluence of history, culture and politics and a history of questioning Spanish identity. Secondly, Barcelona is my hometown, where I trained in contemporary dance and so I have knowledge of and access to the dance community.

This section provides a general statement on the theoretical field of dance. My methodologies depart from a critical dance studies perspective, and borrow from contemporary semiotics and post-structural criticism to analyse dance in contemporary Spain. Susan Foster in *Reading Dancing* (1988) sets a clear example of how to study dance as a system of meaning. Following Susan Foster (1988) and Randy Martin (1998), I will establish an inquiry into the relationship of dance, politics and cultural theory. Martin’s notion of critical dance studies

---

8 The concept of national Catalanism in confrontation with the central Spanish nationalism will be explained in ‘Chapter 3, National Interest: The Pact of Silence’. 
clarifies how dance studies have been informed by critical theory in its methodologies and epistemologies. Dance becomes a practice ready to bring analytical tools for theorizing other social areas such as politics and culture. Therefore, dance stands as a tool of theorization crucial to addressing the social and political problematization of issues relating to embodiment, mobilizations, subjectivities, representation, discipline, and control (Martin, 1998). My research uses critical dance and cultural studies texts to analyse the construction of gender identity in the pieces of Spanish choreographers of the democratic period (1975-present). As corporeality and the body are key sites at which a politics of gender representation is contested (and resisted), one of my fundamental concerns is to develop a feminist reading of the three selected choreographers’ work.

**The Body and Corporeality**

Mark Franko (2006) calls attention to a methodological debate occurring in dance studies, regarding the difference between the formalist and contextualist approaches. The formalists, according to Franko, are those who favour movement analysis over other critical methods (Franko, 2006). They seek descriptive and theoretical tools that account for dance experience. Historians and other critical theorists are included in the contextualist group, which considers a broader experience of dance, such as its historical and socio-cultural context. This model, as well as my research, takes dance as an extension or distillation of social practice.

My work focuses on the way in which dance creates social and cultural meanings. Understanding dance as a socially constructed phenomenon allows us to analyse it as cultural performances and thus acknowledge the flexibility and multi-voiced character of dance in relation to culture.

Foster’s essay on the body in dance, *Choreographing History* (Foster, 1995a), provides opportunities for critique and reflection on social theorists such as Michel Foucault, emphasizing the agency of the body as a vital counterbalance to the neglect of agents in traditional dance studies. Foster asserts that,
The possibility of a body that is written upon but that also writes, moves critical studies of the body in new directions. It asks scholars to approach the body’s involvement in any activity with an assumption of potential agency to participate in or resist whatever forms of cultural production are underway.

(Foster 1995a, p.15)

Foster, like Taylor (2003) and Novack (Novack, 1990), does not formulate an established category of the body, but rather considers what bodies are constructing, or how these values locate embodiment. Foster asserts with regards to dance studies, ‘[they] speak of dance as an embodied discourse, of the body as a cultural construction, and of culture as embodied. And [they] find in dance an articulation of cultural notions of identity – individual, gendered, and collective.’ (Foster 1992, p.362). Foster studies the bodies through its cultural practice, and within a dance studies perspective; she also considers the dancing body through cultural, historical and finally human experience. The body is a vast reservoir of signs and symbols; bodies not only pass meaning along, they also create choreographies of signs ‘dance, cultivates a body that initiates as well as responds’ (Foster, 1995b, p.15). Corporealities edited by Foster (Foster, 1995b) introduces a broader concept of the body, understanding it as an imaginable and malleable matter, inseparable from historical and cultural dimensions.

Within a critique of the invisibility of women in the patriarchal system, Adrienne Rich (1980) notes that silence is central to women’s culture. Silence might be the ideological space traditionally reserved for the feminine. Along this line, in ‘The Laugh of Medusa’ (Cixous, Cohen and Cohen, 1976), the poststructuralist feminist Helen Cixous composes an exhortation to a feminine mode of writing. Cixous urges women to break their silence, to write themselves out of the world that men have constructed for women. Cixous claims that women must write their bodies, their desires, which have only been talked about by men, and use their bodies as a way to communicate. Drawing from this argument, I claim that with their dancing bodies, female dancers write their realities and subjectivities. In this
sense, using their female body, these dancers and choreographers can break the silence traditionally reserved for women’s culture.

**Movement Analysis**

While art could be considered as autonomous of its time, I understand that art inevitably suggests images of the world surrounding. Dance studies have identified the body with the text, and simultaneously as a writer of culture. Foster suggests the reader of dance must learn ‘to see and feel rhythm in movement, to comprehend the three dimensionality of the body’ (1988, p.58). My methodology follows Foster’s framework to analyse choreography in its different codes of movement. The adequacy of this analysis is that Foster complements a formal semiological approach to movement with sociological and political inquiries. This is crucial to my research because it determines the sociopolitical dimension of analysing movement and performance. In a similar manner, Raymond Williams, in his book *The Sociology of Culture* (1981), demonstrates the compatibility of a formal semiological approach with sociopolitical analysis, as one complements the other.

The works of Roland Barthes (1977) and Michel Foucault (Foucault, Rainbow and Faubion, 1998) articulate critiques on the different ways of interpretation. Dance scholar Susan Foster draws from Barthes and Foucault’s argument that reading and dancing are forms of body imprinting ‘[these authors] have attempted to rethink the issue of representation, and in doing so have called into question the nature of the subject (and the body) who engages in the act of representation’ (1988, p.xx). Foster’s choice of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ as metaphors for interpreting dance, serves as an example of incorporating critical theory into dance studies. In ‘Lesson in Writing’, Barthes analyses the Japanese Bunraku puppet theatre as a ‘performative writing’ (1977), a text with three different writings: the movement of the puppets, the actions of the puppeteers and the vocals of the singer-narrator. It is this concept of body movement as an act of writing that I apply in the analysis of the work of Spanish choreographers. Likewise, I emphasize, in my research in the Spanish dance scene, the performative writing of the body as a discourse of different writings: the movement of the dancers’ bodies, the directions of the choreographers and the narrative of the piece.
My dance analysis also benefits from Foster’s choreographic conventions which structure movement analysis in five categories (Foster, 1988). The first, the frame, describes the way the dance introduces itself in the performance scene: the announcement of the piece in newspapers, magazines and posters; descriptions of the event in these announcements; the theatre or space where it is represented; the program with notes and titles that further indicate what to expect from the dances. Beginnings and ends of the dances are also an important frame guiding the viewer into the dance. Second, the mode of representation relates to the way the dance talks about the world in many possible associations: such as in a metaphor, by imitation, by replication, for example the energy might be seen in the interaction between two dancers. Third, the style refers to the use of the body in conjunction with specific movement qualities. Any stylistic choice in dance implies the rejection of other styles in favour of a particular one. The style results from three sets of choreographic conventions: quality (light, strong, directness, or quickness) use of body parts; and the dancer’s orientation in the performance space. As Foster mentions in her early book (Foster, 1988), the early twentieth century movement theorist Rudolf Laban offers a comprehensive systematization of quality in movement: he analyses quality and effort in movement by dividing it in four basic components, (each one subdivided in two opposite dimensions): space, direct and indirect; time, sustained and quick; weight, strong and light; flow, free and bound. The fourth element in Foster’s convention is the vocabulary, comprising the small elements of movement, which make the dance. This method analyses the dance in small parts to access the codes that regulate the sequences of movement. Fifth, the syntax analyses the selection and combination of moves. This code analyses the meaning of repetitions of moves or movement phrases. I use Foster’s propositions as a way to frame the choreography with its movement vocabulary and impact in the world. This code of movement analysis, complemented with Laban’s terminology in movement quality framed in Preston-Dunlop (1998), helps to structure my own choreographic analysis, and at the same time does not restrict other approaches that may appear in the study.

Janet Adshead-Lansdale (2010) suggests that dance analysis requires attention to the detail of the dance, its movements and dynamic qualities, its subject topics, its
spatial orientation, its visual and musical environment as well as the multiple significances suggested in it. Lansdale proposes the use of theories and methodologies of intertextuality to demonstrate the possible different interpretations of a dance or any system of signs (Adshead-Lansdale, 2010). In line with Roland Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’ (Barthes, 1977b), in which he proposes there are as many readings of a text as readers interpreting it, Lansdale suggests the meanings in dance are not in the piece itself, but in the network of signifiers that the reader makes of it. The term intertextuality in dance, then, serves to expose the possibility of multiple interpretations in one piece, depending on the historical, cultural, and social interconnections of the actual reader. Considering the interrelationships of the reader with its sociocultural context, intertextuality recognises the co-existence of several ‘truths’ on the text. In this sense, the reader is also responsible for constructing these truths, and displaying the rationale for them. Following this argument, my readings of selected choreographic actions, do not aim to establish one true interpretation, but to discuss the rationale that has conducted the reader-audience or the academic to this interpretation.

Dance as Political

In 1931 Emma Goldman explained in her autobiography (Goldman, 2011) how she was admonished for dancing at a party in New York. She was told that it did not befit an agitator to dance with such reckless abandon. Goldman responded furiously

I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy (...) If it meant that, I did not want it

(Goldman, 2011, p.47)

---

9 Lansdale borrowed the term intertextuality from poststructuralist philosophy. With the coinage of intertextuality, Julia Kristeva (Kristeva, 1980) attempted to synthesize Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotics, in his study of how signs obtain their meaning within the structure of a text, with Mikhail Bakhtin’s examination of the multiple meanings, heteroglossia, that a single text contains.
This episode was later paraphrased and transformed in her famous line ‘If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be in your revolution’. This quote is an inspiration for my research to explore critical and political dimensions in contemporary dance performances. I would like to embrace Emma Goldman’s statement for my research, as it suggests that the search for agency and the potential for empowerment lies in all elements of life and cannot be relegated to a firmly cordoned-off arena named the political. It is embedded and reflected in dance too.

Under what historical and aesthetic circumstances does it become justifiable and necessary to speak of dance as political? I consider dance as tacitly political because it writes identities and ideologies that have political implications. Mark Franko (2006) analyses this relationship by looking at how dancers have been manipulated and manipulate their own image in the service of politics (for example Martha Graham and Mary Wigman); and by looking, as well, at how scholars have studied this manipulation of dancers in specific historical conditions, such as Susan Manning in the Nazi Regime. Thinking ‘with’ but not ‘within’ the models of the historical period of study, Franko asserts,

I believe that politics is as closely and substantially connected to dance in the real world as dance itself is connected to ritual in anthropology. Dance, however does not operate directly in the political sphere, and thus dance is not, strictly speaking, political.

(Franko, 2006, p.5)

Dance might not be strictly political, but it does tackle ideologies, and it carries political effects for this reason. Ideologies are means by which individual identities are maintained by larger group formations. Dance and the body in movement can make and unmake identities, because dance frames the body and its way of moving, and with this, it proposes representations of identities.

And because so many of our most explosive and most tenacious categories of identity are mapped onto bodily difference, including race and gender, but expanding through a continual slippage of categories to include ethnicity and nationality and even sexuality as well, we should not ignore the ways in which dance signals and enacts social identities in all their continually changing configurations.
Indeed, dance can perform the effects of political power, and with the same gesture resist them. It is this resistance that makes dance a powerful form of political expression. In my research, I want to understand the political implications and modes of resistance in the construction of gender identity that Spanish choreographers provide with their pieces.

Repositioning corporeality back into culture, it is necessary to rethink performance, and specifically dance, in terms of ‘presence’ and ‘disappearance’. Dance is not only an ephemeral art, which may disappear at the end of the performance; dance creates meanings and resistance that persist in culture through several means, such as into the minds of the audience. Franko questions the notion of dance ephemerality and performance, for dance has a capacity to be performed again (Franko in Goellner & Murphy 1995). Dancing also produces archival documentation.

Similarly, Diana Taylor (2003) challenges the ephemerality of performance as opposed to the materiality of the archive, which endures over time. Archives are the material documents and records that are kept and conserved in an institution for endurance. Meanwhile, the repertoire is the embodied knowledge performed, which can transmit cultural memory: ‘we learn and transmit knowledge through embodied action, through cultural agency, and by making choices’ (Taylor 2003, p.xvi). This political positioning of Taylor reviews the definition of performance as ‘the many practices and events - dance, theatre, ritual, political rallies, funerals - that involve theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event-appropriate behaviours’ (Taylor 2003, p.3). On the opposite side, Peggy Phelan delimits the life of performance to the present: ‘performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation’ (Phelan in Taylor, 2003, p.5). However, other scholars (Roach, 1996; Thompson and Schechner, 2004) have extended the understanding of performance by making it co-terminous with memory and history, to the extent that it participates in the transfer and continuity of knowledge. Indeed, and for the purpose of this research, performance marks identities, bends time, and reshapes bodies. As Taylor notes (2003), the debate on the ephemerality of performance is highly political; thus, if
performance lacks the ability to transmit memories and knowledge, whose memories are disappearing? An audience, in this case, plays a key position for the cultural memory performed on stage. As eye-witnesses, they sustain the archive, rejecting the possibility of the disappearance of performance. Along with this experience Taylor encourages a responsibility among the community of witnesses to act on what they have seen.

The comprehension of dance as simultaneously productive and reproductive is echoed by Cynthia Novack, who remarks that ‘Dance may reflect and resist cultural values simultaneously,’ noting the example of the ballerina who ‘embodies and enacts stereotypes of the feminine while she interprets a role with commanding skill, agency and a subtlety that denies stereotype’ (Novack, 1990). Sharing the Dance Contact Improvisation and American Culture (1990) is Cynthia Novack’s comprehensive analysis of contact improvisation. The title suggests not only a description of the principles of this new cooperative dance form, but also the way Contact Improvisation’s values have simultaneously reflected and constructed American culture as the form has transformed over time. In this thesis I pursue her notion that in order to understand any dance form, one must take into account the interplay of its different facets: (a) the art: choreographic structures, movement styles, techniques of dance; (b) the institutions: local, national, global, in which it is practiced and performed; and (c) those who participate in it as performers, producers, spectators and commentators (Novack, 1990). In this sense, in analysing the trajectory of contemporary dance in Spain, I consider the art as well as the social institutions of its contemporary moment in history, and even more, those persons that appear in these interactions.

**Theoretical Foundations: The Problem of Memory**

Memory and oblivion are arguably two major matters in democratic Spain, and are clearly crucial concepts for this thesis. After nearly forty years of democracy, since the death of Franco in 1975, Spain has been dealing with problems of memory and recovery of the country’s history.

Current studies of the transition to democracy in Spain are still incomplete. As Salvador Cardús i Ros states in ‘Politics and the Intervention of Memory’ (2000),
only after the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the acceptance of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, did it become possible to propose criticism against the social and political influences of the democratization process. Recent criticisms of contemporary Spanish culture raise questions of how Spanish society deals with the past (Davis, 2005; Resina, 2000a). In 1975 Franco died and Spain raced for a fast democratization, refusing to confront those responsible for the former regime. The transition was sustained on the erasure of memory and a consequent reinvention of a new political tradition. After a long history of silence, politicians, scholars and the media are now discussing the extent of Francoist repression, the heritage of the Civil War and the implications of the deliberate renunciation of responsibility for confronting the dictatorial regime. The Pact of Silence was a tacit agreement reached by political elites and the media during the transition (Vilarós 1998; Cardús in Resina 2000).10 A democratic government that evolves from a dictatorship is confronted with the problem of memory. As Carsten Humlebaek mentions in his recent article on the transition to a democratic Spain, ‘El Pacto del Olvido’ (2011), facing the authoritarian past is a delicate task because it implies consideration of the complicities of part of the national community with the dictatorship.

The French historian Pierre Nora, known for his work on memory and identity, poses memory and history as opposite concepts. Memory is alive, and remains in permanent evolution, ‘open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting […] vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer […] a representation of the past’ (1989, p.8). Nora’s study of the places of memory becomes entangled in Spain’s historical amnesia. Nora presents the term lieux de mémoire as local or micro sites that do still preserve the memory of the past. These are sites of displaced memories, they preserve the past only fragmentarily, without a general context into which they might be inserted. Lieux de mémoire are

10 As explained in these articles, political elites are the generation of politicians governing under Franco. At his death, these politicians, such as Manuel Fraga, remained in power, negotiating an agreement for the future government of Spain, with the acceptance of the newborn democratic media, El País, for example.
places where memory crystalizes itself; they are the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory. Places that embodied memory would be a very useful concept in de-constructing the silent history of the democratic transition in Spain. To think that places also embody memory helps to sustain the thesis that memory, albeit repressed, remains in Spanish bodies (and places).

Memory, whether it is constructed at an individual level or the sort that is developed socially and internalized by the group, is in all cases an invention (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992). As Hobsbawm exposes in *The Invention of Tradition*, memory is the interpretation of a reality that aims to justify the actions of the main actors involved. Overall, memory is a justification of the present with certain expectations of the future (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992). Social or collective memories describe the narratives that are hegemonic in a specific group, thus the control of collective memories is essential to designate the relationship of this group with its past. Collective memory is accordingly socially constructed and enacted. In Foucault’s terms, memory reflects the power of the dominant, but it is also a negotiation between the official narratives and the reaction-interpretation of the individual. In this sense, memory also endows the repressed group with the power to reject or reconstruct a particular given message. In other words, the recuperation or re-appropriation of memory challenges hegemonic visions of history.

As an oppositional conceptualization of forgetting, Petar Ramadanovic, in his book *Forgetting Futures: On Memory, Trauma and Identity* (2001), also mentions the importance of forgetting and how it (forgetting) defines who we are:

> In order to be we, we forget. Some then say that there is a healthy forgetting, a necessary and curative forgetting because it makes it possible for us to work, to tell stories, to present ourselves to ourselves, reconciling the present and the past, reconciling one and another we that we are.

(Ramadanovic, 2001, p.7)
It is between these two possibilities of forgetting, on the one hand as a disease, a poison, and on the other hand, as a cure, in which forgetting appears as an important element of identity building.

In contrast with the possibility of forgetting, the notion of embodied memory describes the unification of body and mind as a single entity wherein memories are embedded. Memories are, then, not forgotten, but repressed. This concept was introduced in the late nineteenth century by evolutionists Jean Baptiste Lamark and Ernst Haeckel in opposition to the Descartian philosophical duality separating mind and body. Their theories argued that the past is located in the body of the individual, and the individual is a summation of the whole history that had preceded him (Lamarck, 1876; Haeckel, 1879). Exploring the perception of phenomena through the experience of the body in modern society, Merleau-Ponty (1962) postulated that our consciousness is embodied. According to Paul Connerton’s *How Societies Remember* (Connerton, 1989), bodily practices are transmitted in and as traditions. In this sense, the body is seen as a carrier of memory of different types of social practice. Along similar lines, dance studies, as with the study of movement and actions, offer a privileged position for the study of embodied memories. The study of bodies and corporealities facilitates the understanding of how memories operate in bodies. Dance scholars have researched the production and selection of individual or collective memories. Lena Hammergren (1995), for instance, uses the figure of Walter Benjamin’s *flâneuse* to recreate a past landscape through the body memory of those who experienced a particular historical event, in her case, the Swedish universal exposition. From another perspective, my research focuses on how memories are embedded in bodies, and thus, when there is a systemic censorship over memories and language, the body might be one of the only elements that can articulate those oppressed memories.

Labanyi, echoing Derrida’s historical-materialist reading of ghosts in *Specters of Marx* (2006), argues that the whole of contemporary Spanish culture can be read as a ghost story (Labanyi, 2002). As Derrida notes, ghosts are traces of those who could not leave traces, victims of history who were excluded from the dominant narratives of the winners. Thus, those suppressed during the dictatorship, the
republicans, the peripheral nationalists - Basques, Catalans and Galicians - and all those who did not fit into the regime’s fascist values, belong to the ghost history of Spain. How, then, does Spanish society deal with its ghosts?

There are several ways to deal with ghosts. Ghosts, like the memories they stand for, are beyond the ontological realm. Avery Gordon in *Ghostly Matters* (Gordon, 2008) reflects on how knowledge in our age is directly dependant on an economic and political system that depends on practices of social disappearance and enslavement. Gordon conceptualised the ghost as ‘not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life’ (Gordon, 2008). Ghosts are often ignored or denied in the construction of history, yet a denial of their existence may result in those ghosts haunting the present. Derrida’s Hauntology suggests that the present exists only with respect to the past and that society will end up orienting itself towards the ghost of the past (Derrida 2006). Spanish ghost history has co-existed in the marginality of the official history of Francoism. Now, almost four decades after the death of Franco, those ghosts are rising up to be recognized. In this research I identify them through the bodies of the female choreographers making work in contemporary Spain. Their labour on stage talks about ghostly matters that have been haunting Spanish history since the dictatorship, unresolved issues of gender, fear and risk.

**Theoretical Foundations: Choreographing Power and Resistance**

A primary way of knowing and understanding the world comes through conceptions of our bodies and through the ‘movement experiences’ that society offers us (Novack 1990); culture is embodied. As citizens, we create movement, produce and reproduce it, and with these actions we participate in the making and transmission of culture. In this research on the transition to democracy in Spain, the analysis of the dance scene serves as a channel for investigating the relationship between movement, power and society. Therefore, not only does the sociocultural system produce certain bodies and movements, but also bodies have the capacity to create social systems. ‘Dancing Culture’ (Foster 1992) is one of Foster’s earlier demands for a recreation of embodiment in writing as a way to
theorize the double relationship between society and the body. I integrate my writing and theorizing inside this established tradition of dance scholarship.

This study inevitably deals with concepts of power and resistance in contemporary Spain. Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977) is critical in assisting dance scholars to conceptualize the dancing body (Foster, 2010; Franko, 1995; Manning, 1988), and the spectre of power relations within which it moves. *Discipline and Punish* traces the genealogy of social control and the development of punishment through history: how society has moved from public executions on the street to incarcerating people in institutions, the modern prison system. As punishment becomes more about the control of the soul rather than the torture of the body, this book examines the changing relationship between body and subjectivity.

In his genealogy of the modern system of punishment and control, Foucault’s analysis shows how techniques and institutions, developed for different purposes, converged to create the modern system of disciplinary power. The adoption of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon as a tool for surveillance promotes the adoption of the individual as an entity perceptible to power and consequently susceptible to its control. Foucault’s conception of power is defined as a network of relationships; power can be exercised but never owned. Thus, power is invested in the body, as a way of giving skills and indoctrinating this body; just like students, soldiers and prisoners. The concept of training the body emerged as part of the disciplinary social economy of modernity. Public institutions took part in the regulation and production of bodily energies, ‘The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely’ (Foucault, 1977). As Foucault describes, training became the chief function of disciplinary power in official institutions such as schools and factories, among others. However, while some critics of Foucault focus on docility, equated with the passivity of members of society, I instead read Foucault’s genealogy of power as a chance for resistance, as this is an important element in every subjectivity. Foucault says ‘where there is power,
there is resistance’ (1980, p.135), and I particularly use this claim to argue that there are possibilities for defiance in every power network, and some of these possibilities are located in dance.

My concept of resistance is embedded in de Certeau’s renowned book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (De Certeau, 1988). This is a book about the ordinary man/woman and about his/her activities. De Certeau’s everyday practice makes explicit ‘the system of operational combination, which also compose a culture’ (1988, p.xli) and highlights the models of action of this ordinary individual, the users, or as he calls them, the consumers, the dominated element in society. He describes the consumer as a silent symbolic or second-level producer, a nomadic traveller, who covers the territories of the others in a creative way. The consumer is a producer of creative uses; a renter who temporarily borrows the goods that he needs and seals them with his personal subjectivity.

De Certeau characterizes the consumer as dominated but not passive or quiet. He emphasizes the consumption practices of everyday life, and, in more detail, everyday practices: the tricks, deceits and simulations through which the common man and woman manifests his/her extraordinary creativity as consumption. This consumption, which is ‘devious, dispersed and insinuates itself everywhere,’ with certain impositions from a dominant economic order, ‘does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its ways of using the product’ (De Certeau, 1988, p.xiii). Describing indigenous Americans under Spanish colonization (although he could also be describing contemporary practices of television-watching, as he does later in the book), he claims that ‘their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it. The strength of their difference lay in procedures of “consumption”’ (De Certeau, 1988, p.xiii). Throughout the book de Certeau uses other words to describe this process; depending on which everyday practice (reading, cooking, walking) upon which he is focussing. Whether the term in use is, ‘art,’ ‘enunciation’, ‘making do’, ‘poaching’, ‘drift’, or indeed ‘consumption’, these practices are all suffused with pleasure, play, and trickery. The resistance of consumers is not organized, however, it is a matter of individual practice by ordinary people within the realm of popular culture. In fact, these
practices often go unnoticed, and are not gathered by statistics. As de Certeau observes, these practices create theory. Drawing from Michel de Certeau, I seek to understand how the ordinary man/woman operates in this society and its ordinary networks of power. In de Certeau’s words: ‘if it is true that the grid of “discipline” is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it’ (De Certeau, 1988, p.xv). As Foucault suggests, one can only resist power, not overthrow it. However, de Certeau proposes an articulation of exactly how resistance works. Resistance functions not at the macro level of the power apparatus; instead Foucault’s microphysics of power are negotiated equally with technics of daily use. In my research, I argue that these techniques of resistance are to be found in the practices of everyday life, which may include dance making and spectatorship.

Underlying de Certeau’s work there is a juxtaposition of two pairs of concepts: strategy/tactic and place/space. The (creative) consumers produce ‘indeterminate trajectories’ as de Certeau says, because these trajectories are not in rationale with the constructed space. Strategy is the game of the powerful; an action model unique to economic, political and scientific rationality; it is a delimitable place that organizes knowledge according to its own structures. Tactics, on the other hand, are the art of the weak and have no place of their own but instead must take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Tactics are constantly in motion, and utilize time to their benefit. A tactic is an act of guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines in comparison to a strategy’s home base of the Pentagon. De Certeau identifies tactics with the consumption or practices of everyday life of the common man/woman (producer of trajectories of undetermined traces). De Certeau’s definitions of place and space then flow from those of strategy and tactic: place is stable, distinct, a map; space is in motion, practised, a tour. If place belongs to power then ‘the space of a tactic is the space of the other’ (De Certeau, 1988, p.37). Like tactics, these concepts are constantly in motion, able to be adapted to various everyday practices and dances.

De Certeau’s concept of resistance differs from others in the way that it is perhaps the only one applicable to the ordinary woman and man. The ordinary and quiet individual belongs to a silent majority that unconsciously is the creator of cultural
Chapter 1

resistance based on the ability to invent everyday practices. The consumers, unrecognized producers and poets, appropriate the products they consume and produce personalized speeches using a pre-existing vocabulary and pre-existing syntax, which has been delivered by the elite who creates the language of power structures. Others have articulated a means of resistance within the power-knowledge matrix (Butler’s reiteration, for instance), but de Certeau’s approach offers the average person, who does not need to be a member of any organization, the ability to create everyday tactics of resistance in a enjoyable and creative way.

Like De Certeau, I am interested in practices that challenge the dominant order. The concept of modern dance in Spain allows some of these tactics to emerge within choreography. The silence imposed in Spain has been a silence over memory and voice. In this line, my research argues that the body is speaking out, breaking the silence through dance and choreography, removing the primacy of words and language and investing in corporeality. By dancing memories of the dictatorship, the choreographers studied in this thesis break the silence imposed by political agreements during the transition to democracy.

Theoretical Foundations: Politicising Gender

On the basis of Foucault’s understanding of power as exercised rather than possessed and as productive rather than repressive, feminist discourses sought to challenge the assumption that the oppression of women is caused by men’s possession of power (Sawicki, 1988), defying notions of domination and victimisation to better explore the complicated way in which women’s experiences are constructed. Foucault’s contention that the body is the ultimate site of power in modern societies informs the analysis of gender construction in choreography from the 1990s and 2000s, revealing contemporary forms of social control over female bodies. Thus, rather than focusing on traditional structures of power such as governmental structures, or economic agents, feminist studies, including this one, focus on how power operates in the everyday practices through which power relations are reproduced. In doing so, I analyse the politics of personal relations at an intimate level of experience, through the choreographic pieces. My analysis focuses on the ways in which these choreographers reproduce
intimate scenes from the institutions of marriage, partnership, heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and motherhood on the public sphere of the stage.

Taking into consideration Franko’s historiographical analysis of modern dance (1995), I aim to dismantle the progressive narrative of the evolution of dance modernism in Spain, and bring the gendered body into the debate. This standard narrative portrays successive generations of choreographers ‘moving closer and closer to the essential medium of movement, stripping away the expressive resources of dramatic story, musical visualization, and lyrical subtext’ (Manning, 1997, p.226). In contrast, Franko’s revisionary history suggests ‘the relation of modern dance to sexual, class, and modernist cultural politics’ (Franko, 1995, p.x). In this way, I follow Franko’s analysis of the performance of the gendered body. Beginning with Isadora Duncan, Franko proposes that by staging the female body as the vehicle of expression in the public stage, she performed feminism, because she ‘challenged the separation of the public and private spheres that immured women in the confines of domesticity’ (Franko, 1995, p.2). The issue to grasp in my research is how Spanish contemporary dance’s apparent apolitical condition during the transition to democracy can alternatively articulate feminism and resistance towards the dominant values. I will build an argument around how women choreographers of that time expose the female body on stage and with it construct new identities for women, which would be opposed to the conservative gender values of the dictatorship. In this sense, I will consider female bodies alone on stage, that do not need a male body to move and act and that defy the lack of mainly female, but also male, individual rights during the dictatorship.

This interest in the body has also brought with it, and to some extend derives from, the feminist problematization of gender; a concept that, in dance, pushes for an interrogation of the relationship between biological and cultural bodily constructions. Judith Butler’s reading of Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (Butler, 1990a) articulated gender as the effect of reiterative acting. Opposed to the idea that gender performance is an expression of an innate or natural essence, Butler argues for a performative understanding of gender. It is the performance of gender that itself creates gender. The use of Butler’s ‘performativity’ (Butler, 1990b, 1993) opens up new connotations for everyday representations of class and
gender. Butler’s use of performativity discusses the process of socialization by which gender and sexual identities, for example, are produced through regulating practices. Her theorization slightly departs from Ervin Goffman’s presentation of the individual in everyday life. However, Goffman articulates a volatile subject that exists in between these performative interactions and who can choose which role or mask to use in each contact. Butler’s performativity, on the contrary, denies the existence of this subjectivity in between performances. The subject or the individual only exists in performative actions, creating and constructing her/his individuality through this process. If gender is constructed, it is not clear that there is a previous ‘I’ that has not been subject to gender, for, among other things, gendering is the differentiating relations by which (speaking/acting) subjects come into being. Butler suggests that there is nothing in between these performances but silence; it is only when subjects are performing that they become subjects. It is then that dance appears as a tactical way to speak and address this silence, and, in the Spanish case, consequently the pact of silence.

In his recent article ‘Odysseus Weeping’, Ramsay Burt (2014) argues that it is through performance that dancers and choreographers create and re-create identities. By staging their own subjectivities in the public sphere, dancers, Burt, claims, are able to design their identities. It is this concept of constant creation and construction of identity that I have chosen to emphasise in the study of the Spanish dance scene. Indeed, I will approach the uses and values of gender, constructed through recent Spanish history as well as how choreographers play within these constructions. Following Butler (1993), I claim that the performativity of gender can be subversive to the extent that it exposes the hegemonic structure by which gender is produced. Accordingly, by performing alternative hegemonic gender conventions, either on stage or in every day relationships, I argue, choreographers might construct tactics of resistance to the dominant values and create alternative identities in these structures.

The postmodern era has opened up the discussion of how identities are constructed. Amin Maalouf’s study of identities (Maalouf, 2001), asserts that identity is a conglomeration of various ingredients. There is not one single affiliation that matters in the construction of identity, but instead, as Maalouf
notes, the factors that define one’s identity change with time, and so do the ingredients compounding identity. Conversely, Donna Haraway presents a valuable approach on the construction of gender identity. In her ‘A Manifesto for Cyborgs’ (1985), Haraway argues that technology, constantly challenging gender binaries, makes it impossible to situate ourselves in this gender dichotomy or even as merely biological beings. Against essentialist feminisms that describe femininity as an unchanging quality, all organisms, for Haraway, are in a process of constant identification. She maintains that continuous technological advancement has modified sexual-gender binaries; and recommends building new identities. New genders may be constructed from components that surround us. Through the metaphor of the cyborg Haraway proposes a feminist, hybrid, cybernetic organism, built from existing components that will dismantle hierarchies of gender. Even though the metaphor of the cyborg is not completely suitable for this research, in which technological progress does not yet appear at the forefront of the discussion, I want to refer to the image of the cyborg as a new form of identity, as a composite of existing elements. I will argue that current Spanish women’s identity is a composite of values from different historic periods, a juxtaposition of opposing values from the Republican times and the Francoist era. The search for gender values during the transition to democracy brought a composite identity for women, simultaneously enclosing the traditional values of the dictatorial regime and the advanced gender equality of the Republican period. Whether consciously or unconsciously, current Spanish women choreographers seem to dance in between the cyborg and the goddess constructing and deconstructing Spanish feminine identities.\footnote{I use this dichotomy from Haraway’s quote, ‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’ (1987), in which the cyborg, the new feminine identity she proposes, is a compound of surrounding elements; unlike the goddess, which is the unchanging quality of essentialist feminism, often with mystical connotations.} 

To conclude this section, I would like to expose the key themes that will guide the analysis of dance and choreography. First, the following chapters consider the silences that haunt the post-dictatorship spaces and public discourses. A study of the Pact of Silence will help to understand why, during the transition to
democracy, Spanish politicians and Spanish society chose to establish a silence over, and in certain way, a forgetting of the memories of the past. Who created this pact, and how it was approved in the Spanish parliament are concepts analysed in Chapter 2, which will shed light on the problematic relationship between democratic Spain and its memories. Second, contemporary dance appears as a framework to approach those silences of democratic Spain. Women choreographers have developed pieces that deal with those silences and ghosts of the past. Either by confirming the silence or by allowing forgotten feminine issues to re-emerge, these choreographers offer a new vocabulary that questions the way that Spanish society has dealt with the memories of the past. Finally, contemporary dance appears as a space where women choreographers can construct different versions of feminine identity, and simultaneously address issues of resistance and release of these ghosts.

**Structure of The Thesis**

Following my introductory explanation of one dance event and several political events that contextualise the historical period of the transition in Spain, this chapter, ‘Situating Dance’, has set out the specific theoretical and methodological approaches used in this project, using critical dance theory and movement analysis to theorize dance events. I have explored the concepts of memory, power and performative gender and the possibilities of applying those into dance studies.

Chapter 2, ‘Choreographing el Pacto del Silencio’, addresses Spain’s pact to forget past memories. It articulates the Pact of Silence as a framework to approach current construction of identity in Spanish society. Asking questions about the significance of bodies in action, I approach the choreographic deeds preeminent in the erasure of collective memory, in the implementation of a generalized amnesia and in the construction of new identities. In this sense, the use of choreography focuses on the materiality of the body, and also on the meanings created by this body. Divided into three sections, ‘Choreographing Memory’, ‘Choreographing Amnesia’ and ‘Moving Identities’, this chapter analyses the interrelationality of codes and events that happened in the transition to democracy in Spain, through which identity was constructed.
In Chapter 3, ‘Historicising the Dancing Body’, I attempt to follow critically the emergence of modern dance as a new dance form at the beginning of the twentieth century in relationship with the social and political changes in Spain’s history. This chapter analyses the actions of modern dance pioneers which created a discourse of social freedom around contemporary performances, and at the same time, emphasizes the contribution of Spain to the development of modern dance. Section I, ‘Liberating the Female Body’, contextualises the appearance of modern dance as new dance vocabulary in keeping with modern society, and the early feminist claims of gender equality. It recovers the figures of Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà as modern dance pioneers. While section II, ‘Female Bodies in War’, explores the depiction of the female body by the different regimes during the war, Section III, ‘The Re-Establishment of the Domestic Body’, focuses on how Francoism re-constructed, thus re-inventing, an identity for women, through the Sección Femenina (the Feminine Section) that regulated the collection of folkloric dances.

While in Chapter 3 I follow the introduction of modern dance at the beginning of the twentieth century in Spain, Chapter 4, ‘Introducing Modern Dance: Maleras’ Narrativity’, traces the arrival of the first influences of modern dance at the end of the dictatorship, after an absence of almost forty years. Structured around an interview with pioneer Anna Maleras, this chapter questions Maleras’ narrative about the history of modern dance, introducing the observation of historical silences and absences. Embodying Hammergren’s (1995) strategy of the flâneuse, I walk through Maleras words which revisit past events in the first steps of modern dance in Spain.

In Chapter 5, ‘The Construct of The Democratic Woman: Argüelles’s New Subjectivities’, I closely examine the choreographic work of Avelina Argüelles, a preeminent figure in the Spanish dance scene, who belonged to the first generation of modern dancers. Winning several choreographic awards, her pieces were performed nationally and internationally. Argüelles’ professional dance career began with the establishment of Heura, the first female choreography collective. Working collectively, Heura enabled a form of creative freedom, in consonance with the freedom of the new democratic regime. I read Argüelles work as a
performance of new alternative feminine values. With a movement analysis on two pieces of the choreographer, I let the dance theorize concepts of love and marriage, discussing with this the new subjectivities for women opened in her choreographies.

In a similar manner, Chapter 6, ‘Reviving Femininity: The Explosive Body of Picó’, explores the choreographic work of Sol Picó, one of Spain’s most award-winning choreographers of recent times (the turn of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty first century). In a similar manner to Argüelles, Picó enhanced her choreographic career in a collective group in the 1990s. Like Argüelles, Picó also left the collective for a solo career. Picó’s work is examined, in this study, under poststructuralist and feminist accounts of power and identity. As Picó performs women’s realities in post-Franco Spain, her choreography, I argue, also writes about non-hegemonic gender subjectivities of her times. A choreographic analysis is carried out of two pieces of the choreographer, which with a similar solo format, help to understand the alternative feminine values articulated in Picó’s work.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I draw the Conclusions of this thesis, ‘Choreographies of Silence’. With a historiographical reconstruction of the bodies and bodily memories of the transition to democracy, my research argues that while dancing about female realities, women choreographers are calling upon a remembrance of the forgotten gender memories of the history of Spain, challenging previous concepts of authority, patriarchies and inequality. Acknowledging the silence over those gender and wider issues of history, the analysed choreographies open possibilities to discuss other options for gender and national identities, and in so doing; they allow the body and corporeality to articulate the persistent silence over language and memories.
Chapter 2. Choreographing El Pacto del Silencio

There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair [verweilen: a reference to Goethe’s Faust], to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm.

(Benjamin, 2009)

The Transition is, basically, a process of historical and social amnesia and the invention of a new political tradition.

(Cardús i Ros, 2000, p.18)

In Paris in January 1940, while fleeing from Nazi Germany, Walter Benjamin finished On the Concept of History (Benjamin, 2009), a short essay comprising twenty numbered theses on the concept of cultural history. As the Germans advanced through France, Benjamin escaped across the Pyrenees to the Catalan city of Portbou, from where he had planned to cross fascist Spain - then ostensibly a neutral country - to Portugal and then fly to the U.S.A. On the night of 25 September, in Portbou, after being captured by the Spanish Police and threatened with deportation, Benjamin killed himself with an overdose of morphine (Leslie, 2000; Witte, 1997). Nonetheless, the following day, the rest of the refugees were allowed to cross Spain. Buried in Portbou, Benjamin’s epitaph reads simultaneously in German and Catalan: ‘There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism’, an extract from section seven of his last known manuscript. A few months later Hannah Arendt crossed the French-Spanish border with On the Concept of History, which was passed to Theodor Adorno and afterwards published in 1942 by the Institute for Social Research, temporarily relocated to New York.
Ironically, in 2014, the Angel of History might help Spain to face and acknowledge the catastrophes of the past.

Benjamin’s Angel of History appears as a controversial figure that stands in between progress and the acknowledgement of the past. Conversely I approach the Angel of History as a figure that challenges power structures, for he resists progress by turning his back towards the future. Turning his face towards the past, the Angel of History acknowledges the history of the present. Even though the Angel would like to pause a moment in the contemplation of this past, Benjamin says, a storm ‘drives him irresistibly into the future’ (Benjamin, 2009). This storm, or as Benjamin writes, the progress, forces the Angel to ignore the past and move into the future. With this metaphorical Angel’s turn, Benjamin constructs a critique of modernity and progress, as societies are more concerned with advancing towards the future than recognising their critical memories. Likewise, the construction of Spanish democracy relied on the oblivion of the dictatorship, Spain’s most recent past. However, the historical persistence of the fascist regime, which incited Benjamin’s suicide, is still haunting the present of the country. Therefore, the Angel of History’s turn towards the past will help to turn back and acknowledge the forgotten memories of Spain’s history.

The way in which Spain dismantled the Francoist dictatorship and replaced it with a parliamentary monarchy has been cited as a ‘perfect example’ of a peaceful and negotiated transition to democracy. Josep Colomer (1991, p.1283) who first coined the term Spanish Model, mentioned the Transition as an ideal pattern for nondemocratic countries aiming to overthrow their regimes. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (Linz and Stepan, 1996) presented the Spanish democratic process as a paradigm of a peaceful and negotiated transition, while Richard Gunther (Gunther, 1992) mentioned the same model of elite-settlement. The pace of changes, the moderation of elites, the timing of elections and the formulation of the new constitution made the Spanish transition to democracy an international model for the democratizing processes of the late twentieth century. However, the Spanish transition to democracy demanded an erasure of memories. Perhaps progress called for fast democratization that would not allow time to deal with the traumas of the past; or perhaps the memories of the past threatened to some extent the
wellbeing of democracy. Like Benjamin’s Angel, this study pursues a turn back to
the past to acknowledge the memories lost in the process to democratization.

This chapter aims to problematize the Spanish model of democratization,
analysing the actions that led to a peaceful transition to democracy, as processes
that at the same time condemned the country to a historical amnesia, an oblivion
of the memories of the past. Only recently have hispanists such as Aguilar (2001,
2002), Cardús i Ros (2000) and Resina (2005), among others, been able to name
this phenomenon ‘the pact of silence’, a pact that had to forget the dictatorship in
order to create a peaceful democratic regime. Implicit in the oblivion, the new
democratic regime did not confront (but instead incorporated) those subjects
responsible for the repressions and assassination of the previous regime. At the
same time, the process of transition to democracy implemented a collective
amnesia that erased memories about the dictatorship. Other scholars have raised
doubts about the ‘exemplary’ quality of the Transition. Paloma Aguilar mentions
how Spaniards have witnessed the Transition with a mix of surprise and suspicion
(Aguilar, 2001). The transition to democracy has become a model for peaceful
shift from an authoritarian regime to a democratic system. Lacking a stable
democratic tradition and having suffered two dictatorships and a civil war during
the 20th century, the political situation of Spain presented significant difficulties
for transferring to a democratic regime.

Several studies support the argument that Spanish society pushed actively towards
a democratic change. Firstly, the socioeconomic development of the 1960s had
already established the conditions for a successful political transition (Lipset
1959). Secondly, as José María Maravall (Maravall, 1978) suggested, the
discrepancy between the modern economy and the anachronous political regime
produced dissatisfaction among the masses leading to a politicization of both the
working class and students during the dictatorship. Thirdly, Vicenç Navarro
(Navarro, 2000) and José Colmeiro (Colmeiro, 2003) have identified the massive
popular demand for democracy during the last years of the dictatorship, which
witnessed a large number of political demonstrations on the streets. Fourthly, as
explained in Paul Preston’s analysis of democratic Spain (Preston, 2004), Franco’s
most likely successor, Admiral Carrero Blanco, had been assassinated by ETA in
1973, leaving the regime with a temporary lack of authority. Finally, European countries and the U.S.A., linked to Spain by economic agreements, also supported the internal pressures pushing for a democratic change in Spain.

I approach these processes leading to democracy, as performances of the political. In *Odysseus Weeping* Ramsay Burt (2014) draws on Hannah Arendt’s study of political life in Ancient Greece. Arendt argues for the importance of the individual’s actions in the public arena (Arendt, 1998), and how these actions are perceived by members of the community. These actions, when observed by an audience, become accounts of politics as performance in public spaces. In the intersection of individual actions and public spaces, Burt develops a methodology which considers performances as a site where political identities are constructed. The public sphere, Burt says, referencing Arendt, is ‘not only a space in which to engage in speech and action but one in which one’s deeds are discussed and recalled’ (Burt, 2014, p.4). In this way, individual actions become part of a web of narration which creates and re-creates one’s subjectivities. This chapter is aligned with Burt’s and subsequently Arendt’s accounts of politics as performances to analyse the actions of Spanish individuals in the construction of democracy and the democratic identity.

As a dance scholar, I approach the choreographic actions of memory, amnesia and identities by asking questions about the significance of the bodies in action, their impact on the surrounding society, what relations they establish among themselves and how they construct meaning and identity. In this sense, the use of choreography focuses on the materiality of the body: on the movements and actions created by this body. I centre my analysis on the interrelationality of codes and events that happened in the transition to democracy in Spain, through which identity was constructed. The study of choreography makes it possible to acknowledge which bodies had agency in the political decisions in the transition to democracy, which bodies were silent and how amnesia affected the construction of Spanish identities. I argue that movements of simultaneous resistance and apathy interrelate when constructing democracy in contemporary Spain.
The first part of this chapter, ‘Choreographing Memory’, outlines how collective memory was constructed in Spain during Franco’s regime by the use of biased historical analysis of the past to build a new national identity. This section analyses the actions taken by the regime and its official historians to construct an appropriate collective image of the past and present. The second part, ‘Choreographing Amnesia’, considers the steps in the creation of the so-called pact of silence. It analyses which political actions and which political bodies approved the Amnesty Law, silencing the traumatic memories of the dictatorship. Finally, ‘Moving Identities’ explores memory and amnesia and their effects in the creation of new democratic identities in Spain.

Today it is common for critical academics to identify the Transition as the cause of problems in Spanish democracy. For these authors (Aguilar, 2001; Davis, 2005; Humlebaek, 2011; Labanyi, 2002) the fact that the Transition did not involve a radical break with the previous dictatorship meant that the shadow of fascism remained in the political sphere. Along with this critical revision of history, the purpose of this study is to unveil which memories and lapses of memories were choreographed behind the traumatic history of Spanish democracy.

I. Choreographing Memory

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines memory as ‘a diverse set of cognitive capacities by which we retain information and reconstruct past experiences, usually for present purposes’ (Sutton, 2010). This definition sheds light on the problematization of memory and the construction of the present. Memory is an act of remembering the past that also, with this action, makes a connection with the present. For the purpose of this research, the study of memory becomes relevant in its collective status, because of its impact on the construction of contemporary identities. Understanding memory as the process by which our past stories define our present actions, memory is always directly related with the present, from which visions of the past can bias perspectives of the future.

Memory has an important role in the configuration of historical culture. As theatre scholar Gary Taylor (Taylor, 1996) argues, history is not what was done in the past but what is remembered. Historical culture is then understood as a process of
memory selection that creates a particular narrative on a given society. Taylor notes a tension in the process of creating historical narrativity, where conflicting memories interrelate to shape mainstream narrativities. In this framework, the control of collective memories has become essential to shape each group’s relationship with its past. Collective memory refers to the shared common information held in the memories of two or more members of a social group. Parallel to individual memory, collective memory can be passed, shared and constructed. From the human science disciplines, collective memory has begun to be studied in relation to its cultural (Susan Stewart, 2002) and historical (Pierre Nora, 1989; Richard Terdiman, 1993) effects. Historian Eric Hobsbawm claims that the construction of collective memories and traditions are inventions of the hegemonic groups:

Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. A striking example is the deliberate choice of a gothic style for the nineteenth-century rebuilding for the British parliament.

(Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, p.1)

The control of collective memories lies in the use of practices and rituals to create new traditions. A historical review of past events has made it clear that some regimes, and political institutions which did not have strong links within the past, had to invent historic connections and tradition, for example by creating a unified ancient past. In the construction of a common past, these regimes incorporated and therefore created new national symbols such as a national anthem, national flag or the reinterpretation of past events. Inventing traditions is a process of ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, and imposed by repetition. As Hobsbawm observes, the process of inventing a tradition is most clearly exemplified when it is deliberately constructed by a single institution, such as the example of the Boy Scouts events, institutionalized as coming from old traditions (Hobsbawm, 1992, p.4). Invented traditions are also most clearly traced in the case of official and instituted ceremonies ritualized by political regimes, such as the case of
constructed Nazi symbolism and the Nuremberg party rallies. These examples lay the foundations for studying the invention of tradition by the fascist regime in Spain, which for forty years controlled, destroyed and created the collective memory of Spanish society. In this sense, the following text analyses how the Francoist regime choreographed - manipulated collective memories, linking their present with the Peninsula’s imperial past, and creating traditions of unity among different Spanish regions.

The problem of memory in Spain started with the implementation of the dictatorship in 1939. The legitimation of Franco’s regime rested on its military victory over a democratic government, and so the regime attempted to reconfigure the memories of the Civil War as a religious ‘crusade’. Accompanied by the highest sectors of the Catholic Church in Spain, Franco’s regime condemned the Second Republic for its communist ideology, which simultaneously created an anticlerical environment and favoured a federal Spanish state with the dangers of regional dissemination. As Franco himself stated in a speech in 1946, the Civil War was a necessary tragedy to save Spain from the communist devil (Franco, 1946). In reference to the cultural diversity of the nation, the Francoist state was, above all, a centralizing power that aimed at the cultural unification of Spain by supressing historical regional differences. Consequently, Franco proclaimed at the height of the Civil War in 1938: ‘The cruel war sustained today, and the sterile sacrifice made to their regions by Basque and Catalan leaders are so hard a lesson that they will never be able to forget it’ (Franco, 1938, p.202). Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia were particular targets for discrimination, providing the regime with supposed internal enemies. In the areas of the country with a distinct regional identity the dictatorship attempted a form of cultural genocide, forbidding language, customs and freedoms (similarly to other cultural genocides happening in European states: Czechs, Slovaks, Albanians, Poles and Lithuanians, to name but a few). This authoritarian regime, embodied in the figure of Franco, the supreme head of state and dictator, and the Catholic Church, constantly

12 Since the beginning of twentieth century the peripheral regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia have been articulating their historical and cultural differences.
reminded Spaniards of its capacity for violence in defence of its vision of a unified, Catholic, and fascist nation.

Emphasizing the role of the Francoist regime in Spanish history was one of the main strategies employed to reinforce collective memory. This strategy aimed both to suppress the past, which was linked with the Republican side, and simultaneously assert continuity between the Franco era and the memories of the previous imperial Catholic Spain. Official historians of the regime, such as Rafael Calvo Serer and Florentino Pérez Embid, himself the head of the regime’s censorship as the general director of Information at the Ministry of Information and Tourism (1951-1957), insisted that a diversity of discourses on the past would alter the national and orthodox unifying tradition of Spanish history (Díaz, 1974).

As happened under other authoritarian regimes, Francoism implemented only one vision of the past, present and future for Spain. These historians constructed new historic discourse, a new collective memory which directly linked Franco’s regime with the splendour of Spain’s colonial history.

To create a referent for a ‘united Spanish nation’, official historians searched for the great moments of Spanish history which could exemplify a great, united country. The regime aimed ‘to assert continuity between the glories of an imperial Catholic Spain and the illustrious present of the Franco era’ (Herzberger, 1991, p.35). Historians choreographed a cult around the figure of Isabel La Católica as symbol of the beginning of imperial Spain. Moreover, the unification of the two kingdoms, the Castilian crown and the Aragon crown, in 1469 by the marriage of Isabel and Fernando, was used as reference for a united Spain. The union of the Catholic Kings also meant the fall of the Moorish rule in Granada in 1492, and consequently the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from the territory, contributing to the construction of a white Catholic society in Spain which the regime adopted as sign of identity. All those historical facts were adopted by Franco’s regime as events that exemplified the greatness of the Catholic Spanish Empire and created a line of progression directly to Franco himself. Through a very strict process of censorship that controlled all aspects of Spanish life, from cinema and
performance, to newspapers and academic work, the regime controlled the information given to population. With recurrent public speeches, General Franco participated in the indoctrination of a new vision of history. However, the mystification of ‘the great Spanish nation’ as the lapidary dictum ‘One Spain, one race, one religion’ contradicted other models of a plurinational Spain seen through history. Francoist historians produced discourses of exaltation, and patterns that avoided deviation from the official discourses. They ‘forgot’ that the Peninsula (and not Spain, which did not exist at the time of the Catholic Kings) was divided by diverse monarchies and different religions, but Franco himself insisted:

Our victory was the triumph of Spain against the anti-Spain, the heroic reconquest of the Fatherland that was moving headlong down the path of destruction. Therefore, our victory was and is for all men and for all classes of Spain.

(Herzberger, 1991, p.35)

Certainly at the death of the dictator many of the ‘truths’ of Francoist historiography were questioned, and contemporary historians and hispanists (Cardús i Ros, 2000; Resina, 2000b; Labanyi, 2002; Aguilar, 2002) have become aware that those historiographic assumptions are problematic and ambiguous. The union of the Catholic Monarchs which united the monarchies of Castile and Aragon, for instance, has been reconsidered by historians. Although united by a marriage, both kingdoms maintained their separate organizational structures of government until 1714 (when Felipe V de Borbon after the War of the Spanish Succession abolished Catalonia-Aragon’s own governmental institutions and language). During democratic times, the concept of one unified nation was challenged and dismantled into visions of multiple nationalities, creating political autonomies in those culturally differentiated regions. Nonetheless, the current tensions in the formation of a democratic plural Spain are struggles inherited from

---

13 Most of the speeches of General Franco are archived by the No-Do, the official news service of the regime. It was compulsory to show these short news films produced by the government before any movie at the cinemas. At a time when television did not exist, this was one of the most effective propaganda tools used by the regime.

14 My translation of the original text: ‘Nuestra victoria fue el triunfo de España contra la anti-España, la heroica reconquista de una patria que se precipitaba por la pendiente rápida de su destrucción. Por ello nuestra victoria fue y es para todos los hombres y las clases de España.’
a conflictive history in the construction of a nation-state or a state of nations.

The study of Foucaultian genealogies (Foucault, 1998) offers a critical approach to practices of remembering and forgetting, and to placing of such practises in the context of power relations. A genealogical approach to Spanish history might offer a way for Spanish society to understand the past. Turning towards the silence, Spaniards confront the memories and practises that were imposed as universal, such as the ones imposed during Francoism. In the 1975-76 lectures ‘Society must be defended’, Foucault defines genealogy of ‘knowledges’ in contrast with a linear intellectual history. He states that ‘Genealogy is gray, meticulous and patiently documentary’ (Foucault, 1998, p.369). Through this description, Foucault articulates the critical deeds of the process of looking to past knowledges. This definition reinforces the idea that genealogies do not look for official truths in history, but instead genealogies look for what is missing and silenced in the archives. Foucault's approach to genealogies offers a way of analysing the plurality of epistemic perspectives including memories which have been erased from mainstream frameworks. These erased or marginalized memories are what Foucault calls subjugated knowledges: forms of remembering that are pushed to the margins of hegemonic discourses, the consideration of which allows society to reflect on the parameters of resistance and subversion.

The role of the King Juan Carlos I in the democratization of Spain is perhaps one that offers clear opportunities to listen to counter-knowledges. Paul Preston, one of the most prolific British historians with an interest in twentieth-century Spanish History, has extensively researched the time of the dictatorship, and the figures of Franco and Juan Carlos I during the transition to democracy. His condition as a foreign researcher has given him the opportunity to research in national archives that were more difficult to access for Spanish historians, since access to Francoist documents and archives has remained ambiguously opaque for Spanish historians. However, Preston has written extensively about the dictatorial times in the history of Spain, and has raised the profile of the regime’s use of torture and

---

15 For further information on the access to national archives see Navarro (2000) and Ramonet (2004)
its repression of its enemies. The Spanish historiographer Vicenç Navarro (2000) suggests fear may explain the silence maintained by those who lived under the regime, and that subsequently the new generations of democracy did not know about repressions and tortures. While Preston has denounced the injustices of Franco’s Regime, he has controversially praised the figure of Juan Carlos I, as a force for democratisation. In his latest book, Juan Carlos, El Rey de un Pueblo Preston (2011) describes King Juan Carlos I as a truly democratic figure who guided Spain to democracy with ‘heroic behaviour’. This is not a new discourse in Spanish academia: the three major newspapers in Spain, the conservative ABC and La Razón, and the socialist El País have, since the transition to democracy, always honoured the figure of Juan Carlos I. Navarro notes there is still a conservative establishment in Spain, compounded by the heirs of Francoism: part of the political class, integrated in the democratic parties such as the PP, bankers, and directors of the conservative media such as La Razón and ABC, that control information regarding the regime and the transition to democracy (Navarro, 2006).

Flattering the monarch’s figure, the Spanish media have omitted information about Juan Carlos’ ‘labour’ to facilitate the democratic system in Spain. Firstly I would question the legitimacy of the monarchy, as it was reinstated by an illegitimate dictatorship. The institution of monarchy returned to Spain under the call of Dictator Franco, who nominated Juan Carlos the next head of State in 1969, after his grandfather Alfonso XIII had exiled himself when Spain became a republic in 1931. Secondly, following the death of Franco, Juan Carlos I became the King of Spain; he was the head of the dictatorial regime, including the army and its repressive apparatus. Consequently, Juan Carlos had total control over the communication media. Finally, arguing for a hidden monarchic authoritarianism, Navarro (Navarro, 2006, 2002) notes that the first reform proposed by the provisional government, named by Juan Carlos, did not have a real democratic aspect. Nonetheless, the social movements, with strikes and demonstrations, pushed for further democratisation on the first governmental drafts. From 1974 to 1978, Spain had the highest number of strikes in twentieth-century European history (Navarro, 2000). Alongside these critiques of the King’s democratic efforts, this research points towards other reasons which led Juan Carlos I to
include some democratic reforms in the new government, rather than the King’s
democratic feelings. The recent dismantling of Portugal and Greece’s
dictatorships in the 1970s perhaps gave an idea of the democratization process
happening in southern European countries. It was fear of losing control of the
country, as had happened in Portugal’s Revolution of the Carnations in 1974, that
made the King wary of implementing real democratic reforms.

A review of the transition to democracy opens up possibilities for understanding
subjugated knowledges of Spain. On the question of how do we learn to listen to
those silences (the constitutive silences homogenized by official histories),
Foucault (Foucault, Rainbow and Faubion, 1998) claims that omissions and
silences are foundational, a central part of the origins of discursive practices.
Therefore, listening to silences involves revisiting foundational texts, and re-
reading them, paying special attention to the gaps and absences. Foucault
emphasized that the ability to identify omissions and to listen to silences is part
of the critical academic approach for resisting power/knowledge. Reconsidering the
decisions made during the Transition articulates the subjugated knowledges buried
in the official history. By considering which bodies were present and which
bodies were silenced during this process, the subjugated memories of Spanish
history may come to the surface. Within this new historical discourse, the function
of recovering memory acquires a whole new dimension. Hence, there are silenced
and defeated memories which may create a chance to question the official history.

As José Medina suggests in genealogical studies of silence and racism in Anglo-
America (Medina, 2011), a critical reconstruction and revaluation of history can
be re-shaped when we discover that certain voices or perspectives were never
considered. This may explain why the current Spanish population now feels
compelled to reopen certain discourses on the past. Performing an ‘Angel of
History turn’, Spain is becoming able to question and dismantle the politically
choreographed silences of Francoism. In the case of Spain, an understanding of
collective memory also needs an acknowledgement of the collective amnesia.
Transitioning to democracy, the oblivion appeared as Spain decided not to re-open
the cases of those voices silenced during the dictatorship. Conversely, thirty-nine
years later, current Spanish society (2014) is producing numerous initiatives
towards reopening these cases. Several civil institutions have initiated actions in favour of opening mass graves, reconsidering public dictatorial monuments, and re-examining amnesties towards the torturers and repressors of the dictatorship.

II. Choreographing Amnesia

While at an individual level, amnesia is a loss of memory caused by brain damage, a disease, or a psychological trauma, the historian Russell Jacoby (1975) defines social amnesia as a society’s repression of memories of its own past. This section is concerned with the processes of social and collective amnesia, and discusses the political strategies that deliberately omitted the collective memories of the past implemented during the Transition. It tackles bodies that were agents of these actions. It follows bodies and their deeds in articulating a generalized oblivion. With this study of oblivion, I would like to draw a clear path of who negotiated, who approved and who defended this generalised amnesia.

In contrast with what happened in other transitions to democracy, such as the Nuremberg trials held by the United Nations (UN) in Germany after the Nazi regime, democratic society in Spain has not yet judged those collaborators with Franco’s dictatorship. Rather, the actual political and cultural system has absorbed most of the politicians associated with Franco’s regime into the democratic system (Aguilar, 2001).16 In the same way, the legacy of Francoism was never confronted or denied. Alongside the absorption of Francoist politicians into the democratic system, the regime’s collective memories and manipulated history were never denied. These re-constructed memories that justified the authoritarian power of Franco’s regime remained untouched by the amnesic democracy. The collective memories of the regime still existing in those Spaniards educated under

16 For example, Manuel Fraga served as Minister for Propaganda and Tourism between 1962 and 1969. Afterwards, he founded Alianza Popular (Popular Alliance, AP; currently the Partido Popular, Popular party, PP, José María Aznar’s Party) and he still holds the honorary presidency of the PP; Juan Antonio Samaranch became president of the International Olympic Committee from 1980 to 2001. Before this he had been appointed as the Government Secretary for Sports by Franco in 1966; Adolfo Suárez was the Secretary General of the Movimiento Nacional (National Movement), which acted as the single party, for eighteen years. Then in 1977, he led the Unión de Centro Democrático (Democratic Center Union, UCD) to victory in Spain’s first free elections in 41 years, and became the first democratically elected prime minister.
Francoism, are shaping the actions of the democratic times. As an example, the theatre studies scholar María Delgado follows the treatment of García Lorca’s death during the Transition (Delgado, 2013). Lorca stands as an example of a political assassination by Francoist troops in the Civil War. He was buried in a mass grave. Even though the governments of democratic times have publicly praised the figure of the poet, as seen in the speech by the former PP president Aznar (Ruiz Antón and León-Sotelo, 1998), Lorca’s death is not yet regarded as a political assassination. On the contrary, in 1998’s Lorca centenary celebrations, Aznar repeated that poetry has no ideology. As Melissa Dinverno suggests (Dinverno, 2005), this homage endorsed the governmental narrative of amnesia over the facts of the past. Today (2014), primary education textbooks are still ambiguous about the way Lorca died. In May 2014, after a complaint by Luis Naranjo, the director of Democratic Memory of the Andalusian government, the publishers Anaya had to modify the text of their first grade school book. Naranjo had denounced as antidemocratic the text about the death of Lorca and the exile of the poet Antonio Machado, as it did not explain the political ideology that led to their assassination and exile (García de Blas, 2014). This example, among others, reveals the strategy for manipulating memories that continued during the construction of democracy. In this way, the new democracy in Spain was constructed over manipulated and forgotten memories.

The transition to democracy has been portrayed as a model process in the major media in Spain, mainly the newspapers *El País, La Razón* and *ABC*, and the two public television channels TV1 and TV2: these channels are mainly controlled by whichever political party is in power, at present the PP but at times the PSOE. Editorial articles and documentaries have defined the Transition as a consensus between the dictatorial government and the democratic forces, led by the leftist parties in exile in order to construct a peaceful democratic future (Navarro, 2000). This consensus resulted in the constitution of 1978. In January 2013 for example, the weekly news program on TV1, *Informe Semanal*, launched a documentary about ‘Generational Legacy’ (*El Legado generacional, 2013*), with this title the documentary depicted diverse public Spanish personalities commenting on the legacy of the Transition. Among them, the actress Concha Velasco, and actor José
Sacristán express their socialist orientation in politics in opposition with conservative politician Miquel Roca, who was one of the founders of the Constitution of 1978. However, all the participants in the documentary concur on the virtues of the Spanish King’s direction of the Transition, and his opposition to the attempted coup of 1981. This documentary presents a homogenized positive opinion of the Transition and those politicians leading it. Having noted the critical opinions from the academic world in this chapter - historiographers and hispanists from different fields such as Navarro (2000, 2002, 2006), Aguilar (Aguilar, 2002, 2001) and Labanyi (Labanyi, 2002) as a brief example - it is surprising not to find one dissident figure against the Transition in the public media.

The transition to democracy was not a balanced agreement between dictatorial and democratic forces. The democratic forces had just been legalized having been underground, and their institutional and media power were very weak in comparison with the Francoist apparatus (Navarro, 2000). In her extensive study of the political events during the Transition, Victoria Prego (Prego, 1996) notes the constant pressure on the political decisions of Suárez’s government by the right wing generals from the army (mostly the ones that had fought alongside Franco in the Civil War). Tensions escalated when Suarez legalized the trade unions, as this was seen as a dangerous democratic measure by the extreme right sector of the army. The secretary for defence, general Santiago, resigned from his position and was substituted by general Gutiérrez Mellado. When generals such as Iniesta Cano supported Santiago with public letters in the newspapers, the government proceeded to sanction them, yet there was no such law for that purpose. As an omen of the incoming amnesty towards those responsible for the dictatorial regime, those generals could not be disowned publicly. These figures remained as a public threat to the democratization process. Nevertheless, the constant threats from right-wing sectors of the army contrasted with the numerous popular demonstrations on the streets in favour of democracy. As the president of the Communist Party, Santiago Carrillo, claimed going out to the streets was their only way to support democracy at that time (Prego, 1996). Despite a democratic willingness among reformist politicians, the provisional government was still dominated by Francoist politicians and generals who did not allow effective
democratic laws. Hence, this process created a democratic government and democratic laws which favoured the conservative structure inherited from the dictatorship.

An amnesty law was approved in October 1977 enabling a generalized amnesty for the political prisoners of the regime, and simultaneously for those responsible for the crimes committed by the dictatorship. Previously, on 11 January 1977, four representatives of the democratic opposition: Antón Cañellas, Felipe González, Julio de Jáuregui and Joaquín Satrústegui met with president of the government, Adolfo Suárez, to discuss an amnesty and the legalization of the main political parties. The democratic opposition argued for an amnesty for all prisoners related with political offenses committed from 1936 to 1976. This meeting was followed by popular demonstrations all around the country in favour of an amnesty for political prisoners in May of the same year. After the first democratic elections in April 1977, the new government, led by the centrist UCD of Suárez, in coalition with the other parties in the parliament, approved Amnesty Law 46/1977 in October of the same year (Gobierno de España, 1977). While demonstrations on the street called for an amnesty for those imprisoned under the dictatorship for political reasons; this law extended the amnesty to the perpetrators of any crimes of torture and oppression implemented by the dictatorship. With this generalized amnesty, tortured and torturers were granted the same forgiveness. Yet, the law was introduced as a necessary standard for a democratic transition. In the words of Rafael Arias-Salgado, the government spokesperson, the Amnesty Law was:

the ethical and political requirement for democracy, for the democracy that we want, which being authentic does not look back, but instead aims to overcome the differences that divide us, and over which we fought in the past.

(Ministerio de la Presidencia de España, 2006)\(^{17}\)

\(^{17}\) My translation of the text: ‘el presupuesto ético-político de la democracia, de aquella democracia a la que aspiramos, que por ser auténtica no mira hacia atrás, sino que, fervientemente, quiere superar y trascender las divisiones que nos separaron y enfrentaron en el pasado.’
The amnesty law provided official legitimacy for oblivion. The law secured on the one hand the release of the political prisoners of the dictatorship, and on the other hand prevented the prosecution of its offenders. With it, the most preeminent political figures of the dictatorial regime avoided being purged. The democratic opposition parties missed the opportunity to claim democratic justice and historical compensation for the victims of Francoist repression. For instance, the question of pensions for Republican war veterans and their families was dealt with through a series of verdicts that ducked the central issue of decades of discrimination, and only in 1984 did a law formally recognize the rights and services rendered by those who fought to defend democracy during the Civil War (Aguilar, 2002). By accepting that the most important political and military figures of the dictatorship would not be judged, with this law, Spanish society could accept only a very limited programme of social justice. Accordingly, the voices of those previously forgotten would still remain silenced during the Transition.

This law was defended by all politicians in the parliament, among whom was Marcelino Camacho, a member of the Communist Party. Since the earliest years of Francoism, the Spanish Communist Party had been banned and its members were imprisoned and tortured for its ideology. Nevertheless, having suffered from the repression of the regime, Camacho presented the amnesty as a necessary condition to construct a democratic system in Spain, as he proposed:

> We thought that the key piece of national reconciliation should be the amnesty. How could we be reconciled, we that had been killing one an other, if we did not erase the past for ever?

(El Congreso rechaza modificar la Ley de Amnistía de 1977, 2011)

The majority of the political parties, the UCD, the PSOE, the Communist Party, the Basque and Catalan minorities and the mixed group supported the law.

---

18 This phenomenon has been repeated in late South-European dictatorships, such as the Portuguese and Greek counterparts (Muro, 2011).

19 My translation from the text: ‘Nosotros considerábamos que la pieza capital de esta política de reconciliación nacional tenía que ser la amnistía. ¿Cómo podíamos reconciliarnos los que nos habíamos estado matabo los unos a los otros, si no borrábamos ese pasado de una vez para siempre?’
*Alianza Popular*, the party that brought together politicians and defenders of Francoism, abstained from the ballot, alluding to its radical programme for democratization. Two other deputies from *Candidatura Aragonesa Independiente de Centro* (Independent Aragonese Centre Candidature) abstained from the vote as well. Finally, the Amnesty Law was approved in the parliament with 296 votes in favour, two against, 18 abstentions and 1 invalid vote. This law framed the evolution of the Spanish Transition to democracy and built in a political compromise to silence the traumatic memories of the dictatorship. As seen in the speeches by Arias-Salgado and Camacho, politicians from both the Francoist regime and the democratic opposition argued that in order to arrive at a political consensus in the Transition, Spain needed to forget the political past as much as it needed an institutional reform (Muro, 2011). In this sense, it is surprising that politicians who had lived in repression and exile believed that it was not memory but amnesia that would secure a democratic system and prevent Spain from repeating the mistakes of the past, which had led the country to civil war. 

20 The ghost of the Civil War and the constant threat of a majoritarian right wing army accompanied the Spanish Transition. The instability of the political situation while the bases of democracy were being established, combined with the pressure of Basque terrorism (ETA) and the dissatisfaction of the right wing fascist groups, created a fear of conflict. The most detailed and thorough analysis to date of the Spanish pact of silence was made by Aguilar (1996, 2001, 2002), who cites fear, risk-aversion, and a sense of collective guilt as critical inhibitors of further implementation of truth and justice policies, all factors traceable to the traumatic memory of the Civil War. A perception of shared responsibility for the Civil War was one of the factors in the decision to renounce retroactive justice in the Transition. 21 Aguilar suggests that the two sides (Francoist and the democratic opposition, as heirs of the Republican side) reached a form of agreement regarding their mutual guilt for the Civil War: ‘This can be

---

20 For further explanation of the causes that led to the Civil War in 1936 see (Preston, 2006; Orwell, 2000)
21 Although one side defended the legitimate Republican government and the other side supported a fascist coup d’état, despite the fact that the defeated side suffered more, not only during the Civil War, but during decades of dictatorial repression afterwards.
evidenced by statements of politicians during the transition, typical of which are the words of a moderate Basque nationalist who said that both sides [had] “committed blood crimes” (Davis, 2005). Xavier Arzallus is Davis’ moderate nationalist, who mentioned those words in the debate on the Amnesty Law, noting the responsibility of the democratic opposition for the Republican acts of the Civil War (Amnistía al fin, 1977).

This research indicates that the main agents in choreographing amnesia were members of the political class, directed by King Juan Carlos I. When he nominated the provisional president of the Spanish government in 1975, the King became the initiator of the transition to a democratic government. And simultaneously, he became the authority restraining this democratic impulse (already seen as in popular demonstrations and demands). This restraint can be seen in the activation of the Amnesty Law agreements, which on the one hand freed the regime’s political prisoners, but which also gave impunity to the perpetrators of the crimes against human rights during the Francoism. President Suárez, with the representatives of the political parties, created and approved the amnesty law. As mentioned earlier in this section, among the representatives were former members of the Francoist government, such as Manuel Fraga, the Minister of Tourism and Information who was responsible for the political assassination of Julián Grimau, the leader of the Communist Party, killed in 1963 by the Dictatorship for crimes of continuous military rebellion (Torrús, 2013). While the main political bodies of the dictatorship were white, male and conservative, it was almost exactly the same bodies that conducted the transition to democracy (see figure 1: on the right Adolfo Suárez stands next to Santiago Carrillo the leader of the Communist Party).

22 Arzallus’ words were: ‘hechos de sangre ha habido por ambas partes,’
The deliberate and manipulative use of the past by Franco was a key-conditioning component in the later decision by all political parties to renounce the pursuit of justice. Aguilar (2002) has noted that the fears of conflict were the result of a well-imposed strategy that the dictatorship exercised to legitimize its role after the Civil War. The dictatorship’s legitimacy rested on its triumph in the Civil War in 1939, and the following era of peace in the form of a dictatorship. For this reason, it was thought that a process of transition to democracy carried out against the dictatorship would reactivate the memories of a fragmented Spain during the Civil War. Spanish society dreaded a right wing coup, or even a second civil war, that might be provoked by too quick or too conflictive democratization strategies: ‘the fear that the restoration of democracy would lead to a return to the pre-civil war scenario of violence and polarization was widespread’ (Humlebaek, 2011). These features were always present in the minds of Spaniards during the transition to a democratic regime; consequently it led Spaniards to prioritize peace, order and stability over other values such as justice, freedom and democracy. For instance, the desire for oblivion persisted throughout democracy in certain circles of the public scene. In 1998 Francisco Álvarez-Cascos, Vice-President of the Government, suggested that the oblivion of the failed coup d’état of Tejero (1981) by Spanish citizens was an encouraging sign of the consolidation of political freedom (Resina, 2000b). Situating democracy as direct result of a successful
deletion of memory, Álvarez-Cascos reinforced the relationship between forgetting and democracy as progress. The reluctance to deal with many areas related with Franco’s regime highlights the sociopolitical censorship around the topic (Francoism). Driven by political and economic interests, politicians and journalists have repressed debates in order to protect public figures that had previously contributed to Francoism.

Nonetheless, Spain refused to acknowledge the guilt of a repressive past. Calling for social reconciliation in 1977, the government passed the Amnesty Law with the majority support of parliament. Furthermore, those bodies that suffered repression or torture disappeared from the public sphere and did not find any justice in the democratic era. In the democratic times, those bodies forgotten during the Franco period continued in their oblivion; the survivors existed in society in the regime, but to date have not been acknowledged in the public sphere. Conversely, having not been obliged to enact performances of guilt the bodies of the repressors have remained intertwined in Spanish political and social life.

The absence of an institution that might bring justice would affect the process of democratization in Spain. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions or Purification Committees were introduced in other countries such as South Africa and Uruguay some years later. In Spain though there were no institutions created to deal with the crimes of the past (Elster, 2004).

The case of how South Africa dealt with the end of apartheid differs for several reasons from the tacit pact of silence in Spain at the end of the dictatorship. Similarly to Spain, following the end of apartheid (1948-94), South Africa decided not to prosecute the figures responsible for the regime. Instead, it created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was a court-like restorative justice body. Victims and perpetrators alike were invited to give statements about their experiences, and some of them were selected for public hearings. With this public embodiment of guilt, perpetrators could request an amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. The TRC offered ‘amnesty for truth’; this measure of ‘moral amnesty’ aroused much controversy in the country.
and in the international community. In 1998, South Africa's Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the Khulumani Support Group (Hamber, Maepa, Mofokeng and van der Merwe, 1997) found that most victims felt that the TRC did not achieve reconciliation between persecutors and victims; indeed most felt that it had failed by favouring those who had committed abuses. Victims and the international community had raised objections against South Africa’s way of dealing with its repressive past and most of them - as in the case of the family of activist Steve Biko- believed reconciliation had prevented justice from being done.

The TRC emphasis on reconciliation is rather similar to the spirit of the Spanish Amnesty Law; however, the TRC granted that the perpetrators would be publicly exposed, and the country would hold a debate on the human rights abuses during the apartheid era. Conversely, with the pact of silence, Spain did not have the opportunity to debate or publicly expose the crimes perpetuated during the Franco regime. Even though the political performance of reconciliation in South Africa was in some ways insufficient to bring justice, the enactment process of putting bodies through a staging of culpability facilitated a type of remembering which allowed both victims and perpetrators to perform a type of social reconciliation. The public confrontation of bodies and voices with their actions during the apartheid regime allowed a general release of those traumas. This cathartic performance of culpability permitted the country to build a democratic regime on the basis of forgiveness. By acknowledging the crimes committed, the new regime was able to incorporate those diverse bodies; black and white, repressed and repressor stood together. Unlike Spain, the spectacle of forgiveness in South Africa allowed the country to find peace and confront its traumas during the transition to democracy.

From a very different perspective, on 16 May 2013 the central government's deputy in Catalonia, Llanos de Luna (member of the PP party), celebrated the 169th birthday of the Spanish Military Police. More than thirty civic and military associations participated in the act. However, the awarding of a diploma to the Blue Division caused astonishment and repulsion in civil society and the rest of the political class, as seen in the main newspapers (La Vanguardia, 2013; Público,
The Blue Division was a volunteer unit of Spanish phalangists which fought with the Nazi army during the Second World War, on the Eastern front against the Soviet Union. Voluntary recruitment from the Spanish army, students and working class who wanted to fight communism, reached 18,000 men. The commemoration of such an organization with links in Nazism evidences the problematic relationship of certain sectors of Spanish government in acknowledging the repressive past, and the urgent need for Spain to deal with its own ghosts of the past: the missing bodies and memories of the Civil War and Francoism.

In this regard, the Spanish case did not confront the victims and perpetrators of the dictatorship. While, in one sense the repressive and repressed bodies stood together during the Transition, this ‘togetherness’ silenced the repressions committed during the dictatorship and prevented different bodies from appearing. It would only be through counter-cultural movements that will be seen in the next section that diverse bodies would appear to break the silence.

III. Moving Identities

Modernization and Commodification

The Spanish transition to democracy brought urgency to modernization. Spanish society felt the need to establish an image of a modern and open country for the international community, thus in opposition to the negative image left by decades of past dictatorship. As Cristina Moreiras exposes in her study of Spanish society during the Transition, Spain itself became an object of consumption, an exported product composed of flamenco and sangria (Moreiras Menor, 2002). Self-commodified as a tourist destination, Spain embodied the Society of Spectacle in which, as suggested by Debord (1967), social life had been commoditized as a product for consumption.

The critique of the spectacle is a development and application of Marxist theories of fetishism, commodities and alienation. In his analysis of modern society, The Society of Spectacle, Guy Debord (1967) argued that authentic social life had been replaced with its representation. The spectacle defined by Debord is not a collection of images, but ‘a social relationship between people that is mediated by
Images (Debord, 1983). Images, then, act as representations of reality, mediating between reality and people who only see the representation and not the represented thing. Debord notes that such lack of authenticity leads to a degradation of knowledge, which affects the capacity for critical thought. In his later Comments on the society of the Spectacle (Debord, 1997), Debord argued that a society that focuses on the present and the consumption of entertaining products, wants to forget the past. The author identifies governments, which possess all means necessary to manipulate perception, as the masters of memories: ‘Spectacular domination’s first priority was to eradicate historical knowledge in general; beginning with just about all rational information and commentary on the most recent past’ (Debord, 1997). Using the example of how the history of May 1968 has been constructed, or rather deconstructed, and hidden from the history of France, Debord explains his critique of ‘spectacular control’. Image and appearance were key assets in Spain, a country that had just opened up to consumerism in search of recognition from the European community. Franco had already exploited the image of a happy Spain, allowing the touristic boom of the sixties and seventies to consume Spanish gastronomy (tapas), and the easy going and happy culture – the light version of flamenco shows, specially designed to show the happiness of life-. Dancers trained in different dance disciplines (from the Opera’s corps de ballet, to Spanish folk), spent their summers dancing with castanets and flamenco shoes, performing choreographies that had been created for consumption by tourists (Maleras, 2013; Aoyama, 2009). The 1980s brought a collective desire to integrate Spain in Europe, instilling a general feeling of happiness and celebratory excess. This irrational happiness of democratization culminated in indifference for the most recent past, and an anxiety to create a present that would move towards a modernized future.

La Movida, as one of the most well known cultural movements appeared in response to this race to modernism. La Movida emerged in Madrid in the early 1980s and then spread to other big cities of the country such as Barcelona, Bilbao and Vigo. It took place during the first decade after the death of Franco and reflected the economic rise of Spain and the new emerging Spanish cultural identity. It was a countercultural movement, a new spirit of freedom, characterized
by the party scene and the transgression of taboos imposed by Franco’s regime, including the use of recreational drugs. *La Movida*, ‘the Move’, comprised a transition from conservative values to a ‘modern’ society looking towards contemporary European democracies. However, *La Movida* might have not brought an opportunity for change, but rather an escape from the contemporary problems of the generation of the 1980s. The artistic production of *La Movida* focused on transgression of the conservative and Catholic moral standards of the Franco regime. One of the main figures of that period was film director Pedro Almodóvar, who, in his earlier short films, depicts anti-heroes, characters that in one sense or another feel outside the mainstream of Spanish society. His first short film in 1974 *Two Whores, or, A Love Story that Ends in Marriage*, featured overtly sexualized narratives and no soundtrack. However, when asked to explain the success of his films, Almodóvar answers that they are very entertaining, ‘It's important not to forget that films are made to entertain. That's the key’ (Ratner-Arias, 2009). In the music scene, the punk artist Olvido Gara (*Alaska y los Pegamoides, Alaska y Dinarama*) and others (*Radio Futura, Los Secretos* and *Loquillo y Los Trogloditas*) have since become cult icons of the movement.

The Transition, on the one hand, and *La Movida* as a counter-movement, on the other hand, allowed Spaniards to construct new identities. Initially, the enforcement of silence and amnesia during the Transition endorsed performances that rejected the traumas of the past, and promoted the ‘happy Spanish culture’, as a product of consumption (i.e. flamenco dancers in tourist resorts). *La Movida*, in contrast, brought to the surface a culture of excess. What did this ‘move’ actually bring in terms of transgression? *La Movida* has been criticized as an attempt by younger generations to escape the tensions of the difficult political time without accepting their historical responsibility, such as the recovery of historical memory, which would occur later in the 2000s. Even though contextualized as countercultural, *La Movida* was based upon economic and social structures inherited from the former regime which were not challenged by the movement. What *La Movida* did bring was a diversification of bodies, breaking with the standard white middle class obedient body of the previous regime. Through movies and rock songs, *La Movida* introduced the queer body, the powerful
feminine body, and the sexual body among other transgressor bodies. Subsequently, *La Movida* introduced counter-performances of Spanish identity. This identity was one of excess, of uncontrollable and non-conformist bodies, bodies that had remained in silence or oppressed during the dictatorship, which were now constructing their own identities. In fact, *La Movida* brought to surface key aspects silenced by the Catholic moral code of the dictatorship, such as queer sexuality, female sexuality and freedom of sexual and political choice among others.

However, *La Movida* has also been identified with superficiality and entertainment, mostly encouraged by Almodóvar’s words cited above, as a means to escape towards a modernized country that mirrored Europe. In this respect, Teresa Vilarós notes that *La Movida* was an explosion of freedom, but actually it did not create a stable cultural movement that survived its time (Vilarós, 1998). I dispute this argument, noting that those excessive bodies brought an explosion of freedom to public performances, talking about the silences of Francoism. With a move, turning attention to the past, these transgressive bodies brought to surface the repressed bodies of the past, bringing to the forefront bodies that were not allowed to appear during Francoism. I would argue that these moving bodies also wrote about the silences of recent Spanish history.

**Disenchantment**

Conversely, the 1990s and 2000s did not present a common objective; Spanish society turned to individualism lacking a collective awareness. A decade of transgressions, experimental drugs and aesthetics was followed by a collective hangover, in which Spanish citizens awoke in a confused and contradicted state. Moreiras Menor argues:

> The Spanish citizen lives in the most absolute individuality, ruled by uncertainty, the logic of mass communication (television, video and above all the computer) and distrust towards the State


---

23 My translation from the text: ‘El ciudadano español vive sumido en la más absoluta
While the transgressions of *La Movida* were fading, individuals, Moreiras laments, experienced a hang-over from the state of excess. At the end of the twentieth century, spoiled by the previous spectacle of different bodies during *La Movida*, Spanish society continued looking for entertainment. The excessive bodies of the 1980s were not transgressive any more, but instead had been absorbed into the hegemonic body of democracy. Spaniards had entered in the quest for modernity and progress at the same level as elsewhere in Europe. As Debord (1997) suggests, with this progress, society, alienated by images, commodities and spectacle, avoided confronting the past. Yet, while in the 1980s the culture of excess created spectacles for entertaining and distracting society from the real problem of the past, in the 1990s the Spanish population felt disenchanted with the realisation that the problem of the past had not disappeared; on the contrary, the problem persisted and haunted present society.

At this point, civil society began some actions in response to this disenchantment. When the loss of the generation that had fought during the Civil War was imminent, the problems of dealing with their memories arose at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Initiatives such as the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory, ARMH), covered in more detail in the next section, began to articulate a response to the Transition’s amnesia.

Vilarós in her cultural critique of the Transition (1998) suggested that the memories repressed during the Transition became part of the unconscious of Spanish minds. Commenting on Freud’s concept of repression, Vilarós notes that ‘what is repressed exerts a continuous pressure in direction to the conscience, for this reason, the balance is kept by means of an unceasing counter-pressure’ (My translation, Vilarós, 1998, p 146). That is to say, what is repressed does not

---

24 Sigmund Freud originated the concept of repression in his 1895 Studies on Hysteria. Repression is a key concept on psychoanalytic theory, it is a defence mechanism of the mind to ensure that what is not acceptable for the conscience does not comes to surface (Breuer and Freud, 2009).

25 My translation from the text: ‘Lo reprimido ejerce una presión continua en dirección a lo consciente, a raíz de lo cual el equilibrio tiene que mantenerse por medio de una contrapresión individualidad, bajo el dominio de la incertidumbre, de las lógicas de la comunicación de masas (la televisión, el video y el ordenador sobretodo) y la desconfianza hacia el Estado.’
disappear, but rather remains in the unconscious of individuals minds, pushing to be acknowledged. Vilarós articulates a collective Spanish repressed memory which is the silenced memory of the Transition. Although the pact of silence imposed an exercise of oblivion on those memories, they did not disappear or vanish. Instead, the repressed memory remained in the collective Spanish mind, waiting and pushing to be recognized. This exercise of oblivion during the Transition had been partially successful, and so the repressed is breaking into Spanish present society, returning to demand attention for its traumas. This psychological and at the same time political tear might present difficulties for theorizing, but might also help to conceptualize the process of transition to democracy in Spain.

Vilarós observes that the repressed exerts a constant pressure on the conscience. The amnesia imposed by the Spanish Transition is still operating in current democratic Spain, and so there are still repressed memories that push to enter the collective conscience in present-day society. A few contemporary directors and writers in the twenty first century have engaged with the marginal memories of those forgotten by Francoism in their works, and by doing so they have also engaged with the collective memories forgotten during the Transition. In literature, the construction of narratives of remembering has facilitated historical revision of the Francoist historical period. Nowadays some dissident literature centres its critiques on the concepts of historic revision. For instance, Javier Cercas’s Soldados de Salamina (Soldiers of Salamis) (Cercas, 2001) recounts the story of a Nationalist soldier executed by the Republican side, depicting the tensions of a civil war and mass executions by both sides. This controversial novel offered chances to discuss the responsibilities of historians to study those periods that have lain unknown. Ángeles Caso, with Un Largo Silencio (A Long Silence) (Caso, 2000), portrays the repression imposed on those women who fought on the Republican side and were politically silenced during the dictatorship. By the

---

26 Directors such as Ken Loach with the film Land and Freedom (1995) reflects on the Republican side during the Civil War and its internal conflicts between the Stalinist factions supported by the Soviet Union and the international militias coming from an anarchist ideology. This conflict is also portrayed in George Orwell’s Homage to Catalonia (1938).
means of remembering the silenced (deceased) through their narratives, these two authors are among the multiple examples of how literature has been able to articulate critiques of the tacit amnesia. Similarly, embodying a haunted present, the Spanish film industry created a boom of horror movies at the start of the twenty first century (Delgado, 2013). At the same time that the ARMH initiated the first mass exhumations, the Spanish film industry produced movies where ghosts from the past haunted the present. In those movies - for example, El Espinazo del Diablo (The Devil’s Spine, 2001) and El Orfanato (The Orphanage, 2007) among many more - the leading characters had to investigate the past to be able to exorcize those ghosts that were haunting the present. The metaphor of the ghost, who haunts the present, searching for historical justice, symbolises the return of repressed memories in democratic Spain.

**Responses to The Amnesty Law**

Although at the time of its approval, the Amnesty Law was considered necessary and positive for establishing democracy by the political class, as time went by some criticisms were voiced from civil society and inside the parliament. The economics scholar Joan Martínez Alier from the Green Party argued that the Amnesty Law, which created an amnesty for those who had abused human rights, was, surprisingly, approved by the parliament with the votes of the left and centre parties which had been fighting for democracy during the dictatorship (Martinez Alier, 2011). Besides this, in 2007 the socialist politician José María Benegas published an article in El Punto, el Siglo de Europa, where he defined the law as a failure to review the past and the responsibilities created by forty years of dictatorship (Benegas, 2007). The historians Carme Molinero and Pere Ysas from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, denounced the historical problems the Amnesty Law would bring (Molinero and Ysas, 2007).

At the beginning of the twenty first century, the first steps to unsettle this pact of oblivion appeared from within civil society. The gradual disappearance of the activists’ grandparents (those who fought during the Civil War) prompted claims for justice led by a generation of grandchildren (Muro, 2011). The exhumation of a mass grave in 2000, where thirteen republican soldiers were found, in León, in central Spain, consolidated the appearance of the ARMH. This association was
founded with demands for moral and economic compensation for the victims of the oppression of the dictatorship. During its fourteen years of existence, the ARMH has encouraged exhumations and political activities focussed on the recuperation of historic memory. Furthermore, the European Union has urged Spain to deal with its missing. As illustrated by Madeleine Davis, ‘In 2002, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Missing People Disappearances for the first time included Spain in its list of countries that have yet to resolve the problem of forcible detention and subsequent disappearance of people’ (Davis, 2005, p.858). Amnesty International has placed Spain second, only to Cambodia, in terms of the number of missing people during the Civil War and the subsequent Francoist repression (Raghavan, 2009).

The two main political parties in Spain, the PSOE and the PP, have performed (and are still performing) a ‘tug-of-war’ over the recognition of the victims of Francoism and challenges to the Amnesty Law. On the one hand the PP has consistently refused any sign of recognition for the victims of Francoism. On the other hand, the election of the PSOE in 2004 raised the hopes of a revision of the transition to democracy and the tacit pact of silence. This hope was increased as the president of the government, José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero, was himself a grandson of a captain executed by Franco’s forces during the Civil War. However, in 2006, the European People’s Party refused to condemn General Franco’s coup d’état at the European Parliament on its seventieth anniversary.

In the area of the justice system, few initiatives have appeared recently that challenge the silence. Judge Baltasar Garzón came to international prominence for approaching the politics of remembrance in Spain. Exercising the principle of universal jurisdiction Garzón he had the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet arrested when he was visiting London in 1998, and prosecuted Argentine torturers in Madrid 2005. While the judicial cases relating to other Latin-American dictatorships raised post-colonial critiques of Spanish intrusion, they conversely emphasised the need to try Spain’s own torturers. Even when President of the Government Zapatero introduced the Law of Historical Memory in 2007, which called for the removal of all symbols and monuments promoting the military rebellion of Franco, and offered benefits for families of those killed defending
democracy from 1968 to 1977, Amnesty International and the ARMH maintained it did not go far enough to revoke the Amnesty Law of 1977. Supported by the Law of Historical Memory, in 2008 Garzón formally declared the acts of repression committed under the Franco Regime to be crimes against humanity. Garzón estimated that there were over 100,000 deaths during and after the Spanish Civil War, and ordered the exhumation of nineteen mass graves. However, in November 2013, Garzón announced he was dropping the investigation because state prosecutors had questioned his jurisdiction over crimes committed more than seventy years ago, but above all crimes that were covered by the Amnesty Law of 1977. Garzón was found guilty on a charge of breach of professional duty in a case involving money-laundering by the PP, and consequently was disbarred for eleven years. Human rights organizations and thousands of people in Spain’s main cities denounced a politically motivated witch-hunt to remove Garzón from the case of the victims of Francoism.

In 2009 international human rights associations criticised Spain for the way it treated the crimes committed under Francoism. The United Nations Human Rights Council recommended that Spain repeal the Amnesty Law, because human rights are not subject to statutes of limitation. The Spanish government, led by the socialist Rodríguez Zapatero, replied by questioning the jurisdiction of the Council in this subject and alluding to the generalized acceptance of the Amnesty Law and its role in the democratic government (Gobierno de España, 2009a). The same year, the same response was given to the United Nations Committee against Torture when it asked Spain to judge those that had been amnestied under the law of 1977 (Gobierno de España, 2009b). Finally on 10 February 2012, Navanethem Pillay, a representative of the United Nations Human Rights Council, formally asked Spain to repeal the law, arguing that it violated international Human Rights legislation (Europa Press, 2012)). While national and international associations have called for a re-think of the pact of silence, the Spanish government, whether the PP or the PSOE, is still supporting the legitimacy and importance of the Amnesty Law.

The prize of a peaceful transition in Spain involved ignoring the bodies of those who lost the war and were oppressed, suppressed and forgotten during the
dictatorship. However, with the Amnesty Law, dissident political bodies in prison under Francoism were released. The nonconforming bodies were freed from government repression, but now existed quietly with their own memories because any intent to raise awareness of their own traumas was silenced in the name of the pact of silence. Today, the question of what memory is, leads to a crisis in Spanish society. Even though forgetting became a means towards a peaceful transition to democracy, the pact of silence had shown that it fulfilled a function during the first thirty years of democracy. It is only recently that this silent agreement has been questioned, socially contested and politically confronted (Julia, 2000). The forgotten bodies have acquired public awareness, articulating their demands for social justice and moral compensations.

***

With the pact of silence, Spanish bodies did not confront the gender and national values from the dictatorial era, which have since been shaping the democratic society. In the early days of the Transition, Spain pursued modernity and progress, at the same level as the rest of Western Europe, based on a rejection of the past (Labanyi, 2000, p 64). Yet, as Benjamin claims, progress oppresses the memories of the past, rather than acknowledging them (Benjamin, 2009), and there is now an urge to recognize the conflicting memories of the Civil War to construct new democratic identities. In this chapter I have discussed several actions that attempted to deal with the ghosts of the pasts, such as the ARMH’s initiatives to exhume graves, judicial calls to judge the crimes committed by the dictatorship, the exposure of transgressive bodies during La Movida, and the revision of history in literature and film. However, the difficulties encountered in officially achieving this recognition, are evidence of the tensions still present in Spain when dealing with the past, and particularly when dealing with unravelling the pact of silence.

In analysing choreographies of memory and amnesia during the transition to democracy, what strikes me is the dominance of male bodies taking political decisions. In particular the absence of female bodies in the negotiation of the new democracy is striking. Yet, considering the responses to the amnesty law in the 2000s, female bodies are more present (for example in La Movida, as writers and
film directors). I conceptualize the collective amnesia as a way to keep certain bodies silent. Contemporary dance appeared during the Transition as a platform which to unsettle those bodies to enquire about the past and present. Mainly male bodies created the pillars of Spanish democracy and silence, which makes female bodies dancing a much more effective response to this silence. With a new movement vocabulary, not seen before during Francoism, these dancing bodies offered ways to think about the past. How have the repressed memories and traumas of Spain’s ghost history pushed to be acknowledged in the bodies of contemporary dance women? How does their choreographic practice offer a dialogue with the past, a way to negotiate with history and the present bodies dancing? These questions among others will be answered through the choreographic analysis in the following chapters.
Chapter 3. Historicising The Dancing Body

In 2002, Celia Valiente argued in her article, ‘An overview of research on gender in Spanish society’, that sociological studies of gender in Spanish society were developed and closely influenced by the political evolution of the country, rather than by changes in Spanish society. I will likewise build an argument that the development of dance in the second half of the twentieth century in Spain has been more influenced by the political events of the country than by the cultural transformation of Spanish society. As previously discussed, the main factor that explains the significant impact of political matters on the scholarship of gender, dance and the humanities is that from 1939 to 1975 an authoritarian dictatorship, led by General Francisco Franco, governed Spain. Franco’s government actively opposed the advancement of women’s rights and status, and the dictatorship opposed any kind of human rights and freedom, including avant-garde dance forms. During the early twentieth century, however, Spanish dance did evolve, closely interrelated with the social changes in Western countries.

This chapter analyses the emergence of a new dance form at the beginning of the twentieth century in relationship with the social and political changes of that time. In this way, this study analyses the actions of modern-dance pioneers which created a discourse of social freedom around contemporary performances, and, at the same time, it emphasizes the contribution of Spain to the development of modern dance. Section I, ‘Liberating The Female Body: Early Modern Dance in Spain’ contextualises the appearance of modern dance as new dance vocabulary commensurate with modern society, and early feminist claims. It recovers the figures of Carmen Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà as modern dance pioneers. Section II, ‘Female Bodies at War’, explores depictions of the female body by the different regimes during the war. Section III ‘The Re-Establishment of the Domestic Body’ focuses on how Francoism re-constructed, thus re-invented, an identity for women through an institution that regulated the collection of folkloric dances.

A consideration of pre-Franco Spain is necessary to understand the evolution of modern dance in the country, first in the early twentieth century, and later during
the transition to democracy. The lack of visibility of modern dance during the dictatorship and the latent opposition of the latter to modern dance performances in public theatres will help to conceptualise modern and contemporary dance during the democratic times as a modernizing, and thus democratic, tactic.

I. Liberating The Female Body: Early Modern Dance in Spain

In the late nineteenth century, dance was a female dominated occupation, and the two main forms of theatrical dance (before the arrival of modern dance), ballet and vaudeville, staged a submissive feminine body, a dominated femininity subject to the desires of a predominantly male audience. As Ann Daly suggests:

> By the turn of the century, the ‘dancer’ (implicitly female, but with little distinction between the trained ballerina, the entertaining skirt dancer, and the moonlighting factory worker-cum-chorus girl) was constructed as a highly paid, empty-headed, blonde Soubrette of ill repute. In order to produce that fantasy, dancers were subject to the whims of the novelty-hungry audiences.

(Daly, 1995, p.157)

Theatrical dance appeared to occupy a low value position in both America and Europe. After the highlights of the romantic era, Ballet had reached a point of stillness, with the repetition of obsolete themes, repertoire, technique and aesthetics (Daly, 1995). The other theatrical dance form of that time was vaudeville, however, this dance form was considered ‘light’ and less serious than ballet.

The industrial revolution and the political demands for democratic governments brought social agitation in North America and Western Europe. The old fashioned and conformist aesthetics of ballet did not offer a convenient vocabulary in which to express these concerns. However, sensing these political and social changes, the ballet world would see a readjustment of its needs by the social and aesthetic changes that the international tours of Anna Pavlova and Sergei Diaghilev, the impresario of the Ballets Russes, would bring. Spanish folkloric elements had previously been incorporated into the ballet vocabulary, resulting in ballet repertoires such as Marius Petipa’s creations (The Pearl of Seville, The Adventures of a Madrileña and The Flower of Granada among others) during his residence in
Madrid Teatro Real in 1843. Other examples include Spanish solo dancers such as Antonia Mercé, *La Argentina*, Pastora Imperio, Carmen Amaya and José Greco, who toured around the world popularizing Spanish dances, including flamenco, bolero, sevillanas and fandango, among other forms.

During the First World War (1914-18) the Ballets Russes were in a critical situation in Europe, which was divided by the war. The Spanish king Alfonso XIII invited the Ballets to perform at the Teatro Real in Madrid, May 1916, and because of the international context the Ballets were obliged to extend their stay one more year in Spanish territory. The interest of Diaghilev and Leonide Massine (as the principal dancer-choreographer after Vaslav Nijinsky had left the company in 1913) in Spanish folklore resulted in some ballets inspired by folkloric elements (Norton, 2004). *Cuadro Flamenco (Flamenco Group)* and *The Three Cornered Hat* respectively premiered in London in 1919, and in Madrid in 1921, which opened the path for the utilisation of Spanish folklore by other Spanish national choreographers to create coherent and innovative performances. The Spanish influence on these traditional theatrical forms of dance is recognized in the disciplines of ballet and ethnic dance.

Nevertheless, Western society at the turn of the twentieth century needed a new dance form that expressed its sociopolitical changes. Drawing from the rational, progressive discourse of the Enlightenment, this new society required new artistic aesthetics that would meet its needs. Dancers such as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Denis, Loie Fuller, Allen Maud and the lesser-known Tórtola Valencia created new movement vocabularies which proposed other ways of understanding dance and performance on stage, rather than ballet or vaudeville. These dancers proposed images and choreographed dances with their bodies, as Elisabeth Dempster points out, ‘producing a writing of the female body which strongly contrasted with classical inscriptions.’ (Dempster, 2010, p.229). With their artistic

---

27 In 1917 Antonia Mercé, ‘la Argentina’, was the first dancer to develop a theoretical definition of the four Spanish aesthetic forms: folklore, flamenco, escuela bolera and stylized dance (Puig Claramunt, 1944). These four dance elements are separate techniques which could be independently performed, and at the same time, they also could act together on stage in a sort of Spanish theatrical dance (see Monés, et al, 2000).
choices, dancers and choreographers responded to the ideologies of their time; ‘new dance’ gave shape to the confrontation between traditional and new values existent in modern society. As Nancy Reynolds notes:

> Around the turn of the twentieth century, a new form of solo dance – also called ‘aesthetic’ or, occasionally ‘barefoot’ dance- began to appear on the stages of Europe and America. Some of the things that made it new were its seriousness of purpose, the use of concert music as an accompaniment, and an innovative approach to dance technique, in which the rigorous code of ballet and the exhibitionistic high kicks of the music hall played no part.

(Reynolds and McCormick, 2003, p.1)

The history of Spanish contemporary dance was closely connected to the development of modern dance in other Western countries. National cultural movements such as *Modernismo* and *Noucentisme*, as will be discussed later in Chapter 3, pushed Spain to establish its national and European character, by involving Spanish folklore with contemporary European trends such as modern dance (see the following cases of Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà). The process of adoption, re-creation and consumption of Western modern dance is the result of a local perception and adaptation of a foreign cultural practice, which arrived through performances by its pioneers as well as other artistic practices. The figure of Isadora Duncan, considered the pioneer of ‘barefoot dance’, had a considerable repercussion in the Spanish press. Even though Duncan never danced on a Spanish stage, her European performances were recorded in the national newspapers’ review sections, which praised the quality and innovation of her dances (Bueno, 1927; Martinez de la Riva, 1927). For instance, her tragic death received numerous editorials in the national press. Referring to her as ‘the genius of dance’, the Spanish newspaper *ABC* dedicated a compilation of Duncan’s work in 1929 (Bueno, 1927; Martinez de la Riva, 1927). Loie Fuller did perform in Madrid in 1912 with her company, which also received reviews in national newspapers such as *ABC* (Notas teatrales, 1912) and the theatre magazine *Blanco y Negro*, which admired her genius ‘colourful choreography’ and eclectic style’ (Notas Teatrales, 1912, p.12). Modern dance was introduced as the avant-garde path for modernization from European countries. A symbol of progress and modernization, Spain’s bourgeoisie from the main cities of Madrid and Barcelona
embraced this new art form as something distinct from feudal Spanish society. Iris Garland describes these changes as being ‘situated within that strand of modernism before World War I that engaged European intellectuals and artists with the essential, the primitive and exotic in a search for lost spiritual values during the rapid technological changes of the fin de siècle’ (Garland, 1997, p.1).

Spain’s contribution to the development of modern dance (thus far attributed to North American and German dancers) has not been sufficiently studied. Iris Garland, who researched the work of the Spanish dancer Carmen Tórtola Valencia as a pioneer of early modern dance, notices how Tórtola Valencia does not appear in the bibliography of early modern dance in the Anglo-Saxon world (Garland, 1997). However Tórtola Valencia had conquered European, North and South American audiences with her eclectic repertoire of Oriental, classical and Spanish dances and received critical acclaim as one of the most celebrated dancers of her time. A similar case of oblivion happened with other Spanish pioneers, such as Aurea de Sarrà and Josefina Cirera Llop.

**The Forgotten Bodies of Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà**

As Murga Castro notes (2009) the currents of cultural renovation at the beginning of the twentieth century reached Spain through two principal focal points: Madrid and Barcelona. The main political and economic activity was concentrated in the two cities: Madrid, as it was the capital and where the monarchy had its court; and Barcelona, as it contained an incipient industrial and commercial bourgeoisie looking for a symbol of modernity and prosperity.

Tórtola Valencia (1882-1955) was born in Seville but soon moved to live in London with a wealthy family. She produced an aura of mystery surrounding her Spanish origins and her life in London where she first performed in 1908 (Queralt del Hierro, 2005; Clayton, 2012). She always refused to clarify where she was born, and her Spanish mixed nationality: from a Catalan father and Andalusian mother, Tórtola Valencia was born in Barcelona. However, she hid those facts and claimed that she had pure gipsy origins in Andalusia. This mystery was deliberately emphasised by the artist herself, in line with the mystification of the biographies of pioneering modern dancers such as Duncan. On her debut in
Madrid in 1911, her style of interpretative dance was initially not well received by Spanish theatre audiences. But it was the interest of the cultural movement of the Spanish Modernistas\textsuperscript{28} that elevated her art from Music Hall to a solo concert dance artist.

The Orientalist discourse had appeared strongly in the nineteenth century, drawing from Eastern myth, religion and culture. This exoticism influenced artists such as Ruth St. Denis, Maud Allan and Tórtola Valencia, who created exotic dances on the theme of authenticity. At the turn of the twentieth century, the level of authenticity was closely related with the value of the dance. Consequently, the dancers, who were at the same time choreographers and agents of their careers, introduced their dances as results of archaeological and cultural research, which could ultimately mean anything from a visit to an archaeological museum, to extensive readings or a planned trip to the East.

Women occupied a central position in the expression of Orientalism, particularly the attributes of irrationality, mystery and passion personified in femme fatales. Noted in several reviews of the performance, Valencia was considered to be one of the most beautiful women in Europe (Garland, 1997). She accentuated her dark and expressive eyes and her olive skin in an attempt to exoticize her body, profiting from an aura of mystery and sexuality that she sold on stage (see figure 2).

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Modernismo} was a Spanish-American literary movement of the end of the nineteenth to beginning of twentieth century, with the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario as its major figure. The movement is a blend of three European currents: Romanticism, Symbolism and Parnassianism. It praised a return to the roots of Oriental civilizations to recover knowledge based in the senses and the powers of the spirit (Davison, 1966).
From reviews in New York to European critiques, the body of Valencia was moulded into that of a sexual goddess. As Garland quotes in her article (1997), the new New Yorker newspaper praised Valencia’s stage presence as ‘more strange and mysterious’ than other pioneers of modern dance such as St. Denis (The Morning Telegraph quoted in Garland, 1997, p.3). Far from denying the sexual component in her dances, Valencia’s interpretation deliberately incarnated the erotic body and sacred mythic themes of the Spanish modernistas, among them Ramón del Valle Inclán, the renowned Spanish writer who was one of her admirers. The positioning of a female body on stage must deal often with objectification and commodification by the audience. As Sue-Ellen Case suggests, when the audience looks at a woman on stage, she is perceived as a possible site for the fulfilment of male desire (Case, 1988). Valencia’s body movements, emphasizing her curves and sensuality, suggests to me that Valencia was aware of the effects of the ‘male gaze’; moreover she did use it as a component of her success (see figure 3). Valencia displayed her feminine body on stage, and thus, as the target of the male gaze, she allowed and even played with this commodification. The staging of her body, however, presented different options for understanding femininity than the hegemonic domestic femininity promoted by the patriarchal system of her time. Valencia’s eastern dresses and dark eyes had

---

29 The Morning Telegraph and the New York Herald, on 16th November 1917 (Garland, 1997).
a strong presence on stage; her movements were often strong and precise; her choreographies showed complex arm movements and animalistic torso forms, often with sexual references. Her feminine body on stage was not passive but instead active. As a modernist woman, she embodied the new freedom demanded in the claims to equality of the first-wave feminist movement: an independent woman outside the domestic sphere, embodying powerful female characters in the public arena. Conversely, selling a type of exotic sexuality, she personified the desires of that patriarchal system that enhanced her success.

Figure 3. Tórtola Valencia, La Serpiente (The Snake) 1915-1949. Museu de les Arts Escèniques, Institute of the Theatre Archive

From Spain’s other focal point, Catalan circles played an important role in the modernisation of the dance scene (Murga Castro, 2009). The musician, poet and pedagogue Joan Llongueras created the Institut de Rítmica I Plàstica de l’Orfeó Català (Catalan Institute of Rhythm and Expression) in Barcelona, 1912. This was the first institution to bring to Spain Jacques Dalcroze’s\textsuperscript{30} new musical

\textsuperscript{30}Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, a Swiss musician and composer, had revolutionized the art world with a new methodology for learning and experiencing music through movement in 1892. This new methodology, Eurhythmics, based in the rhythm of the body, did not aim to train professional dancers, but it offered some elements that would become the basis for future modern dance:
methodologies. Llongueras’ school used Dalcroze’s method to teach musicians the basis of rhythm, as Magrinyà commented on in a television interview (Espinàs, 1984). This method served as well to some dancers as preparation for movement. For example, Joan Magrinyà was among the disciples of the Catalan Institute, and would become a choreographic and pedagogic reference point in ballet during Franco’s regime, leading the Barcelona Conservatory of Dance.

A different viewpoint was the Hellenistic discourse in modern dance that appeared thanks to the pioneer Isadora Duncan. She saw her solos as a very different art form than codified ballet; Duncan simultaneously distanced her dances from the vaudeville style by connecting her performances with a high ideology and philosophy, in the representation of the Greek past. As Daly notes, at that time ‘the Hellenistic tradition was then considered the pinnacle of genuine artistry’ (Daly, 1995). This elevated, Greek discourse provided a solid aesthetic and ideological foreground which legitimized the new dances. The rise and acceptance of this dance was connected with social and political ideologies. The romanticised idea of liberation from the restrictive forms of ballet (and what this antique form represented, originating in the courts of the monarchy) aligned with the rise of bourgeois social ethics. Catalan free dancers Aurea de Sarrà (1889-1974) and Josefina Cirera Llop (unknown) found inspiration in the Hellenistic style of Duncan as the pinnacle of beauty and perfection for their dances (Vilallonga, 1997).

Concurrently with the aesthetics of exoticization, Sarrà and Llop were practising a free dance that also rejected the constraints of academic dance. Josefina Llop remained almost anonymous and for this reason I keep her controversial figure silent in this study pending further research. She is only mentioned in two history books (Amorós & Borque, 1999; Markessinis, 1995) and there are no existing archives in print about her dances. Aurea Sarrà has a few entries in Spanish archives and her performances are recorded in the contemporary press, citing international tours and international successes. Seeking a harmonic link with economy in the gesture, alternation of muscular contraction and relaxation, importance of breathing and the mutual relationship of time-space with energy.
nature, Sarrà was a self-taught dancer, inspired by Isadora Duncan and Eleanor Duse, with whom she was often compared (Ferrando Miralles, 2010). With her Hellenistic dances, she aimed to revive antique Greek dances, which in her opinion were based on rhythm and expression (Vilallonga, 2008), (see figure 4: an article in the Spanish magazine *Esfera* comparing Sarrà’s Greek influences with Duncan’s aesthetics).

Figure 3. *La Esfera*, 'The resurrection of classic dances’ (Madrid 1914, p.10). Aurea Sarrà dancing at the Dionysius Temple in the top picture, and Duncan’s picture below. Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Supported by the Catalan *Noucentisme* artistic movement, Sarrà made her debut
in Madrid’s *Teatro Eslava* in 1920. Received with enthusiasm as noted in the ABC newspaper article compilation of her career (Aurea de Sarrá en el Ateneo, 1929), she began her international tour in Paris, where she received the nickname of the ‘the great tragedian of dance’ in 1921, and London in 1923 (Vilallonga, 1997). She later, began a tour of South America, Buenos Aires in 1924. After performing in Italy and Egypt, admired by Mussolini and the Egyptian Royal family respectively, she received the most important success in Greece, where she danced in the main monuments of Athens, such as the Temple of Zeus and the Theatre of Dionysius (Vilallonga, 2008), as seen previously in figure 4. In fact, the Greek Dictator Theodoros Pangalos awarded her the Order of the Phoenix in 1926, the same award that the poet Constantine P. Cavafy rejected that year. With the Phoenix Order Sarrà was welcomed into Greek intellectual circles, and the Greek poet Kostis Palamas dedicated several poems to her.

Sarrà was first inspired by exoticism and Orientalism. With a similar trajectory to other pioneers of modern dance (Duncan, St. Denis, Valencia and Allen) she danced exotic characters such as Salome, the daughter of the Pharaoh and a self-exoticised Spanish female conqueror (Murga Castro, 2009). Nevertheless, as a proponent of *Noucentisme*, Sarrà soon abandoned Orientalism and those dances, exploiting folkloric visions of Spanish culture with flamenco figures and bullfighters. She then dedicated her dances to emphasise models from Catalan nationalism more closely. Depicted as the symbol of purity in the body of the Greek goddess by Catalan *Noucentisme*, her later career focused almost exclusively on her studies of classicism and Mediterranean mythology: another exotisation of her culture, as problematic as essentialised notions of Spanish culture. Despite the support of *Noucentiste* intellectuals such as Carles Rahola or Joan Estelrich, Sarrà received some criticisms during her last tour in Catalonia in 1928. The signatories of the ‘Yellow Document’, which included Salvador Dalí, criticised her amorality, frivolity and unfashionable aesthetics. In 1930, Sarrà danced in her last big performance, in the monographic performance dedicated to her at the Greek Theatre in Barcelona. She married Madrid art critic José Francés and, affected by the death of Duncan in 1927, she would retire in 1930 at the beginning of the Second Spanish Republic.
The rise of the first feminist concerns amongst Western upper and middle class women coincided with an effervescent moment in the dance scene. The ‘new dance’ brought a new woman on stage who would combine values of modernity, progress and feminism, as Reynolds suggests:

In creating a new identity for dance, touring the world in the dissemination of their art, establishing schools to educate a new generation, and publishing books about their artistic goals and discoveries, they also represented an early form of New Woman – strong, independent, physically daring, self-sufficient. In much of what they did, they lacked role models of any kind.

(Reynolds and McCormick, 2003, p.1)

Embraced by the opposing Spanish cultural movements of Modernismo and Noucentisme respectively, Valencia and Sarrà developed a new body for women of their time. Even though both dancers were supported by mainly male intellectuals, they both maintained the independence and control of their solo careers. Whether with emphasis on eroticism or classical Greek beauty, these two women played a part in the patriarchal structure that commodified their bodies as objects of desire. While the stage might inflict the masculine gaze on their bodies, I suggest that their performance empowered their bodies. With sexuality or antique magnificence, their movements claim female agency in their societies.

Melissa Blanco Borelli’s article ‘Hips, hip-notism, hip(g)nosis’ (2010) deploys an argument which empowers the commodified mulata’s body. Arguing that there is no such thing as victimisation when an active body uses her ‘sexualised’ movements, Blanco Borelli asserts that the mulata’s hips’ actions claim agency and citizenship (Blanco Borelli, 2010). Resisting hegemonic discourses and practises, hips swinging speak of another history of the circum-Atlantic area, one complicated by the production of knowledge by women of colour. Likewise, Elisabeth Dempster speaks of the role of modern dance in creating new writings of the female body. Dempster’s article ‘Women writing the body: Let’s watch a little how she dances’ (2010), brings modern dance pioneers and the agency on their bodies to the forefront. In her study of female writing, focusing on Martha Graham, Dempster suggests that the power that Graham inflicts on the female body on stage differs significantly from the hegemonic feminine conceptions of
her times, which ascribed the female body to the domestic scene by denying many of the universalised Western human rights. As modern dance pioneers were performing in the public arena, ‘they created spaces for dance and for women which had not existed before’ (Dempster, 2010, p.232). The entrance of this new free dance allowed Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà, among other less known dancers, to apply these freedoms (of movements) into their bodies and their professional careers (Amorós and Borque, 1999), to perform their chosen feminine roles/bodies and with this, to present other feminine realities on stage. As Garland suggests in her study of Tórtola Valencia, it was precisely the stage that allowed Valencia to find a social position other than marriage (Garland, 1997). Valencia explained her concerns with her female independence in an interview to Eggers Lecour in Argentina, in 1928:

I have known very few lovers...I have been alone, as was my ideal, because man is so egotistical that they [sic] all wished me to abandon the theatre and give up my art, to which I have always been faithful, and I would never give it up for a man!

(Tórtola cited in Garland, 1997, p.5)

Ultimately Valencia and Sarrà also opened up new spaces for women from which they could raise their contemporary social concerns.

II. Female Bodies at War

The economically weak and politically unstable Spanish society of the early twentieth century limited the development of early modern dance in Spain. Freedoms and rights were suppressed during General Primo de Rivera’s military dictatorship (1923-31) until the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931.

Women’s rights evolved with the Second Republic with female bodies introduced into the political scene. At that time women could be elected but could not elect; Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent (Partido Radical, Radical Party of Lerroux, and Izquierda Republicana, Republican Left Party, respectively) were the first

---

32 I would argue that if they were denied to women, then they were not universal
women appointed as members of parliament. Campoamor and Kent would embody opposing opinions on the debate on women's suffrage in October 1931. While Campoamor defended the right of women to vote in any circumstances and ideologies, Kent supported a postponement of women's suffrage, alluding to a conservative ideology associated with the female vote. Finally, the vote was favourable to female suffrage and the right to vote was granted as the 36th article of the Republican Constitution. Other major gains were made in favour of women’s rights and gender equality. The 25th article of the Constitution recognized the equality of men and women. The 40th article gave both sexes equality in public employment and work. In the 43rd article, the rights to equality in marriage and divorce were also granted to women. Also the 53rd article awarded the right to be elected to all citizens over the age of 23, independently of their sex. Today, the constitution of 1931 is considered as one of the most progressive in the history of Spain. The modernization of the state, the development of democracy, the appearance of public education, and the growing political and social conscience of women since the beginning of the 20th Century made these advancements possible, and the Republic was ready to accept them.

The Spanish Civil War broke out on 18 July 1936 with a right-wing offensive by the Spanish Army against the Second Republic. When the leader of the insurgent Spanish Army, General Franco, declared the coup d’état, the population of the main cities of Spain (women, men and children) took up in arms to defend the democratic regime. On the home front, and especially in the city of Barcelona, anarchist and socialist movements simultaneously took up the defence of the republican government with a spontaneous social revolution: workers collectivized factories and industries and decisions were taken on direct assemblies (Pateman, 2005). Besides the initial enthusiasm of the population in defending the Republic, the Civil War became a multifaceted conflict involving the international political arena; Mussolini’s Italian Fascism and Hitler’s Nazism supported the Nationalists and the Stalinist Soviet Union supported the Republicans. This triangulation, which is well known to have had implications in the Second World War, finally led to the victory of Franco Nationalists on 1 April 1939.
The muted Dance Scene

With the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain, the need to focus on defending democracy led to the inevitable forgetting of the pioneers of modern dance. Some important dancers disappeared from the contemporary scene with the early death of la Argentina in 1936 or the retirement of Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà in the same decade in Barcelona. Along with these dancers, some interesting projects also disappeared which would have facilitated the consolidation of modern dance in Spanish institutions. For instance, the creation of a National School of Dance (directed by the choreographer Max Aub) fell into oblivion as Manuel Azaña (the President of the Second Republic) received the plan two months before the Nationalist side rose up against the democratic government. The urgent need to sustain a government in crisis required the oblivion of most avant-garde artistic projects. Although there were some theatre companies that toured among the front lines, the main modern dancers’ careers, which had been promoted by social elites of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, retired at the outbreak of the Civil War. Most artistic production was paralysed during the three years of the Civil War, and restarted under the fascist regime after 1939, when dance and women’s labour resumed as a civic duty in the collection of folk dances.

Even though the Spanish Civil War put an end to the wide range of possibilities for the female dancer’s body, it paradoxically acted as a catalyst for the feminist movement giving a new role to women in society and in war. In fact, there are three spheres where the role of women was especially emphasized, or politically manipulated: the image of women in the military, the incorporation of women in specific fields of politics and the use of women to maintain industrial production. Consequently, women were represented as active in several public spheres. As occurred with other European and North American women in World War I and World War II, with the outbreak of the Civil War, Spanish women joined the labour forces, becoming aware of their subjugated position in society. Images from the Republican side depicting women illustrated not only the social rights conquered by women during the Second Republic, but also embodied their emancipation and the roots of Spanish feminism, a movement that would be repressed by Franco’s dictatorship (1939-75) (Moruno, 2010).
The Republican Female Body

At the time of the Civil War, the image and representation of the Republican female body acquired new dimensions. In 1936, the image of a young militia woman (women in the militia), with a rifle, going to fight at the front was displayed on propaganda posters, becoming the most common symbol of resistance against fascism (see figure 5). These images were a symbol of a working class defending their freedom within a subversive social structure. With this symbol, the idea of highlighting a female soldier broke with the traditional image of subordinated women. In reality, female soldiers were not numerous during the first weeks of the Civil War and most support by women was provided in the rear-guard. The motivation of these women who joined the militia was to defend the political and social rights acquired during the Second Republic. This was the time of famous militia women such as Lina Odena, Rosario Sánchez ‘La Dinamitera’, and the Basque, Casilda Méndez, among many others (for example, see anonymous militia woman in figure 5).

Figure 4. The Republican People’s Army Heroine. Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation.

However, after the first weeks of revolutionary euphoria, women’s roles were reoriented. The images of the militia women disappeared from the posters, and women appeared in more traditional images dedicated to activities like social assistance. The soldier-heroine was replaced by the rear-guard worker. As Mary Nash argues (1995), propaganda posters containing images of women with rifles
were actually aimed to motivate the male population to go to the front lines, instead of pushing for women to fight. In fact, in 1937, all political groups agreed to withdraw women from the front lines.

Indeed, the key contribution of women in the fight against fascism was in the rear-guard. As would happen later in the Second World War in the U.S.A and Great Britain, women occupied the positions that men left to go to war. Women were the workers who maintained production (see figure 6). However, the status quo was that women participated in social assistance work such as assisting casualties and orphans. Still, these women organized an important national and international antifascist solidarity network.

Figure 5. Manufacturing war materials. Barcelona. Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation.

During the war, women continued to participate in the political system. The Anarchist leader Federica Montseny was the first woman to become a minister in the government in Spain. Between 1936 and 1937, she headed the Ministry of Health and Social Help, and was responsible for numerous social assistance initiatives, refugee care and public health (see figure 7). The communist activist Dolores Ibárruri also had an important role in mobilizing the population. She was famous for her motivational speeches, which she gave in front of large audiences. As a deputy and vice president of the Parliament, Ibárruri was one of the most well known politicians, and a symbol of the working class fight against fascism. Montseny and Ibárruri are symbols of the Republican women who resisted fascism.
Figure 6. Federica Montseny giving a speech, in Montjuic Cemetery, Barcelona 20 November 1938. Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation.

The Fascist Female Body

In opposition to the Republican People’s Army heroine, the role of woman that *La Falange*\(^{33}\) promoted was an ‘annexed woman,’ a woman whose purpose was to support men’s action. Later on, an organization exclusively for women, the *Sección Femenina* (i.e. the Women’s Section of the Spanish Fascist Party), joined this organization with the specific mission of supporting the men of the *Falange*. The women in the *Falange* were assigned to help injured soldiers and their families, to participate in the distribution of supplies and to knit pullovers for the soldiers on the front lines.

The concept of woman was based on the exaltation of maternity and femininity, with the ‘natural’ attributes of fragility, submission, asexuality and spirit of sacrifice. The Nationalists (right-wing parties, fascists and other supporters of the *coup d’état*) believed that women inherently embodied certain traditional feminine traits, and so were only capable of certain activities. This highly reactionary vision of women tended to perpetuate sexual inequality and the traditional situation of female inferiority.

\(^{33}\) The *Falange Española* was a Spanish political party founded in Madrid in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera (the son of Miguel Primo de Rivera, the previous dictator of Spain from 1923-30). The *Falange* confronted the idea of the class struggle and the capitalist social system with the ideal of combating the progression of leftist movements. The party advocated a totalitarian, authoritarian, united, nationalistic and imperialist government.
Those values already present during the Civil War were strengthened with the implementation of the fascist regime. Franco brutally repressed the memories of women, suppressing their identities as active individuals in society. This repression enforced a collective historical amnesia about the active role of women during the Civil War, who fought in the militias, in the front or/and as active political members of the republican resistance (Nash, 1995; Ackelsberg, 2005). If the Second Republic showed women dressing similarly to men and fighting with the same tools as them, women under the nationalist side and later Franco’s regime were shown as an accessory in the domestic sphere. The female body dressed according to the rules of a very conservative Catholicism and was dedicated to social activities such as the conservation of Spanish folklore. Once militant or even resistant, the emancipated female body became gendered and domesticated.

III. The Re-Establishment of The Domestic Body (1934-75)

In the previous section I have explored how the Second Republic advanced Spanish society towards gender equality. This section examines the shifts in women’s identities implemented by the Francoist Regime which would further impact on the process of recovery of democratic values during the transition to democracy.

In 1939, the defenders of democracy lost the war. The nationalist side, headed by General Francisco Franco, imposed a right-wing authoritarian regime that lasted till Franco’s death in 1975. The social liberties achieved during the Second Republic were annulled. Women’s roles were totally subordinated and limited to the domestic sphere.

As for the status of women under the dictatorship, Spain was a traditional society. As Celia Valiente (2002) notes, the subordination of Spanish women as a group was produced by, among other factors, the dictatorship, Catholicism and economic backwardness. During the dictatorship, the fascist regime actively opposed the advancement of women’s rights and status, and relegated women to the domestic sphere. The ideal family was a hierarchical unit, and the highest authority was supposed to rest on the father, who was also considered to be its
only financial supporter. In this sense, mothering was conceived not only as women’s main identity, but as an obligation to the state and society, and a task incompatible with other activities such as wage work. Therefore, during the first stage of Francoism (1939 until the late 1950s and early 1960s) as proposed by Spanish historians Soldevila (1952) and Fontana (Fontana and Ellwood, 2000), the regime presented several measures to prevent women from working outside the home. Examples of these were the ‘marriage bars’, containing prohibitions for women from working in some companies after marriage, and the requirement for the husband’s permission to work before signing a job contract. During the second stage of Francoism (late 1950s–early1960s, until 1975), there were some measures of liberalization regarding women’s status, such as the abolition of some marriage bars. However, the regulation of sexuality and reproduction was still under the control of the most puritanical Catholicism (Nash, 1995).

Spain had been a homogenous Catholic country since the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and Muslims in 1502. During the first Francoism, the church and the dictatorship ideologically supported each other. The church and state not only maintained a spiritual relationship, but also an economical one, since Franco’s dictatorship exempted the church from taxation. Freedom of worship was abolished (Valiente 2006). In fact, until Franco’s death, the Catholic Church played an important role in the construction of women’s identities, supporting the dictatorship’s ideologies. The regime delegated to the church the role of moral and ethical indoctrinator of society. The Catholic Church became responsible for managing the issues of marriage and divorce (illegal during the regime) and took control of education in schools, where boys and girls were segregated and learned different curricula. In fact, the Church provided the moral legitimacy needed by the dictatorial regime (Casero-García, 2000; Valiente, 2006). An example of this is The Church's treatment of the Civil War: it declared the Civil War a crusade between the supporters of Christianity (Franco’s side) and the unfaithful and immoral (the Republicans and defenders of democracy). However, during the second Francoism, a section of the Church started a distancing movement from the state, and tolerated other political options for Spain. Catholics became members of several groups and parties that opposed the dictatorship. Thanks to
this distancing, when Franco died in 1975, the church could participate in the construction of democracy in Spain.

The Feminine Section

The Sección Femenina de la Falange Española (the Feminine Section) contributed to the propaganda of the most conservative Catholic values. Led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, the Feminine Section was an institution in charge of maintaining the subordinate and traditionally domestic status of women. The Feminine Section would give educational support teaching courses such as ‘home economics’ to promote the activities of the complete housewife starting from teaching activities in primary school. The fascist regime directed the political indoctrination of women and popular culture through the Feminine Section. Fascism, as an extreme and aggressive expression of the most conservative form of government, thwarted the chances for the development and independence of women.

At this time, Spanish society experienced a process of migration; population was moving from the countryside to city centres. In this sense, the role of women acquired more importance as recipients of the programs regarding the recuperation and maintenance of ‘popular traditions’.

These were also the activities of Catedras Ambulantes (Travelling Professorships) and Coros y Danzas (Chorus and Dances), institutions created as an ideological tool to save and transmit the folkloric roots of the Spanish State. Estrella Casero (2000) has analysed the manipulation of the image of women by the propagandist objectives of the regime. The author analyses images in different sources such as books, newspapers and posters, but her main source is the No-Do (Noticiario y Documentales, News and Documentaries). No-Do was a cinema news-reel that the regime used as an ideological instrument for propaganda. Before a film started, the exhibition of No-Do in every theatre was mandatory. In this way, this news

---

34 Pilar Primo de Rivera (1907-91) was the sister of José Antonio Primo de Rivera who founded the Falange Española, as well as the daughter of Spanish dictator General Miguel Primo de Rivera. She was an enthusiastic member of the Falange, heading its Feminine Section.
program travelled around Spain and was the best propaganda tool at the service of the regime. As Casero asserts, the features that Francoism considered inherent to women were the spirit of sacrifice, silent self-denial and submission to male authority, the same ideology was promoted in Nazi German Women’s organizations, for example. No-Do transmitted these features: austerity, simple costumes, absence of make-up and simple hairstyles were predominant in the images of women in these documentaries. The fact that in the 1940s, 60% of the female population were illiterate, and 51% lived in the countryside, where there were no libraries and sometimes no schools, underlines the power of the image, more than the word, for reaching the population.

During the first period of Franco’s Regime, the main message that the state wanted to transmit to women was to return to the home. However, during the Civil War, the Feminine Section mobilized women to help in the rear-guard, many times substituting men in their jobs. After the conflict, the state changed its message and made it clear where the place of women was. Several speeches by Pilar Primo de Rivera deal with the new message: ‘By staying at home, which is your special place, you would have done much more for Spain than all of the old fashioned speeches and discourses. You would have definitively freed your children’s generation from all of the vices of the former generations’ (Pilar Primo de Rivera, 1950, pp.23-24, quoted in Casero, 2000, p.76). Also, in the Memoria sobre el Departamento de las Escuelas de Hogar de la Sección Femenina (Report of the Department of Home Schools of the Feminine Section) in 1939, a new concept of feminism is identified (see figure 8). This image shows a woman with a vacuum cleaner, which in 1953 was considered a luxury commodity that supposedly reduced the time spent on housework, allowing more time for hobbies. However, what is indoctrinating in the image is the phrase standing in the middle, which translates as ‘A good wife always knows her place’. The fascist ideology appropriated the word feminism and redefined it to suit its

35 My translation of the text ‘Metidas en el seno de la familia, que es vuestro único puesto, habréis hecho por España mucho más que todos los discursos y todas las peroratas de viejo estilo. Habréis separado definitivamente a la generación de vuestros hijos de todos los vicios y de todos los resabios de las generaciones anteriores a la nuestra.’
interests: a new and totally empty concept of equal opportunities for both sexes, as seen in the manual for the good wife published by the Feminine Section: ‘For many years, unfortunately, influenced by bad ideas of a misunderstood feminism, women wanted to be equal to men, totally abandoning the tasks pertaining to their sex’ (Valiente, 2006).  

As in other fascist regimes, the dictatorship in Spain emphasized the traditional, pre-industrial way of life. During Francoism, popular and folk dances were employed in the effort to construct a unifying Spanish Culture. This effort was officially overseen by the Feminine Section. In 1939, the new fascist regime released a warrant to preserve and perpetuate the regional dance and music folklore of the whole territory. In the same year, the teaching of ‘Spanish folkloric dances’ became a course in the Conservatoire of Music of Madrid.

In 1938, at the Second National Council the Feminine Section created the Department of Culture. Later, a Department of Music was created within the department with the mission of compiling popular songs and music. They never thought of creating a department focused on dance. However, during its existence, the department adapted to the reality that, as Estrella Casero-Garcia argues, ‘the

---

36 My translation of the text ‘Durante muchos años, por desgracia, la mujer, imbuida por las falsas ideas de un feminismo mal entendido, pretendió igualarse al hombre, abandonando casi en su totalidad las labores propias de su sexo.’
Spanish audience, and especially women, liked to dance more than to sing’ (Casero-García, 2000, p.35). In this sense, the Department of Music created the section of Chorus and Dances, which was dedicated to compiling the national folklore of Spain. The department organized music courses with the objective of educating music teachers, intended for women around Spain. One of the main interests of the Department of Music was to organize folkloric research into traditional folk music and dance. For this reason, the instructors who finished the music courses were sent to different regions to compile all kinds of information with the purpose of establishing a folk repertoire of each region. The process of compilation was measured under fixed norms that the Department of Chorus and Dances set up (Casero-García, 2000, p.42).

The Use of Dance

As some researchers have shown, the political intention behind this preservation of folk culture was to promote the idea of a unitary tradition in a politically and socially divided country (Monés, Carrasco, Casero-García and Colomé, 2000). The Feminine Section’s Choruses and Dances worked on that project for forty years (1937-77). Not only was this an instrument of internal propaganda, but it also became a powerful instrument for international publicity. For example, at the start of the Cold War in 1948, Franco sent a group of 150 musicians and dancers from eight different Spanish regions to Argentina with the aim of dancing and overcoming Latin-American hostility towards Franco’s Regime. This project became a huge success and the following year the experience was repeated in other countries, including Peru, Chile, Panama and Colombia. The other forms of Spanish dance, flamenco, escuela bolera and stylized dance, were also praised and promoted by Franco’s regime. There were a high number of Spanish ballets and cuadros flamencos (flamenco groups) in the theatres touring nationally and internationally. In this way, Spanish dance also became part of the nationalistic propaganda of the regime.

The use that the regime made of culture in Spain is very specific to the country, even if we compare it with other countries under totalitarian regimes. The case of Germany has some similarities with the Spanish use of dance. During the rise of fascism, from 1933 to 1945, the Nazi regime in Germany promoted modern dance
as a tool for propaganda (Manning, 1993). In Germany, the dance was modern and contemporary, led by a professional choreographer and intended to be performed in a theatre, whereas in Spain, the dance promoted by the fascist regime was folkloric and the groups were directed by non-professional women. Despite these differences, what these two fascist regimes had in common was the use of dance and culture as an ideological transfer agent. The Choruses and Dances of the Feminine Section were representative of the ‘national dance’. As Casero-Garcia observes in her study (2000), this Francoist institution was also responsible for the influence of puritan Catholic morality in those dances. Dances were not only collected and transcribed, but they were modified under the standards that the Catholic Church judged as moral. The adjustment of the traditional costumes and the modification of the sexes in the dancing couples, making two women dance together instead of a man and a woman, were some examples of this puritanical influence (see figure 9).

![Figure 8. Coros y Danzas, Sección Femenina, Madrilejos (Toledo) 1953. Fundación Joaquín Díaz.](image)

**How Chorus and Dances Collected The Dances**

The norms for the compilation of dances were broad and not very clear. After consulting the records of the Feminine Section in the _Archivo General de la Administración Española, AGA_ (the General Archive of Spanish Governmental Administration), and after interviewing women who worked in the Choruses and Dances, Casero-García suggests that even though the Board of Culture of the Feminine Section enacted some general norms for the compilation of popular
dance and music, these were confusing and ambivalent in their distortion of the folklore from every region. These women of different ages developed the process of compilation from 1950 to 1977. Currently, they are still in contact with the dance world, working as folklore dance teachers or as directors of dance groups that were founded under the old organization.

The process of data collection had several phases:

- Phase one: the Feminine Section delegates from every region sent information to the General Board of the Feminine Section about the different dances of every region. However, for economic reasons, there were not enough delegates for every region. Without an economic reward, few rural women could afford to dedicate their time to examining the folkloric dances of their regions and deciding if these dances were interesting enough to report to the general board in Madrid. According to the references of the Feminine Section (Casero-García, 2000, p.88), for a long time many regions did not have a cultural representative.

- Phase two: after receiving the information from the delegates, the General Board sent a group of two or three women to archive these dances and music. One of the women had to be a skilled dancer, the other capable of singing, and the third, a music teacher, would compile the rhythms and write the score.

- Phase three: when the group consisting of three women came back to Madrid, they would complete a card explaining the characteristics of the dance. The card specified the same kind of information for all the regions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the dance</th>
<th>Region to which it belongs</th>
<th>Place to which it belongs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of dancers</td>
<td>Choreographic details</td>
<td>Compasses and rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate date from which it has been danced</td>
<td>Musical instruments that accompany the dance</td>
<td>Place where it was collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the dance</td>
<td>Who collected the dance and musical piece?</td>
<td>Who collected the history?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Group presenting the dance for first time</td>
<td>Final place in the contest</td>
<td>Costumes to perform the piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music to perform the dance</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These cards had to be sent to the general board in Madrid, accompanied by the music and score. It is interesting to note the difference between two of the titles: ‘place to which it belongs’ and ‘place where it was collected’. These differences point to the fact that a lot of dances were collected in places other than their place of origin. Since there was an emphasis on quantity rather than quality in this collection, owing to the effort to collect the maximum number of folkloric forms, this group of women distorted the compilation itself by pushing for a re-elaboration of dances in towns that were not the original places of the dances. A close look at the completed cards also shows differences in the responses. For example, for the question, ‘Approximate date from which it has been danced’, many collectors answered: ‘the exact date since when this dance has been performed cannot be accurately specified, as the elders of the town say that it has been danced since time immemorial’ (Casero-García, 2000, p.91). This example illustrates that the methodology used to collect the music and dances was simply to ask the regional elders about the origins, the forms and steps of the choreography.

The formation of the groups of Chorus and Dances depended on the enthusiasm of the women of the region. In 1943, each Spanish province had fewer than 50 members in the group, but in 1967 provinces such as Burgos, Asturias or Valencia, which were not particularly large, had more than 500 members each. Barcelona was a different case: the city that had been the symbol of anti-fascism during the civil war paradoxically received the politics of the Feminine Section with enthusiasm. This reaction is still a subject of study today. Consequently, the

37 These conclusions are based on the analyses that Estrella Casero-Garcia (2000) makes of 1,069 filling cards from 1966 in the Central Department of Culture.
38 As some of the collectors have corroborated, ‘the elders were the ones who gave most information’ (Casero-García, 2000, p.92)
enthusiastic reception of the Chorus and Dances labour, and the music courses, converted the city into the venue for all the courses for music instructors in Spain, and one of the provinces with the most Chorus and Dances groups in the country.

The women of Chorus and Dances had passed through music courses for specialized teachers. These courses started with a three-month introduction in each province, but then the two-year course was always held in Madrid, the centralised capital of the Spanish fascist regime. These courses included music topics such as singing scales, and collecting songs, but the main concern in organizing these courses was the civic-religious indoctrination of the students. Therefore, the result of this activity would be the birth of ‘compiled dances’ which combined the original folklore and the ideology of the Choruses and Dances. Women’s labour was used by the state to make a cultural history of folkloric dances. Through an indoctrination course held in the capital, Madrid, these women, on a voluntary basis, ‘learned’ to write national history, not from their own perspectives, but from the hegemonic discourse of a patriarchal, fascist and Catholic regime.

Ideology

The current folklore that persists in Spain is a stylized recreation of the old folklore. The Feminine Section altered the folkloric forms in order to construct a spectacular and performative style to be represented at national contests and abroad. In this sense, the manipulation of folklore by the regime is a response to the necessity of creating a sense of national unity as a way of repressing the country’s cultural diversity, and also as an element of external propaganda.

Having seen the image of women that the fascist regime promoted, I now want to assess the issue of how this fascist ideology directed the methodologies used by Chorus and Dances to collect the folkloric forms, and how these traditional forms have been produced and reproduced up to the present day. It is notable that in the interviews from three different women who participated in the compilation of folklore under the direction of the Feminine Section in Casero-García (2000), none of them talked about the interference of ideology in their activities. Indeed, these women emphasized the freedom that they felt while doing their activities.
However, because of their role in the Feminine Section and the subsequent ideological education that they received, the freedom in the actions that these women claim seems difficult to believe. Talking about freedom under a dictatorial regime is already a paradox. Casero-García mentions in her study of woman and dance under Francoism the official letters of the government censoring dresses and costumes of performers for not meeting the minimum standards for correctness and morality (Casero-García, 1998), as the dresses were too short, sleeveless or too provocative for the conservative and Catholic moral of the time.

Choruses and Dances played an important role in terms of participation in Spanish cultural life and folk culture, as well as promoting them abroad. What is still a question is how adequate the preservation and reproduction of these folk traditions was, since there were political problems, as described above, such as insufficient economic support and a subsequent lack of representatives investigating all traditions and all territories. However, the main problem when studying this institution is that Choruses and Dances is a result of a dictatorial regime; the censorship that the Catholic Church and the fascist regime exerted on the dance forms and the gendered bodies is still little acknowledged.

It is also important to mention that in some historically and culturally differentiated peripheral regions of Spain, such as Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, local folk dance groups such as Rey de Viana in Galicia and the Esbart Verdaguer and Esbart Rubí groups in Catalonia, were created to articulate a resistance against the cultural homogenization of the fascist regime (Casero-García, 2000). Chorus and Dances still operated in these regions, which had shown historically separate national identities, but the creation of collective folkloric organizations resulted from a popular desire to resist the regime’s archival ideology. The use that Franco’s regime made of folklore responds to the aim of unifying the Spanish territory under a re-created and re-invented folkloric form, actively ignoring the folkloric forms of those ‘problematic’ regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country which always claimed cultural and national differences from the rest of Spain. On the other hand, the articulation of a different folklore by these regions not controlled by the Feminine Section, was a way to resist the systematic suppression of cultural differences, such as the Catalan and
Chapter 3

Basque languages, by the dictatorship. The integration of these different folkloric projects would be an important element of distortion in the reconstruction of democratic Spain in 1975.

The project of unifying folk dances under a homogeneous national culture, also affected the academic dance education which had been institutionalized under Franco’s Regime. Once the folkloric dances had been transformed into a more theatrical version, they were also taught in those versions within the official academic conservatories. In this sense, not only folklore, but also other dance forms taught in academia suffered a process of homogenization, and this occurred throughout the whole of Spain. Next to the apprenticeship in ballet, all the dancers learned the same folkloric forms, and, under the name of Spanish dance, the conservatories were teaching folklore (specific to each region where the conservatory was), flamenco, escuela bolera and stylized dance.

***

The handling of female Spanish bodies changed under a democratic system and changed again under the dictatorship of Franco. Female bodies transferred from the public sphere, pictured as a member of a militia, a politician or a worker outside the home, to the private sphere, supporting the male partner with her domestic labour. Francoism created laws which controlled women’s movements and kept them from working outside home. However, the appearance of Chorus and Dances in the Feminine Section brought a contradiction in the use of the feminine body, which with this task was taken out of the private sphere to carry out fieldwork in the various regions of Spain. Francoism allocated a task to the feminine body. These women worked on a voluntary basis in a field for which they were not trained or educated. Consequently their actions were not valued as part of the process of recovering the folkloric heritage. Moreover, the actions of these women were controlled by censorship and modified to comply with the moral standards of the fascist regime. In this sense, in the same way that the female body had been under control, the feminine labour was unrecognized, controlled and dominated by the patriarchal structure in which it operated. As suggested by Foucaultian genealogies, in this case the official narratives created in
the archive of folkloric dances can be counteracted by listening to the discontinuities of the discourse: the silences and omissions. An archive not only maintains and curates memory, but deletes it as well. Consequently in the process of selecting which memories, dances and events to archive, there are forgotten and silenced events that will remain outside the official discourse. In this chapter I have discussed how the dances and movements were censored, because they were considered too provocative for the morals of the time, as an example of the silenced events that remain outside the official discourse of history. If the labour of creating a material archive is already problematic, as Derrida (1996) suggests, creating an archive under the directions of a fascist dictatorship further emphasises the ethical component in the actions. These women performed a kind of directed silence during the collections. What these women did not collect and what they modified in the dances, such as the changes of costumes and certain gender modification to the couples, reflect the silence inflicted in the collecting.

In 1975, Franco died and a moderate transition to democracy took place in Spain. Spanish society felt an urgent need to modernize, to join the capitalist development of the European Union, and to overcome the isolation of Franco’s regime. Policy makers began to dismantle the discriminatory legislation inherited from Franco’s regime and to promote women’s rights and status. The 1978 Constitution contains several articles that testify to this intention (Gobierno de España, 1978): the constitution explicitly states that women and men are equal before the law (Valiente, 2006); sex discrimination is prohibited; the selling and advertising of contraceptives was decriminalized in 1978; and divorce was permitted in 1981. In this way, Spain’s governments have tried to advocate gender equality policies in line with the other EU member states. However Casero-Garcia (1998) notes the lack of available information about the Chorus and Dances. As happened to most Francoist institutions under democracy, as their existence was linked to the regime’s existence, they ceased their activities with the first democratic elections. As displayed by the difficulties that Casero-García (1998) experienced in finding women that would admit their participation in Chorus and Dances, its history and activities fell into the obscurity of the imposed oblivion. The lack of information about these past institutions contributes to the opacity
surrounding any intent to analyse the dictatorship, still nowadays.

Women in present-day Spain have inherited a double role: the traditional, domestic status promulgated by Franco’s dictatorship that originally related to the power of the Catholic Church through the last centuries; and conversely, the image of the Republican woman who fought for her rights and equality and defended the Second Republic side by side with men. In this sense, the enthusiasm for modernization after the Dictator’s death could have helped to revive, although perhaps not consciously, the values of those rights and freedoms for which the women of the Republic fought. However, in contemporary Spain, these two oppositional female roles still persist, performing and producing gender and national values to a variable extent. Further chapters will analyse how the work of contemporary dancers offers a distinct answer to this genealogy of women-body-dance in Spain.
Chapter 4. Introducing Modern Dance: Maleras’ Narrativity

I come from a silence, ancient and very long  
I come from a silence that is not resigned  
Whoever loses their origins loses their identity  
I come from a silence that people will break  
I come from a struggle that is deaf and constant […]

Raimon, Jo vinc d’un Silenci, Palau dels Esports, Barcelona, 1975. 39

On 30 of October 1975, while the dictator Franco lay dying in his bed (he would finally die twenty one days later), a concert at the Palau dels Esports in Barcelona was full of people listening to songs by Raimon and by Lluís Llach. As members of the cançó protesta movement (protest song), these two singers had been criticising the regime through their songs since the early 1960s. Catalan, the historical language of Catalonia, had been forbidden by the regime in an attempt to ‘unite’ Spanish culture under the language of Castilian. Singing in Catalan, Raimon and Lluís Llach raised the hopes of Catalan society that Spain would soon become a democratic society, which would respect Catalan culture as well as other cultural rights such as gender and politics. However, at the time of Franco’s death, there was some uncertainty as to how Spain would attain democracy. Raimon’s lyrics articulated a prominent yet unspoken feeling in Spanish society, which, coming from the long silence of a forty-year dictatorship, was ready to be voiced.

This chapter is a historiographical approach to the introduction of modern dance in Spain. Using a genealogical analysis of the pioneering voices of contemporary dance, I would like to propose new narratives for understanding modern and contemporary dance’s role in the Spanish transition to democracy. Following Lena Hammergren’s figure of the flâneuse, who investigates the bodily memories of a concrete historical time by re-visiting the collective memories of those who lived at that time, this chapter is structured around an interview with the pioneer

39 My translation of the song: ‘Jo vinc d’un silenci, antic i molt llarg /Jo vinc d’un silenci, que no es resignat /Qui perd els orígens perd la identitat/ Jo vinc d’un silenci, que la gent romprà /Jo vinc d’una lluita, que és sorda i constant’. 
of modern dance in post-Franco Spain, Anna Maleras (see Appendix B for a full transcription of the interview). Revisiting her memories of the emergence of modern dance, the structure of the study aims to follow the development of modern dance during the first years of democracy in Spain.

This chapter is therefore divided into three sections. The first one, ‘In Theory/Constructing a Narrative’ sets up the historiographical context that surrounds the interview with Maleras. Questioning my position as a Catalan native and former dancer on the Barcelona scene, this section develops an argument for constructing a narrativity of the history of modern dance during democracy. Section two, ‘Embodying New Techniques’, introduces the discovery of ‘modern’ moves by Anna Maleras, and the consequent development of the sector. Section three, ‘Dancing in Silence’, leads into a discussion of the political and apolitical motivations of the first contemporary choreographers, questioning why and how they enacted a civic silence about the sociopolitical matters of their times.

While the political resistance had been operating in exile, organizing and maintaining their institutional structures, and seeking international recognition (such as the Partido Comunista, Spanish Communist Party; Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, the Republican Catalan Left; and Convergencia i Unió, the Catalan Nationalists of Convergence and Union, among others), some cultural protest movements resisting the dictatorship had appeared during the second half of the twentieth century.

In the world of theatre, companies such as Els Joglars40 and Els Comediants41 operated with a critical sarcasm that foiled the fascist censorship from 1962 when Els Joglars first appeared on stage. However, ballet and Spanish dance had developed at the conservatories and folk dance under the influence of the regime’s

---

40 Founded in Barcelona, 1962, Els Joglars is an independent Spanish theatre company created by Albert Boadella, Carlota Soldevila and Anton Font. The company took its name from the medieval minstrels with a very specific objective: to elaborate a social and political critique by using irony to contravene the established power. They acquired national recognition under the regime of Franco and during the democratic era for their political criticism of any political system.
41 Born in 1971, in Catalonia, Els Comediants was a theatre company dedicated to an avant-garde base in collective creation without directors, in opposition to the classic theatre of Spain. They are nationally and internationally renowned for the spectacular nature of their pieces.
institutions such as the Feminine Section. The dance scene during Francoism, similarly to all other cultural and political fields, was strongly suppressed by Catholic and Fascist censorship.

As stated in the previous chapter, the most prominent dance form during this period was an exalted and performative folkloric form, taken from different regions of Spain, which had passed through puritanical censorship and was performed at theatres around Spain. Modern dance did not exist until 1967, as the pioneers of the 20s and 30s in Spain emigrated, retired or died during and after the Civil War. While some theatre companies had been able to articulate resistance to the regime through the use of humour and sarcasm, it becomes difficult to identify a direct link between dance and political resistance in the theatrical dance field during Franco’s regime. The link between folk dances and political manipulation is debated in Chapter 2. This chapter analyses how Catalan choreographers positioned themselves in the social and political context during the transition to democracy in Spain, and what their views and artistic reactions to the political situation are. My argument, following Mark Franko (2006), draws on dance as political expression, since like any cultural production, it is a voluntary or involuntary expression of its time.

Approaching pioneer Anna Maleras’ bodily memories through an interview, I aim to re-draw the path that those dancers walked and performed at the beginning of modern dance in Spain. I wish to reconstruct bodily memories of that time, not only focusing on what bodies feel and felt, but also on what bodies create, and what they created at that historical time.

I. In Theory, Constructing a Narrative

Despite the lack of academic studies in the field, Anna Maleras is considered by most Spanish dancers, a pioneer who brought the first influences of contemporary and modern dance to Spain through her school in the late 1960s. In this regard, a few recent articles have noted some parts of the history of contemporary dance in Spain (Monés et al., 2000; Vendrell, 2008; Arts Santa Mònica, 2012). However, today there is still an absence of an accepted narrative on the events that framed the appearance of contemporary dance in Spain. The generalised absence of dance
and performance studies at university level has caused the Spanish dance scene to remain anonymous and isolated from European academia. Conversely, the dance conservatory of Barcelona, the Institute of the Theatre (IT), which was the first and only conservatory in Spain to offer a degree in contemporary dance until 2001, does not have an archived history of modern dance in Spain. Moreover, the lack of planned infrastructure threatens the presence of the few documents in the library of the IT, the only performing arts based library in Barcelona. The video-recordings of some of the dance festivals are becoming old and damaged, and the digitalization of this material is awaiting government subsidies, which were cancelled with the budgets cuts during the financial crisis in 2009. Finally, the pieces by modern dance pioneers are only in personal archives, which threaten their historical persistence. Therefore, the field lacks a historical archive and theoretical base that can generate critical debate. The history of those pioneers and subsequent developers of modern dance remains only in newspaper archives, as briefly mentioned by Monés et al. (2000). The authors of this article, which is part of Andrée Grau and Stephanie Jordan’s edited anthology Europe Dancing (2000), draw an extensive overview of the institutions and organizations that carried the development of ballet, contemporary dance, folkloric dance, and the variations of Spanish dance in Spain. The article specifically notices the unique role of Catalonia in developing modern and contemporary dance; however, it focuses overall on how institutions and organizations developed the dance forms. My aim in creating a history of the evolution of contemporary dance is different. My focus is on the social and cultural context of the emergence of modern and contemporary dance in Catalonia, Spain. Overall, my aim is to address what these dancers and choreographers were doing with contemporary dance, and how contemporary dance helped to exorcize some of the issues of the democracy. Therefore, this chapter considers the absence of dance and performance studies in Spain, and proposes a re-thinking of the history of the discipline in the Spanish territory.

Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris define historiography as ‘the study of the way history has been and is written – the history of historical writing’ (Furay and Salevouris, 1988). When considering the history of contemporary dance in Spain
there is still no clear or official narrative. For this reason this study uses
historiographical methods to define and create a critical narrativity of the
emergence of contemporary dance in Spain. The methodology used comprises
critical examination of sources, the selection of particular details from original
materials and sources, and the synthesis of those details into a narrative that can
withstand a critical examination.

From an anthropological perspective, when using interviews to recreate historical
events the researcher may record a slice of life on a page. Writing interview notes
is a process of analysis-in-description (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). Indeed,
all descriptions are selective, partial, angled, and intentional because they are
written by somebody, and thus they are authored. A researcher uses linguistic
conventions to create an envisioned scene. Even straightforward, descriptive
writing is a product of social and historical contexts. Through the choice of words
and scenes, a writer presents ‘her’ version of reality. In the words of Emerson et
al., ‘All writing, by definition is an abstracting and ordering process’ (Emerson,
Fretz and Shaw, 2011, p.126). In this sense, the author must acknowledge herself
and her background in order to acknowledge the possible bias she may bring. In
Critical Ethnography (2011), Madison notes the situation of the researcher in a
post-colonial and post-structuralist science: ‘Our position as ethnographers is to
understand that we bring our belongings into the field with us, not only the many
others who constitute our being but how we belong to what we know’ (Madison,
2011, p.24). From this critical perspective, I would like to acknowledge the
researcher’s position of power as the narrator of meaningful cultural paradigms
and at the same time propose an understanding of performance as a significant
framework to approach human interaction. In order to understand those embodied
meanings, Dwight Conquergood (1991) suggests that the researcher be a co-
performer in her research. By these means, the acknowledgement of my position
as a native of Barcelona and a former member of the dance community of the city,
should serve as guidance to identify power relationships that may arise in the
conduction of this study and specifically in the interview that will structure the
following sections.
My research enquires into how a narrativity of contemporary dance in Spain might be constructed. I situate Maleras as the focal point whose actions allowed modern dance to become known in Barcelona and subsequently in the rest of Spain. In this historiographic project, I structure the narrativity of contemporary dance emergence in Spain around an interview with Maleras, thus contextualizing her answers with archives and previous narrativities.

When reconstructing historical events, the critical historian should raise questions about what and how historical narratives are constructed. How do we create from sources and what can we make of them? Lena Hammergren in ‘Many sources, many voices’ (Hammergren, 2004), introduces the problem of creating a dance history narrative. In line with June Layson’s (1994) study of historical dance sources, Hammergren proposes the distinction between primary sources, material that is close in time to the object of study (e.g. diaries and dance performances programs), and secondary sources, produced further away in time, and based on interpretation (e.g. performance reviews, history books). In working with these sources, which are both of equal importance, Hammergren explores how narratives are products adjusted to generic and time-specific conventions. Not only in texts, but also in speech (e.g. interviews), the critical historian can expose the construction of these time-specific narratives.

In questioning the nature of narrativity, in terms of the problem of how to report the way things happened, how to transfer ‘knowing’ into ‘telling’, Hayden White (1980) analyses narrative theory as a means by which we can comprehend how subjectivities impose order on our experiences and actions by giving them a narrative form. According to White, the historian begins his work by constituting a chronicle of events which afterwards will be organized into a coherent story. Alongside White, Alexandra Carter, in Rethinking Dance History (2004) claims that all historical accounts are personal for ‘all historical narratives contain an irreducible and inexpungeable element of interpretation’ (White in Carter, 2004, p.3). Tracing the genealogy of contemporary dance in Spain, there are many noteworthy events. From the opening of Anna Maleras’ dance school in 1967, which marked the beginning of contemporary dance in Spanish territory, or the return of the dancers Concha and José Láinez in 1969 who had emigrated during
the dictatorship, and founded the first contemporary dance company in 1972; these events can be considered the beginnings of contemporary dance in Spain. However, one can also go back as far as Aurea Sarrà and Tórtola Valencia in the 1920s to find the pioneers of free dance in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, constructing a historical narrative brings into debate questions of who, where and why.

The term genealogy traditionally refers to the study of family history. Re-appropriated by Michel Foucault (White, 1980), ‘genealogies’ provides the critical frame for considering the reconstruction of modern dance history in Spain. A ‘Genealogy of knowledges’ is then opposed to the writing of a linear history, which focuses on the causes and effects which might explain the logical progression of history. Genealogy exposes the development of discursive formation which highlights certain kinds of power relations and knowledges related to them. The point of a genealogical analysis is to show how a given system of thought is the result of cultural and social accidents/mechanisms, rather than a rational, progressive succession of facts. This enables a study of how power operates in constructing official discourses (knowledges) of history. In his early book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1989) discusses how systems of thought and knowledge (episteme and discursive formations) are governed by rules that operate beneath the consciousness of the individual, limited by the boundaries of a historical and social period. Subsequently in his genealogy of knowledge, Foucault’s critical philosophy exposes how universal scientific truths are the outcome of provisional historical forces and are not ultimately scientifically grounded truths. Hence, the construction of history is the result of social and cultural given mechanisms, and not a linear, progressive succession of facts.

A narrative on the evolution of free and modern dance in Spain was interrupted by the dictatorship. The early-twentieth century pioneers of free dance were forgotten for over forty years. Through exile or death, after the Civil War their body memories died with them. The hegemonic discourses of the dictatorship suppressed these memories to the extent that when Anna Maleras was looking for new movement styles, she was never able to recover the Catalan traditions of
Aurea Sarrà and Josefina Cirera Llop or the Modernista influences of Carmen Tórtola Valencia; they remain as subjugated knowledges, outside the official narrative; and in opposition to the Francoist official history of Spain. Maleras travelled abroad, to France, to get acquainted with new techniques which could offer her the ‘freedom’ of movement, as she suggests in the interview, that she was looking for. Through Maleras’ itinerary for the search of new styles in dance, from Barcelona to France, dance and choreography become the routes by which to explore this imposed silence. This Janus-faced amnesia, on the one hand, suppressed the memories of Republican Spain before the dictatorship, and with it all innovation in dance and the arts, and on the other hand, dissolved the responsibilities of Francoist institutions during the transition to democracy. Maleras’ movements through the reconstruction of her history will guide this chapter, which observes her own silences when looking back to the choreographies of the transition.

Structured around the words of Anna Maleras’ interview, the next two sections examine the first influences of contemporary dance during the end of the dictatorship and the subsequent democratic times. I contrast and complement her answers by consulting newspaper articles, dance journals and performance programs of that time which cover those events. By these means, I reproduce excerpts of the interview and then contextualise her words in the construction of my own narrative.

II. Embodying New Techniques

In 1944, Magrinyà was appointed director of dance at the Institute of the Theatre dance conservatory, becoming the main figure in dance in Catalonia. As mentioned in Beatriz Martínez del Fresno’s ‘Espectáculos de Baile y Danza: Siglo XX’ (Martínez del Fresno, 1999), and noted in several interviews with Catalan choreographers such as Anna Maleras and Avelina Argüelles (Muñoz, 2004), Magrinyà established his ‘reign’ in the dance scene in Catalonia, as he personally directed the main Liceu theatre from 1939 to 1977 and simultaneously led the pedagogic dance scene from the Catalan dance conservatory. During the dictatorship, ballet technique and Spanish dance were officially established as
disciplines at the dance conservatories of Spain in Barcelona, under the direction of Joan Magrinyà, and in Madrid, under Ana Lázaro. However, it was only at the Liceu theatre in Barcelona, under the direction of Magrinyà, that the corpus de ballet continued. Even there, the escuela bolera, flamenco and Spanish dance predominated as forms of expression on the stage. Magrinyà’s interest in technical perfectionism and the escuela bolera, resulted in an institutionalization of the teaching of the escuela bolera and other Spanish dance forms in Spanish conservatories. The form of the escuela bolera taught today is still the version which Magrinyà created.

Magrinyà (1903-95) entered the Barcelona school of Joan Llongueras in 1918, where he trained in dance and rhythm using the Dalcroz method. While there he decided ‘to dedicate his life to dance’ as he said in an interview on Catalan television (Espinàs, 1984). Two years later he became a member of the corps de ballet in the opera’s choreographic section of the opera at the Liceu which was at that time directed by Pauleta Pàmies. Pàmies died during the Civil War, and at the end of the war, in 1939, Magrinyà was appointed director of the choreographic section, but still he continued creating choreographies in other alternative spaces.

Creating a parallel career outside the Liceu, in 1951, Magrinyà, with the support of the Asociación Cultural del Ballet (Cultural Association of Ballet) funded by art critics, composers, business men and art patrons, created the Ballets of Barcelona under the direct patronage of Manuel Segura, an example of the type of bourgeois patron that academic dance needed at that time. Despite its intense activity in creating pieces and touring in Spain and France, the absence of economic structure resulted in the company’s disappearance, and in 1953 the Ballets of Barcelona was incorporated into the Liceu. At the same time, Magrinyà actively supported the fight for the rights of dancers at the Liceu to be considered as independent company members, as in other European theatres. Consequently,

42 The name of Joan Magrinyà can be found in the archives and news with several variations. The Castilian version is ‘Magriñá’ and the Catalan version is ‘Magrinyà’, given the differences in the alphabet between the two languages. For the purpose of this research, I will refer to him as Joan Magrinyà, with the Catalan spelling, since he was born in Catalonia.

43 The Liceu theatre, founded in 1847 on Barcelona’s Rambla, became the only theatre with regular programming in Barcelona and Catalonia after the Teatro Principal burned down in 1915.
in 1966, the *Liceu* would become recognized as the theatre’s permanent dance company. The Ballet would dissolve in 1977 with Magrinyà’s retirement.

In his aesthetic style, Magrinyà combined classical ballet with Spanish dance and the *escuela bolera*, creating innovative new ballets with the support of vernacular composers and visual artists, such as: *Els Cinc Continents (The Five Continents)* with the music of Joan Guiovart; *Laberinto (Labyrinth)* with a musical score by Xavier Montsalvatge; and *Gavines (Seagulls)* in 1963, with music by Joan Altisent. These works merged the classical school of ballet with the recreation of popular aspects of Catalan culture. As stated at the Museu de les Arts Escèniques (Museum of the Performing Arts in Barcelona), between 1939 and 1977 (the date of his retirement from the Liceu) Magrinyà choreographed more than one hundred opera ballets and more than two hundred independent pieces, although there is no archive or documentation of them.

Magrinyà’s pedagogic work influenced the development of international dancers such as Alfons Puig and Guillermina Coll. Among these disciples emerged Joan Tena, who stressed the need for ballet technique to be at the same innovative level as in the rest of Europe and America. In 1952, one year after Magrinyà had created his ballets, Tena presented the Ballets de Joan Tena in Barcelona, with the support of avant-garde artists and intellectuals such as Antoni Tàpies, Guinovart and Montsalvatge. Tena had travelled abroad and contacted European artists such as Harald Kreutzberg, who was an outstanding student of Mary Wigman at her Berlin school (Partsch-Bergsohn, 2013). Tena’s choreographies were innovative in intent, and always counted on the intervention of these avant-garde painters and musicians. Nevertheless, after performances in Catalonia and Zurich and at the Spanish Festival, the company was dissolved in 1957 to create the smaller format Ballet de Càmara, which would continue creating pieces in collaboration with Catalan composers, such as *Barcelona Blue* with Montsalvatge’s music. Again, in 1979, Tena would create a new company, Joan Tena Ballet-Drama. With a spirit of opposition to what the master Magrinyà represented (an institutionalized ballet that was developed under a conservative dictatorship), Tena wanted to reproduce, in his choreographies, the artistic avant-garde blossoming in Barcelona through the work of visual artists and musicians of the time. However, in contrast to the
experience of Magrinyà, the fact that Tena offered an unconventional alternative to official dance institutions, such as the Liceu, was detrimental to the stability of his dance productions. When Anna Maleras describes her dance training in Barcelona, she does not mention Joan Tena. Unlike other contemporary dancers, such as Avelina Argüelles, Maleras was not in contact with the avant-garde ballets of Tena.

The 1960s brought the incubation of new ideas, before the explosion of contemporary dance following Franco’s death in 1975. The earlier ballets of Magrinyà and Tena had begun to bring the question of innovation to dance styles.

**Liberating Movements**

Wednesday 12 September 2012, Anna Maleras is at the front desk of her dance school, the *Estudi de Dansa Anna Maleras* (Dance Studio Anna Maleras). It is 11.30 in the morning on a sunny and humid day in Barcelona. She has arranged the interview at the school, as she must be there during business hours and there is relatively little noise coming from the only active studio in the school. It is time for an intermediate ballet class. This tiny woman in her 70s, who has pioneered modern dance in Spain, welcomes me in sweat pants and a shirt, at her small studio in the northern part of Barcelona. She has short, white hair and vivid eyes that stare at me when I arrive.

Anna Maleras is the niece of Emma Maleras, a dancer and choreographer of Spanish dance, born in 1919; Emma created a method that takes her name, for the study and training in castanets that has been taught throughout Spanish conservatories. Anna Maleras, born in 1940, studied dance in Barcelona at the Institute of the Theatre under the direction of Joan Magrinyà. At that time, ballet and Spanish dance were the only dance disciplines taught at the Institute of the Theatre and in almost all dance conservatories in Spain. When asked how she first encountered modern dance, Maleras comments (Appendix B),

> It is not that I was studying with Magrinyà; rather, there was nothing else if you wanted to dance. I was studying ballet and Spanish dance at the Institute of the Theatre.
In the early 1960s, Anna Maleras, aged seventeen, decided to go to France to improve her ballet technique. Determined to pursue ways of learning ballet outside the domain of Magrinyà, she comments:

So I went outside the country to study ballet. The first trip was to Cannes, because Emma Maleras was very close friends with Josep Ferran, and he was Rosella Hightower’s right hand at her school in Cannes. And Emma Maleras said to me: ‘I think that you have to go there to study’, but always thinking about ballet dance. […] Always thinking of ballet, there [at Rosella Hightower’s school] I find there are more things. I find Lin McMurray and I fall in love with jazz. I discover a class of Graham [technique] that for me is a very ‘unusual’ thing.

At Rosella Hightower’s school in Cannes, which opened in the early 1960s (Robinson, 1997), for the first time, she found other ways of dancing. Over ten years Maleras visited Rosella Hightower’s school and other dance festivals in Europe, taking workshops and master-classes on different techniques: jazz, modern dance and tap dancing. From those experiences, Maleras discovered a new way to move outside of ballet and Spanish dance. Her contact with both Lin McMurray and the Graham instructor, whose name is not mentioned, strongly impacted on Maleras’ concept of dance and influenced her subsequent decision to open a dance school in Barcelona introducing these new techniques. As she says:

And all these people that I connected with [at the Cannes school], will come to Barcelona when my school opened. And so this is a never-ending flow. […]

Gradually, I discovered that there is more than classical dance [ballet]. I opened the studio, which is the centre of this effervescence. Young dancers come to the school and are influenced by all of these new tendencies. During the summer we go out to attend workshops, or I bring guest teachers. So, in the shortest time, only three or four years, we construct this ‘bubble’ of openness in contemporary dance. After that, contemporary dance companies start to appear in Barcelona and Spain. Everybody was eager to see new things, we see new things and I bring new things. I carried on going out to do workshops and more workshops, always with other
dancers. And then I created the Anna Maleras Grup Estudi [her dance company], which is a show case for all of this that is brewing, right? This is the beginning, and from this it develops in many ways, for young people who look for new things. And from here, Cesc Gelabert, La Gran Companyia, and Avelina Argüelles, etc, can make their way out.

In 1967, Maleras opened the Dance Studio Anna Maleras with the aim of creating a collective space where invited guest teachers could produce choreographies for the new dancers trained there. Maleras brought new dance tendencies in dance, from Europe and the United States to Barcelona and Spain for the first time. The school became a platform for contacting and learning these new modern techniques that Spanish choreographers and dancers had not been able to learn before. Through the guest teachers coming from Cannes at first, Maleras and her group of students become acquainted with modern dance techniques, and a new world of choreography.

Eva Aymamí Reñé (EA): I am interested in knowing or understanding how this happened. Why do you think there was this sudden explosion of new techniques when you started bringing guest teachers here to Barcelona?

Anna Maleras (AM): Everybody wanted to free themselves, but we did not know how, because we did not have anything. And suddenly when attending the workshops, we started seeing new material.

This new material which was observed in foreign dance schools or brought to Barcelona by the guest teachers enabled Anna Maleras to consider freedom within dance practise. Her training in ballet and escuela bolera at the conservatory of Barcelona had been limited to the counted movements and codified exercises of those disciplines. When Maleras discovered other dance techniques which had a capacity to create infinite movement phrases, she automatically found ballet and bolera restrictive. The innovation and freedom of movements, introduced with the movement techniques brought by Anna Maleras, were very well received as metaphors for freedom of expression and sociopolitical rights, by Catalan and Spanish dancers who had been born and raised under the dictatorship. Maleras and
the ‘discovery’ of more diverse techniques, among them modern dance, offered a channel to experience and perform the freedom that Spanish society claimed at the end of the dictatorship. In the same way that a new democratic state needed to be built, a new way of moving and expressing was being built by Maleras and her dancers. As happened with modern dance pioneers at the beginning of the twentieth century, in modern and contemporary dance, jazz and tap dance Maleras found a source for expressing the democratic concerns of her generation.

Alongside these discoveries, during the 1970s, the gradual relaxation of Francoism and failing health of its leader released the isolation that the country had suffered during the early years of the dictatorship and allowed international dance and theatre companies on tour to enter the main cities of Spain. For the first time, European and American contemporary dance companies performed in Spanish theatres, such as Maurice Béjart with the Ballet du XXe Siècle, Alvin Ailey, Paul Taylor, Alwin Nikolais and Marcel Marceau, among others. However, Franco’s death and Spain’s transition to democracy were necessary for the Martha Graham Company to tour in Spain, as in the 1930s Graham had raised funds in New York for the International Brigades which fought on the Republican side in the Civil War.

New vocabulary and new ways of moving arrived through the supervision of guest teachers such as Gerard Collins from the Ballet de Marseilles, Giancarlo Bellini from the José Limón Company, Gilberto Ruiz Lang from the London Contemporary Dance School and Karl Paris, who had danced major roles at the Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey Companies. Anna Maleras shares her own tactics for luring teachers and their new vocabularies to Barcelona. This is significant because she was taking control of her own choreographic and technical development, something quite distinct from the women in Franco’s Spain who simply followed orders, taking notes and collecting data. Maleras was making a decision to share those techniques with other Spanish dancers, and with these actions, she positioned herself as the ‘pioneer’ or the introducer of these new techniques in Barcelona and Spain. Maleras would invite teachers to spend weeks in Barcelona teaching workshops, while, at the same time, selling them the idea of enjoying holidays on the coast of Barcelona.
AM: When I had seen a good master teacher I tried to ‘seduce’ him to bring him to Barcelona for him to transfer his knowledge to us.

Since the opening of the school, Maleras had invited diverse guest teachers, from modern dance techniques such as Graham, Limón and Horton, to jazz teachers like Walter Nicks. Nicks, who introduced jazz dance instruction to Europe through the International Academy of Dance in Krefeld Germany (1959), gave the first African American jazz class in Barcelona and became a regular teacher and mentor at the school and at Maleras’ workshops (Espinás, 1984). Soon, other Catalan dancers such as Cesc Gelabert and Avelina Argüelles, among others, who were looking for new trends in movement expression, came to Maleras’ school and eventually constituted the Grup Estudi Anna Maleras group of students which would promote and energise the contemporary dance scene in Barcelona and later in Spain.

The poster for a performance by Grup Estudi in figure 10, conveys the mixture of styles and aesthetics that the group embodied. Both terms in the title, *Moderno*, referring to modern dance, and *Jazz*, for the African and Caribbean American styles (broadly used in Broadway musicals) are different dance techniques. Being different techniques, what is unusual in this poster is the conjunction of both terms and styles in the title, *Moderno Jazz*, as if the choreographer had created a new style, a mixture of both techniques. However, Maleras herself showed me the poster with a smile, adding ‘we did not know what we were doing’, as the fusion of styles stated in the title was not usual when announcing modern performances. The lack of prior generations at this time allowed a sense of freedom in transgressing technical borders. Nevertheless, experimenting with different styles in a non-ordered ‘trial and error’ mode seems to suggest the way Maleras and her dancers were working. In this way, by ‘not knowing what we were doing’, Maleras constructed the dance knowledge of the generation of the 1970s and 1980s. With this blend of dance forms in the title of the performance, Grup Estudi invoked a claim for modernity and freedom of expression in their performance. This would influence other dancers to create schools and choreographic groups such as Carmen Serna, who opened a school in Madrid specialising in jazz in 1972.
In December 1977, Xavier Fábregas, dance and theatre critic of *Avui*, one of Catalonia’s main newspapers, wrote a review of *Duke*, a piece by Grup Estudi, which was danced to the music of Duke Ellington (Fábregas, 1977). As Maleras states in the interview, ‘what really inspired me was the music’; this is a jazz dance piece, which pays homage to Duke Ellington’s music. While acknowledging the work of the group in introducing new techniques of modern dance and modern jazz in Spain, Fábregas notices the lack of technical rigour from the performers. In the rhetorical question that gives a title to the article ‘Towards an independent dance?’ the critic questions whether this is really an independent dance, suggesting a lack of professional training in the dancers and a naivety in the choreographer’s phrases that still does not bring a professionalized status to jazz dance. Yet he encourages the company to continue working as the pioneers of new dance techniques, and to develop their own dance style. However one might consider that Fábregas was not used to the vocabulary of modern dance, and as a ballet critic he might have seen that modern piece as sloppy and messy. *Duke* is a group piece for eight dancers: seven women and one man. The piece, three minutes long, is structured as a sequence of arm and torso movements while the legs mark the rhythm, moving from the right to the left in a compassed tempo with the music. Arms, hands and shoulders reproduce jazz movements; turning, clapping and pulling the parts of the body seem to mark a constant rhythm. The movements are performed in synchrony by all dancers; there are no movement
sequences, no movement silences, rhythm changes or couple work. Dressed differently according to their gender: the man in trousers and the women in skirts and a blouse, white gloves and a hat that recalls the dress style of the 1950s, the bodies on stage perform the same choreographic movements, despite presenting themselves differently as man and women, the dancers move in unison. Their actions are directed towards the audience, maintaining an almost bi-dimensional body facing the audience, only disrupted by some turns which end with a fast head movement smiling at the audience. The lack of technical development seems to be suggested by the simplicity of the movements, and the lack of choreographic and technical risk in the sequences. After seeing the piece in a video recording of the company, I agree with Fábregas in his critique of the lack of professionalism in the performance; *Duke* is closer to a jazz class routine in the studio than a theatre stage piece, yet the piece displays a variety of experimentation with these new styles.

This first generation of dancers and choreographers who initiated modern dance in Spain faced an absence of referents and the challenges of professionalism in a sector that did not have proper structures. Their actions showed the need to create institutionalised support in modern dance education and production. During the dictatorship, the Feminine Section had not been a proper referent for theatre dance, since it dealt only with folklore and traditional dances. However, not only Joan Magrinyà, with his classical ballets, but overall the innovative conceptions of Joan Tena Ballets and the following Joan Tena Ballet de Camera, could have been a referent, when the new techniques were introduced during the Transition. Joan Tena’s choreographies experimented with aesthetics, forms and movements of ballet; however, the gender roles exposed in his pieces seem not to experiment and always maintain the traditional gender roles in the relationship between men and women. While Magrinyà and Tena could have helped to understand the relationship of dance with the avant-garde movements in music and painting, despite the control of the dictatorship, none of the pioneers of modern dance in the democratic times cites them as reference figures.
After 1975, the return of many dancers and teachers who had emigrated to other countries to pursue their dance careers and who had been in contact with innovative modern dance techniques, added their experiences to the work that Maleras and the Grup Estudi had been developing since the sixties. Among them were Ramón Solé, who was raised in France and received a ballet education, and José and Concha Láinez, who had arrived in 1969 in the Basque Country, creating the Anexa dance company in 1972. When these dancers returned, they wanted to settle down in the new democratic Spain, and most of them created dance companies that presented new and radical performances for Spanish audiences that were only recently coming into contact with modern dance and jazz vocabulary. In 1975, Ramon Solé formed the Ballet Contemporani de Barcelona dance company with graduate students from the Institute of the Theatre. Two years later, in 1977, a split in the company directed the group towards a more contemporary dance vocabulary. Now called BCB Col·lectiu, this group would be a nest of artistic contemporary creation over the next 20 years, touring internationally, taking the name of Barcelona outside the country and throughout South America.

AM: [Referring to the Mostra de Dansa Independent, Independent Dance Showcase] it was Hermann Bonnin and me. When he was made director of the Institute of the Theatre, he looked for me. We became very good friends. And Barcelona owes Hermann Bonnin ... You should definitely state this, very clearly: all of the movement, and the department of contemporary dance owe their creation to Hermann Bonnin for listening to irritating Anna Maleras. […]

Bonnin is very important in the history of modern dance in Barcelona. Because, of course, I annoyed a lot of people who did not even consider what I was saying. But with Hermann Bonnin, no, they listened to him. And later on in the 80s, he created the department of contemporary dance at the Institute of the Theatre.

While describing the events that produced the first contemporary dance festivals in Spain, Maleras claims her agency as the pioneer of bringing contemporary
dance to Barcelona, but also she emphasizes the labour of Hermann Bonnín as one of the figures who helped to consolidate contemporary dance in educational institutions. Her actions, and her words in this case, are important because they suggest, again, an important difference with the women of the Feminine Section. With her words, Maleras writes her own narrative history and with it she signals the figures that accompanied her in this history, in contrast with the women of the Feminine Section who remained almost anonymous in their work of collecting dances.

During the Transition artistic education at the Institute of the Theatre was also in a process of renewal. In 1974, the retirement of long-term director Magrinyà, and the new direction of Bonnín, brought the incorporation of new dance techniques to this centre dedicated to dance and theatre education. Effectively Bonnín hired Maleras as dance teacher for these new techniques, and also brought guest teachers sometimes matching up with Maleras’ guests: Gerard Collins from the Ballet de Marseilles established his choreographic practice of modern dance and jazz in Barcelona with his newly formed company L’Espantall (The Scarecrow); Giancarlo Bellini from Limón Dance Company brought the first Limón technique classes to Spain; Gilberto Ruiz Lang came from the London Contemporary Dance School with a strong influence from the Graham technique; and the married couple José and Concha Láinez returned from The Netherlands with neo-classical influences, José teaching contemporary and Concha, ballet.

In November 1977 following the first post-Franco democratic elections in Spain, held in June, Anna Maleras and Hermann Bonnín, as head of the Institute of the Theatre, organized the I Mostra de Dansa (The First Independent Dance Showcase), an independent contemporary dance festival in Barcelona (see figure 11). As the first platform to show contemporary pieces to Catalan and Spanish audiences, this festival helped to bring together new dance groups to create and present their pieces. From the first Sample in 1977 with five companies: Grup Estudi Anna Maleras, Ballet Contemporani de Barcelona (col·lectiu), Ballet Alexia, Espai de Dansa and l’Espantall, there was an increase of nine companies in the 1980 Sample with the addition of: Anexa, La Gran Compañía, Acord, Empar Roselló, Cesc and Toni Gelabert, and the seven-woman collective of
Heura. A year after the Institute of the Theatre led the organisation of the annual *Mostra de Dansa Independent* (1977, 1979, 1980 and 1982). Between 1976 and 1982, approximately 26 new groups and creators, most of which were based in Barcelona, performed some 173 choreographies. A second generation of dancers began to create pieces, with the prominent first choreographies by figures including: Cesc Gelabert, Diola Maristany’s Acord group, La Gran Compañía of Jesús Burquet, L’Espantall of Gerard Collins, and in 1979 the formation of the female Heura collective, founded by among others Avelina Argüelles, Elisa Huertas, Alicia Perez Cabrera and Àngels Margarit. That same year, Heura, with its collective pieces, won the Bagnolet (France) choreographic contest and took second place in Nyon (Switzerland).

![Figure 10. Excerpt of program of the First Mostra de Dansa Independent, Museu de les Arts Escèniques, Institute of the Theatre, Barcelona.](Image)

While the 1970s witnessed the beginning of contemporary dance in Spain, with the emergence of private schools in Barcelona and Madrid, the 1980s brought an
outburst of creativity in the arts, with the proliferation of pieces, dance companies and dance festivals. However, the different roles of dancer, choreographer and director were still ambiguous, and most of the dancers were choreographers at the same time.

The development of the first and second generations of contemporary dancers in small dance groups (mainly Grup Estudi Anna Maleras, Cesc Gelabert, BCB, l’Espantall, Heura and Acord, which was based on jazz stylistic principles, Taba and Empar Rosselló), operating independently, without governmental funding, revealed the creative needs of the dance sector. It was not until the late 1980s that a structure of governmental funding would enable dancers and choreographers to direct choreographic and educational projects, bringing their distinctive personal identity to them.

It was not until 1980 that the Institute of the Theatre created an official department of contemporary dance. It was the only official institution offering a contemporary dance degree amongst all the conservatories in Spain until the 2000s, when the Madrid conservatory created a department of contemporary dance. This might suggest why Barcelona remained the centre for the creativity, development and distribution of contemporary dance within Spain.

Funded by private sponsorship, a second institution for contemporary movement training appeared in 1981. After returning from a period in New York trying several movement techniques, Toni Gelabert and Norma Axenfeldt inaugurated La Fàbrica (The Factory), a centre that promoted a specific education in the most avant-garde body techniques not only in dance but in circus, theatre and mime. These included Cunningham and alternative techniques, contact improvisation and choreographic workshops. At The Factory, artists and companies trained such as Cesc Gelabert (who also was with the Anna Maleras’ Grup Estudi), Juan Carlos García, Ramón Oller, Danat Dansa, Margarita Guergé, Francesc Bravo, María Muñoz, and Vicente Sáez among others. The first democratic City Councils, which were created in 1979, led the creation of the first performing arts festivals, such as the Mostra de Dansa Independent (1977-82), Grec Festival de Barcelona (1976), Castelldefels Dance Festival (1980), Fira de Teatre al Carrer Tarrega
Chapter 4

(1981) and Sitges International Festival of Theatre (1967-2004). In 1983, the Generalitat, Catalonia’s autonomous government, created a dance section within the Department of Culture to award grants to independent dance groups. Also, in 1983, Barcelona City Council opened the Mercat de les Flors, a performing arts centre and theatre which would feature Catalan and international companies. At a national level, from 1982 onwards, the socialist Government of the PSOE increased resources for cultural activities. In 1987, for example, it approved legal regulations for dance that included a national dance prize and a two-year subsidy for companies which had to première a creative work each year to keep receiving the subsidy from the government.

The 1980s witnessed the growth of contemporary dance companies around Spain. Spreading from Barcelona to the rest of the country, dance groups appeared in Spain’s main cities such as Madrid and Valencia, most notably: Ananda Danza (with Rosângeles and Edison Valls in 1980, Madrid) Vianants (Gracel Meneu, 1984, Valencia), Bocanada (María José Ribot and Blanca Calvo, 1986, Madrid) and 10x10 (Mónica Runde and Pedro Bedayes, 1989, Madrid). In Madrid, the Festival of Dance was founded in 1981, and in 1983 the Autumn Festival showcased an excellent sample of works both from Spain and abroad. Three years later, the choreographer and activist Laura Kumin created the Madrid Choreographic Contest which served as a platform for new choreographic talents. In the same year, the festival Madrid in Dance appeared,

With the specific aim of providing a meeting place between dancers and spectators to celebrate the resurgence of dance forms which reflected the spirit of the end of the twentieth century and revitalised public interest in the magic of dance.

(Monés et al., 2000, p.148)

The city of Valencia was another important centre for modern choreography. In 1988, Dansa València was created with the aim of bringing together the whole Spanish field, once a year, in February.

These contemporary and modern dance companies began to tour European circuits. Attracting international interest for their originality and creativity, the
first Spanish companies produced a wave of curiosity in European theatres that were keen to see the artistic expression of a country that had only recently encountered modern dance, but that was not behind what was happening in Europe. As Spanish dance historian Nèlida Monés states, ‘In the 1980s and 1990s, contemporary dance has been the most exported form of the performing arts, competing with the most avant-garde theatre groups such as Els Comediants and La Fura dels Baus’ (Monés et al., 2000, p. 151). Catalan dance companies toured nationally in several dance festivals around Spain. The Catalan scene was also promoted internationally through collaboration between the Mercat de les Flors and many companies from abroad. For instance, for the Biennale de la Danse dedicated to Spain, held in Lyon in 1992, only Catalan companies were represented. A professional association of dancers was created in Catalonia in 1987 and later spread across the whole country, developing a platform for the representation and protection of the dance sector. This situation of growth and development reached its high point with the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games where, alongside flamenco and theatre, contemporary dance was present in the various ceremonies, including the arrival of the Olympic torch, with a choreography by Cesc Gelabert.

On the other hand, the race for democratization would also bring the oblivion of those dance forms that dominated the scene during the dictatorship. In Catalonia, as Ester Vendrell (2013) notes, flamenco and ballet projects received less government attention in the form of subsidies than modern and contemporary performances during the 1980s and 1990s. Certainly, Maleras’ discovery of new dance techniques, among them modern dance, enabled freedom of movements in a democratic/liberated body on stage, and yet it contributed to the fading of memories of other dance techniques, which were related to the constriction and codified vocabularies of the dictatorship. Therefore, I would claim that alongside the development of a democratic state, modern dance speaks of freedom and democracy as well as oblivion and silence. Because of the euphoria that modern dance created around the new techniques, this simultaneously meant the devaluation of the dance forms predominant during the dictatorship: flamenco and ballet.
III. Dancing in Silence

EA: How would you describe the themes of your choreographies?

AM: Do you mean the inspiration?

EA: Yes. Considering the historical period you lived in during the 1970s and 1980s, during the transition to democracy, what would you consider to be your main influences and inspirations?

(Maleras interrupts my question)

AM: No, no, no, it is not exactly this; do you know what always inspires me? Music. Music for me; it is basic. For example this [she shows me a picture of an earlier choreography] was something very funny, you see, we had guts, in the 70s we were wearing these leotards with red and green stripes [AM goes on to describe the costumes]. And the music inspired this story. I always went for music.

EA: [I insist] I was thinking of the piece Guernica presented at the Mostra de Dansa in 1977 and how this piece expresses the horrors of the Civil War and the years of dictatorship that came after it.

A.M: Guernica was choreographed by Guillermo Palomares. He was a dancer at the José Limón Company. I brought him to one of my workshops in Mallorca, then I brought him to Barcelona - and we became very good friends. Here in Barcelona, he created Guernica, a very nice piece. I think it is recorded, but I am not sure. As I just told you, I have to organise my archives a bit.

EA: Did Guernica win any awards?

AM: No.

Mentioning her own choreographies and awards, Anna Maleras changes the subject. She stands up and walks towards a closet, bringing more pictures of her pieces and her dancers. This leads to her commenting on particular dances and costumes. Maleras goes silent and turns away as she remembers her pieces. Embodying the turn of Benjamin’s Angel of History, Maleras stands and turns towards the past, remembering those choreographies, Guernica’37 among them.
Which past is she observing? Maleras brings out her choreographies; she is willing to talk about the movements, the styles of contemporary dance. She focuses on the modernity of the bodies in her choreographies, the fashion of the costumes and the strident colours, and yet she does not say anything else about *Guernica’37* except that ‘it was a very nice piece’. *Guernica’37* might have been a nice piece, however, the title and the events it evokes certainly recall the bombing of civilians in the Basque city of Guernica by the German air force in support of the Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War. Maleras herself danced this piece, where the bodies of the dancers simulate, by jumping, the bombs falling over the city. Maleras’ silence when I asked more questions about *Guernica’37* suggests a reluctance to talk about the past. She mentions her past choreographies, the ones which she created inspired by music. However, she does not want to comment on the tragedies embodied in *Guernica’37*. Her silence about those memories of the past is reminiscent of the pact of silence approved by the young democratic Spanish government.

While Maleras’ silence over the piece *Guernica’37* may be proof of the collective amnesia over the memories of the past, her refusal to talk about Palomares also suggests a lack of interest in talking about how to exorcise those traumas of the past. I understand the figure of Palomares as the link which facilitated a dialogue with the ghosts of the past. However, he proposed this dialogue at a point in history when Maleras and most of Spanish society were not ready for it. Unfortunately, Guillermo Palomares, a Mexican choreographer who came to Europe through France, has faded in the archives and newspapers along with the memories of his piece. His name is absent from national performance archives and libraries, and we only know about him through his piece. *Guernica’37* has become the only record of him in the archives. As Diana Taylor (2003) suggests, this repertoire of Palomares has become a living document in the archives. The recording of the piece can only be found in the personal archives of the historian Ester Vendrell. I asked Maleras later in the interview about Palomares, what happened to him and what did he do, but Maleras did not know: ‘he went to France and after that I don’t know.’ Maleras answered my last questions over the phone. This exceptional choreographer now stands as an important link with the
concepts of memory and silence in the Transition. The inconsistency of his traces in the narrativity of contemporary dance history will be subject to further research in the future.

In November 1977, after Spain held its first democratic elections in forty years, and soon after the approval of the Amnesty Law, which created a generalised silence about the past, Guillermo Palomares choreographed *Guernica’37* for the Grup Estudi Anna Maleras. In this piece, Palomares reminded the audience about the recent tragedies of the Civil War at a time when civil society was undergoing a process of collective amnesia about those events.

Choreographed for ten dancers, with music by Anton Webern, *Guernica’37* was premiered, among other pieces, at the First *Mostra de Dansa Independent* in 1977. Seven women wore long, fuchsia leotards and a black knotted mesh holding their hair back, while the three men wore brown and earth-colour trousers and were topless. A few minutes of the piece recorded in an empty theatre can be watched in historian Ester Vendrell’s private archive. A former dancer with the José Limón Dance Company, Palomares used movement vocabulary based on the premises of the Limón technique: an overall organic movement, seeking harmony in the balances, changes of weight and falls. The ten dancers create rounded and angular shapes with their bodies on stage. The movement of falling down appears often in the piece. Remembering the bombing of the city Guernica, or perhaps just abstracting a fall, the bodies of the dancers appear in a constant fluidity, moving up and down. Towards the end of the piece all the dancers on stage create a circle holding hands while each dancer performs different foot movements. The sardana is a traditional Catalan dance performed in the same way, in a circle holding hands. Stanley Brandes in his article ‘The Sardana: Catalan Dance and Catalan National Identity’ (Brandes, 1990), relates the formal elements of the folk dance to the national character features attributed to Catalan national identity such as the

---

44 José Limón was a of modern dance pioneer. In 1928 he moved to New York and studied under Doris Humphrey. A great admirer of Doris Humphrey and her technique, Limón’s technique clearly reflected Humphreys’ qualities of movement: the body’s weight was represented with falls and rebounds, and suspension and succession. Limón ’s main goal was to express, in an organic way, his perception of the world (Dunbar, 2000).
circle with egalitarianism, and the complicated counts with persistence and patience. In *Guernica’37*, the creation of a circle, comprising all ten dancers, creates a sense of togetherness with the dancers holding hands and moving their feet in unison, creating shapes, at a slow pace. A voice-over recites a poem by Pablo Neruda, *Paz para Los Crepúsculos que Vienen* (‘Peace for Twilights Yet to Come’), while the dancers continue moving in unison in the circle. This poem talks about peace for humankind; among several things mentioned, one verse describes ‘peace for the choreographer screaming/through a funnel at the vines’ and ‘peace for the broken heart/of guerrilla Spain’.

With a direct link to the past of Spain, this poem again mentions among other things the tragedies of the Spanish Civil War, while the dancers embody a togetherness holding hands in a moving circle. In my opinion, the piece *Guernica’37* talks about recovering the memories of the past, the memories of the ones who lost the war and were forgotten during the dictatorship, and also those memories that were not recovered with the democracy. As the dancers come together in a circle, a non-hierarchical structure where everybody can be heard the same; they embody a democratic society that comes together when listening to the voice of the past.

Perhaps it is easier to identify forms of delusion in a national transition as a foreigner. Five companies presented works at the first *Sample*, with several pieces from each group. Anna Maleras herself had choreographed other pieces presented at the *Sample*, for example, ‘Amb Jazz’ with the music of Duke Ellington, and ‘Strauss’ with music by Richard Strauss. These pieces show the modern vocabulary that Maleras and her contemporary dancers had acquired through contact with guest teachers: abstract movements, contractions and relaxation, in the style of Martha Graham, and fall and recovery, as in the Limón technique, mixed with a jazz vocabulary of tilts and swings. However, the other twenty-nine short pieces at the *Sample* were not connected with recent local history or politics. *Guernica’37* remained in the company’s repertoire for several years and it was danced again at the fourth Sample in 1982, as seen in the dance review in *Dansa*.

45 My translation of the text ‘paz para el coreógrafo que grita, / con un embudo a las enredaderas, [...] paz para el corazón desgarrado,/ de España guerrillera’.
Guillermo Palomares was a choreographer from Mexico, who also danced with modern dance companies from the U.S.A. The international component in this context is significant because Palomares’ original country was one of the only two countries (along with the Soviet Union) to support the Spanish Republican government during the Civil War, thereby contradicting the non-intervention policy of the international community. (This was also ignored by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy who helped the Spanish Nationalist side.) In this way, Mexico became one of the main countries to receive Republican refugees after the Civil War. More research is required on the links between Palomares and Spanish refugees. The absence of Palomares in the archives and from any events in the Spanish dance scene make it difficult to carry out research in this direction, however the choices that the choreographer made in his piece are telling, not just his vision of Spanish history, but also on the contemporary democratic situation. Palomares chose a poem to be read at the end of the piece written by Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet who had been committed to the communist cause and the fight against fascism for his whole life and who had died of health problems under the dictatorship of general Pinochet in 1973. His verses speak of bringing peace to future days, but they also acknowledge, like Guernica’37, the past memories of the Spanish militia defending the democratic government of the Second Republic.

Maleras danced this piece and performed these forgotten memories on stage. She jumped and fell at the sound of the bombing; she embodied the togetherness of democratic society in the circle, and heard Neruda’s words. However, when answering my questions about the meaning of the piece, Maleras kept silent and switched to another topic, echoing the silent agreement between government forces and society in 1977 not to talk of the tragedies of the past. There are other possible explanations for the silence of Maleras about Guernica’37; maybe she did not remember the piece, as she danced so many pieces at the time. However, as I insisted on talking about the piece, Maleras insisted on her silence, instead of trying to remember or reading what the critics had written about it. As other possibilities arise regarding the interpretation of Maleras’ silence, I understand the
persistence of Maleras’ silence over Guernica’37, and simultaneously, my own questions about it to be an example of how the collective amnesia of the Transition has been silencing the memories of the past.

Figure 11. Review of the Fourth Mostra de Dansa Independent, in Dansa 79, 1982. ARCA Archive.

***

In this historical re-construction of the events that framed the introduction of contemporary dance in Spain, I moved into the past with Anna Maleras, re-visiting the flaneuse strategy of walking through history (Hammergren, 1995). Maleras created a school that first institutionalized the teaching and learning of new forms of expression in dance, at the same time participating in the choreographic movement that the new techniques facilitated.

Anna Maleras’ choreographies do not tackle the sociopolitical issues of her times. In the interview and later communications she avoids any reference to the past and current political situation. Instead, her choreographies emphasize the new possibilities of movement learned in other countries. Her focus remains on the form of the pieces, the musicality, the style of movement, the technique and the costumes. Maleras proposed modern dance as an innovation in the form of the dance: a rupture with the codified vocabulary of ballet. What is political in Maleras’ work is the new freedom of expression, which makes it possible for learning to move in a different way. These new techniques that Maleras imported
offered the possibility of creating new moves for choreography and technical exercises; in opposition to the ballet technique and flamenco that Maleras had learned in dance schools, where all possible movements were learned and repeated again in the studio. At the same time as the country’s transition to democracy, this freedom of expression materialised in modern dance, unveiling the repression and lack of freedom that Spanish society endured under the dictatorship. All of these democratic concerns would find a way into the fresh techniques that Anna Maleras imported into Barcelona.

Inscribed in the history of Spanish democracy, modern dance bodies moved freely on stage, free of governmental control. In a dialogic relationship with their time, these dancing bodies talked about the new identities constructed during democracy, and simultaneously articulated the long-term silence that allowed Spanish society to reach a peaceful democracy. Maleras introduced modern dance as freedom of movement, but her actions and dances perpetuated the silence over the past memories, which Maleras did not want to remember. By these means, Franco’s history still haunts contemporary democratic bodies and will struggle to come to light until it is faced, performed or written about. The next generation of choreographers will deal with the ghost of the past, showing in their choreographies the struggles to come to terms with the silenced history.

Finally, Maleras introduced a new language in movement, which would not bring a real political statement in her choreographies; on the contrary, her actions and dances perpetrated the silence. Nevertheless, this language would allow future generations of dancers to reproduce, contest and deconstruct responses to this imposed collective silence.
Chapter 5. The Construct of The Democratic Woman: Argüelles’ New Subjectivities

What we cannot explain with words is what makes us dance. Because dance is that precisely, we move in that border of saying what cannot be said.

(Argüelles in Muñoz, 2004)

With the arrival of foreign guest teachers and choreographers at Anna Maleras’ school, the dance scene would be modernized with the incorporation of innovative aesthetics and techniques. The 1980s witnessed an outburst of dance companies and pieces, which with their creations galvanized the recent democratic society of Spain. A new community of dancers was born from Maleras’ Grup Estudi and some of them began to create their own choreographic projects and their own dance companies.

Among them, Avelina Argüelles with six other female dancers created the Heura choreographic collective in 1977, where these dancers experienced the freedom of creativity, without censorship, in a cooperative structure. Three years later, in 1981, Argüelles left the collective and started her solo choreographic career. Argüelles embodies the modernist statement that the body is a channel of inner expression and uses dance to express what cannot be articulated with language (see the introductory quote above). In her choreographies, the bodies on stage articulate gender issues such as equality, marriage, love, power and control during the transition to democracy. By exploring these performing bodies, I argue that Argüelles’ pieces discuss some of the non-spoken matters that were silenced in the history of Spain.

Section I introduces Argüelles’ first steps in her dance career and her participation in the collective group Heura. The effect on her continued development of remaining in this collective seems to have played a role in her later decision to undertake a solo choreographic career. This section will be supported by excerpts from a telephone interview in September 2007, and a face to face interview conducted in September 2012 (see Appendix C for a full transcription of the
Section II explores the construction of femininity that Argüelles proposes in her piece *Anells sense Dits (Rings without Fingers)* premiered in 1980. Finally, Section III analyses *Paralelas (Parallels)* in 1989, focussing on the evolution of female values in the democratic era. Both pieces have won prizes, and both illustrate the nuanced nature of her reflections on the concept of the female condition during this decade.

**I. Collective Movements, Heura**

Argüelles’ choreographic career is not properly documented in the archives of the Institute of the Theatre, the institution in which she has developed a major role as a Limón technique instructor and choreography teacher. Perhaps thanks to her primary role as a dance and choreography instructor, her choreographic career has received little critical attention and there is hardly any documentary record of her performances in the archives. However, from her first choreography *Absencia (Absence)* in 1979, through to her last, *Deseos (Desires)* in 1997, Argüelles created a solid body of choreographic work which has won several choreography awards nationally and internationally. Early pieces, such as *Absence* and *Rings without Fingers*, won awards at the choreographic festivals of Nyon and Cologne respectively, and *Parallels* won the national award at the Ricard Moragues contest in Barcelona.

Avelina Argüelles was born in 1948 in Barcelona. She had been interested in dance since she was a little girl, and at the age of nine she entered Joan Tena’s dance school, which was characterised by its avant-garde conception of ballet, as seen in the reviews of Tena’s choreographies in chapter four. Her dance education is very eclectic. After having trained in ballet, *escuela bolera* and flamenco, at the age of eighteen she came in contact with Anna Maleras and the first modern dance influences, travelling to European summer festivals and performing at the *Mostra de Dansa Independent*. After finishing a degree in philosophy at the University of Barcelona, Argüelles became a regular dance teacher at Maleras’ school and a member of Maleras’ dance company, the Grup Estudi.
Throughout the 1970s Anna Maleras taught contemporary dance at the Institute of Theatre as a guest teacher. On occasions when Maleras could not teach the classes she would send one of her dancers from Grup Estudi. In so doing, Argüelles, who was the usual substitute for Maleras at the Institute of the Theatre, met the students of the recently created contemporary courses and soon became a ‘free student’ at the Catalan conservatory. Argüelles simultaneously became a student outside the curriculum and a substitute teacher at the centre.

It was common to see students become teachers for a day and lead classes between themselves at the Catalan conservatory. Due to the poor planning of the institution, which was dealing with the incorporation of new techniques, on some occasions students were left without teachers. This auto-didacticism benefited the concept of collectivity and the sharing of embodied knowledge and dialogue in the training of the Heura choreographic collective. This impromptu teaching enabled the students to create tactics for sharing embodied practices, spurring creativity and the development of new dance vocabularies. This new way of creating empowered the (female) dancing bodies to work democratically (without the figure of a leader or director) in an egalitarian way. As Argüelles (Appendix C) recollects:

Well, the collective started because we thought we were all good and we all knew how to dance. [...] Dance, for us, was a principle of freedom. When I was young, during Francoism, repression was everywhere. As a woman, one had to wear clothes which were not very provocative. At school, girls had special education: the things that [the regime] tried to put in your head.

At this time, Spain was creating the necessary structures to function as a democratic country. After the first democratic elections on 15 June 1977, the president Adolfo Suárez undertook the task of constructing the pillars of a democratic system. Within the democratic spirit of freedom in the country, seven female dancers created a choreographic collective group in the dance studios. In 1978, Alicia Pérez Cabrero proposed a network of dance collaborations to her

46 Avelina uses this term to identify her position at the Institute of Theatre. She was not officially enrolled there, but attended almost all the classes unofficially.
colleagues at the Institute of Theatre; the Heura group was born. The other members were Remei Barderi, Elisa Huertas, Lola Puentes, Carme Vidal and Avelina Argüelles. One year later, Àngels Margarit, who belonged to the former student group, would join them, after having danced with the Contemporary Ballet of Barcelona. At that time there was the Judson Church collective and the Grand Union in New York (Novack, 1990), and in London there was the X6 collective (Jordan, 1992); what Argüelles was doing as a member of Heura was therefore part of a wider international phenomenon. However, there is no certainty about how Heura’s collective came to know about these other collectives, since they confirm in the interviews that they did not know about the Judson Church and other collective groups at that time (see appendix B and C).

Heura, as a dance collective, offers not only an opportunity to analyse in detail the dynamics of cooperation and creating collectively in dance, but also a chance to think in a wider aspect in line with the creation of a sense of collective identity in the new democratic Spanish society. Heura is the first of two collectives that I will discuss (the second one is in chapter 5) and each will raise different issues. Within collective discourse, Florian Schneider (2007) mentions the appearance of terms such as ‘cooperation’ and ‘collaboration’ in collective discourses in the 1970s to refer to joint learning activities that were supposed to break with the authoritarian teacher-centred style of instruction. Drawing on Jaques Ranciere’s *Le Maître Ignorant* (1987), Schneider highlights the importance of ignorance as the first virtue of the instructor to emancipate the student. In this sense, the teacher would function as a kind of director of the knowledge to be acquired. This figure is in line with the choreographer of collective groups, who does not create all the movement of the piece, but instead guides the dancers in the search for movement vocabulary. Schneider highlights the ‘ignorance’ of the teacher in collaborative theory, as this helps to illustrate the egalitarian status of the members of a collective. In Heura there was no single director or choreographer of the group; instead, all members participated in the decision-taking.

This collaborative environment of contemporary dance is a democratic model in development, as there are no power hierarchies and normally decisions are taken by the votes of all of its members. This way of working together exemplifies the
exchanges and flow of ideas in creating new vocabularies. In line with the democratic Constitution, approved in a referendum in 1978 under which all Spaniards acquired equal rights, Heura was established as a structurally egalitarian collective: a group with no hierarchical organization, where there was neither a director nor a choreographer who led the group. The sense of self-didacticism of those students at the conservatory defied the traditional dance company structure of a director-choreographer leading the dancers. Instead, in Heura, all members participated in the direction of the collective with equal opportunity.

The creative process of the group followed the structure of the ‘ignorant’ choreographer. One of the members would take over the creation of a piece, selecting the dancers desired. The choreographer would propose a theme and the dancers would work on choreographic exercises searching for movement vocabulary. The task of the choreographer was normally to select and link the movement sequences created by the dancers. *Laberint (Labyrinth)*, directed by guest choreographer Gilberto Ruiz Lang, was created through a series of exercises that the choreographer gave to the dancers. Working on textures, in groups of two or three, the dancers created several choreographic sequences, which the choreographer eventually united into a piece.

This collective creative process distanced contemporary dance from the hierarchical power structures that are more common in ballet companies, where a director and choreographer instruct the dancers who repeat the movements dictated to them. In contrast, Heura embraced a democratic spirit in the creation of the group and the pieces. As Argüelles mentions:

> At the beginning, there was a lot of illusion: Who are we? What do we want? It was not like now, ‘how much do they pay me?’ As a collective, we were not making any money. At the beginning there were no subsidies. We were selling sandwiches at the entrance of the theatre to earn a bit of money.

However, this democratic model for creation in contemporary dance encountered the problem of a lack of structures to support their creative process. The newly elected Spanish government established the basic institutions to support the democracy, such as the parliament and the constitution, which was approved in
1978. Simultaneously, the contemporary dance scene was also looking for structures of support. There were no performance circuits or systems of government funding for culture yet (these would come from the Catalan Government in 1983). Therefore, the new contemporary dance in Spain initially operated, without making a profit, something which would inhibit the professionalization of the sector. The dancers and choreographers had to survive from teaching dance at schools and other jobs, in order to dance.

Heura debuted at the Second Mostra de Dansa Independent in 1979 with Labyrinth, choreographed by the guest teacher Gilberto Ruiz Lang. In addition, this piece was presented at the Choreographic Festival of Bagnolet in 1979 and won the third place. The other pieces presented by the collective were Com et Dis Nena? (What’s your name baby?) choreographed by Isabel Ribas, Caixes (Boxes), choreographed by Gilberto Ruiz Lang, L’Amant de Sol a l’Ombra (The Lover of The Sun in The Shade), choreographed by María Rosas and Absencia (Absence), choreographed by Avelina Argüelles, which would also receive the second choreographic award at Nyon, Switzerland, in 1979. Alicia Pérez Cabrero was named ‘best performer’ at the same festival. At the Second Sample, Heura received very good reviews from dance critics, who noted and welcomed the varied and distinctive styles of each piece and choreographer. A review in Dansa 79 magazine noted that:

Harmony and plasticity are entangled in this group that, in the genre of contemporary ballet, tries to communicate with an audience used to watching ballet passively. Their goal is to motivate the audience, [...] Their performances are a beautiful example of an art form that unifies poetry or words with shapes and music, as can be seen in their success throughout their first year of existence. The cohesion that prevails among them is remarkable. The group’s identity is shaped by respect for each member’s opinion and personality.

(Aroca del Rey, 1980, p.6)

47 As the French newspaper Le Monde wrote about the piece: ‘Laberint, an intelligent and sensitive materialisation of a picture by Tàpies at the Festival of Bagnolet’ (My translation, Le Monde 1979 in Vendrell, 2007, p.185).

48 My translation of the original text: ‘Harmonia i plasticitat s’entrellacen en aquest grup que, sota
Within the world of contemporary dance, the preference for creating collectively became quite common during the 60s and 70s as a reflection of the social changes of the time (Laermans, 2012). Examples such as the Judson Church Group\(^{49}\) in 1960 did not influence dance in Spain, owing to Spain’s historical isolation under the dictatorship, but it does serve as an example of the simultaneous appearance of collaborative groups in Western societies. Nevertheless, the idealistic desire for a harmonious togetherness, which influenced the artistic scene of the 1960s and 1970s (Ruhsam, 2014), seems to introduce intrinsic problems in the Spanish equivalent. As mentioned by Avelina Argüelles, some of the members of Heura engaged in creating a mutual ‘togetherness’ that functioned as the united subjectivities of the group:

> The participants in a collaborative dance project create and sustain an always particular commonality through repeated acts of communication, thinking, feeling or moving that both transform and exceed their subjectivities. As a subject, every individual is per definition autonomous. However when working in collaboration, the social common operates as the creator and generally des-subjectivizes the individuals.

*(Laermans, 2012, p.98)*

Heura supplied a platform for producing collective dance, and at the same time offered a space in which to confront and resolve internal differences. In a similar line, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001) propose that democracy is a practice in progress. Rather than thinking of democracy as a finalised product, the authors suggest thinking about it as a process in construction. While democracy depends on consensus and balance between majorities’ and minorities’ rules,

---

\(^{49}\) The Judson Dance Theatre was an informal group of dancers who performed at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, New York City, between 1962 and 1964. The people involved were avant-garde dancers and other artists who challenged the limits within which modern dance operated, creating, with their experiments, the principles of postmodern dance. (Burt, 2006).
Laclau and Mouffe propose that this consensus oppresses differences in race, opinions, class and gender. The authors instead suggest the concept of a ‘radical democracy’ that encourages equality alongside, not instead of, difference. In this line, in analysing democracy, Mouffe (2007) focuses on the inevitability of antagonism, which refers to disagreement and differences, as part of a democratic process. As antagonism is part of a democratic process, Mouffe suggests thinking about it in terms of an ‘agonistic perspective’ (instead of antagonism). The agonistic standpoint brings a new angle to the category of the adversary, ‘the opponent with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of “liberty and equality for all”, while disagreeing about their interpretation.’ (Mouffe, 2013, p.7). This antagonistic perspective in the democratic process may help to understand the internal conflicts appearing in artistic collectives when discussing opposing points of view.

An artistic collective is not a unified outcome either, but a concept under construction that is moulded by the differences and agreements of its members. In this sense, Spain at the beginning of the transition was undergoing a generalized process of defining democracy for its diverse and sometimes antagonistic population. Like in the construction of a democratic government, in an artistic collective, the consensus of the majority may endanger respect towards the interests of the minorities. Likewise, as an instantiation of Mouffe and Laclau’s theorization of democracy, Heura’s work illustrates the difficulties of integrating minorities into the hegemonic speech of the collective.

Nevertheless, the democratic spirit of the Heura collective, described in the interview with Dansa 79 magazine, and how it fed into their pieces, faced social challenges which affected the decisions taken. Collaboration happens in unexpected ways. Instead of assuming the generosity of a group, comprising individuals seeking solidarity, collaboration often works as an abrupt and selfish practice, where the group members rely on one another more, as they pursue their own interests. Exchange then becomes an effect of necessity rather than one of mutuality or involvement. The problems in Heura seem to be related to working collectively; specifically, one of the members, Argüelles, struggled with the concept of creating collectively. The particular commonality that Laermans
mentions (2012) produced frictions among personal relationships inside the collective of Heura. Argüelles was not ready to lose her individual creativity or the piece’s ownership. Argüelles notes that the collective politics of the group obstructed not only the creative process, but also the performances while on tour, and spending days on end together, sharing food and sleeping in hotels. As Argüelles explained:

It became a kind of collective of power, with very bad habits. It was like: the weak were the good ones, and the more experienced one was the bad one. There were things that irritated me, like some of them were real hippies, and were always smoking hashish. And when we were going to gigs outside, it was like we always had to be together, as though we were at primary school, and I really could not stand that. There were things that started to make it more difficult little by little. There was finally an abyss between them and me. […] I remember I suggested writing a constitution tackling all the conflictive issues to try to resolve these tensions, and when I was reading them out loud, I said, you know fuck it! … I was tired of it.

Despite the irregular opposition of Argüelles, Heura embodied a type of temporary togetherness in producing contemporary dance in Spain. The cooperation and egalitarianism of its members developed a model for making dance in Spain. Creating together brought internal conflicts to the collective; the authorship of the choreographies became a constant struggle. Initially, a single choreographer signed the pieces, as seen at the Second Sample. However, while developing choreographic work for the Third Sample, the group developed a crisis of authorship in which some members pushed for collective authorship of the pieces, which would remain the property of the collective, as opposed to individual authorship of the pieces. Argüelles was one of the only members in favour of conserving the individual authorship of the pieces and she wrote some constitutional amendments to protect individual copyright of the pieces. However, when it was put forward for approval, this constitution was not accepted by the majority of Heura’s members and became the starting point for internal conflict in the group.

The different individual experiences of the members, such as age and previous dance experience, also helped to erode the already fragile unity of the collective.
We had different lived experiences. For example, there were very young girls in their twenties and I was already twenty nine years old. Moreover, I had previous experience dancing with the Grup Estudi Anna Maleras during the early 1970s, and some of them had just graduated from the conservatory.

The collective was also driven by different approaches to choreographic aesthetics that early contemporary dance conveyed. Heura’s productions defined two main choreographic aesthetics: the formalist and the expressionist approaches, both influenced by European dance festivals and guest dance teachers from the Institute of the Theatre or Anna Maleras’ School. The formalist style was based on a preference for the physicality and materiality of the bodies on stage, creating choreographic pieces based on the movement itself rather than ‘content’ as such. On the contrary, the expressionist style used the body as a means for expressing an idea or feeling. Most of the members of Heura, such as Argüelles, shared an expressionist perspective on choreography. On the opposite side, there was Àngels Margarit, who with a formalist approach, recalls in an informal interview (on 13 of September 2013):

> There were also different conceptions of aesthetics. I was moving towards a formalist approach to choreography, where I liked to investigate the architectural space and geometry through movement. And the problems were that most of them worked with thematic on the line of dance/theatre, involving expression of feelings, images and this was not good for me.  

When Margarit took over leadership of the group in 1981, the problem of aesthetic and choreographic differences began to break again the fragile unity of the collective. In 1982, at the IV Mostra de Dansa, organised this time by the Department of Culture of the Catalan Government at the Regina Theatre, the company presented *Temps al Baix* (Bad Times), choreographed by the collective. Under the direction of Àngels Margarit, the collective created this piece as a study of functional aesthetics, which marked a change from the previous expressionist style. Margarit imposed her vision of choreography, distinct from the expression

---

50 My translation of the interview: ‘També teníem diferents conceptes estètics. Jo em movia cap a un aspecte coreogràfic formalista, en el que m’agradava investigar l’espai arquitectònic i geomètric a través del moviment. I el problema era que la majoria d’elles treballaven en la temàtica del teatre dansa, involucrant imatges i emocions, i això no és el que m’agradava.’
of emotions within dance. Her style focused on the forms of the body and how the body shapes spaces; the style was in line with the formalism of Merce Cunningham and Alvin Nikolais, and would eventually evolve into the minimalism of Margarit’s solo career in Mudances (Changes), her post-Heura company (Vendrell, 2007).

However, the expressionist style came to the fore when Isabel Ribas, who had been dancing at Wuppertal under the direction of Pina Bausch and was suffering from terminal cancer, returned to Barcelona to die in 1982. Ribas would create the first piece of dance-theatre performed in Barcelona, Le Ciel Est Noir (The Sky Is Black), highly influenced by Bausch’s theatrical elements. Sadly, she did not live long enough to see the premiere of her piece. During the process of creating the piece, the tensions between different aesthetic perspectives created a very difficult working atmosphere that led to the end of the collective after the first performance. As Argüelles comments in an interview in Dansa 79 (Entrevista a Avelina Argüelles, 1980) both aesthetic choices had exposed the internal conflicts of Heura. This collective had linked the first and third generations of dancer-choreographers in Catalonia and Spain, and established the two main choreographic aesthetic movements: dance theatre (expressionism) and formalist abstraction, the two tendencies that would provide the base of contemporary dance in Catalonia for the next generations. Heura’s split was a result of the tensions that arise when creative people work together, as had happened in other collectives such as the Black British company MAAS Movers in the late 1970s. They split because of tensions between people more interested in Dance Theatre and those interested in formalist Graham-based abstract dance. In this line, Heura’s collective had raised problems, both of individuality versus commonality in the creative process, and differences in choreographic aesthetics.

In 1980, having won the second prize in Cologne, Argüelles, a founding member of the group, left Heura’s collective to start her individual career as a dancer and choreographer. In search of her own dance vocabulary, Argüelles choreographed a series of duets, trios and group pieces from the 1980s through to the 2000s. Her creative approach is closer to the American modern dance lyricism of José Limón, which she picked up from Giancarlo Bellini’s Limón technique classes at the
Institute of the Theatre (Vendrell, 2007).

II. Constructing Femininity in *Rings without Fingers*

*Rings without Fingers* is a short twelve minute piece, the second piece that Argüelles choreographed as part of the Heura collective during 1979 and 1980. Inspired by a real event in the choreographer’s life, her sister’s wedding sixteen years before, this piece for three dancers choreographs a bride, her father and a groom on a wedding day.

Argüelles notes in the interview how she could not understand why a woman needed to get married at just twenty years of age. At the time of her sister’s wedding, Spain was still under the dictatorship, but as Franco’s health became more fragile, the regime relaxed its censorship and pressure on cultural and social events. In fact, during the final years of the dictatorship, it started to be conceivable for a woman to live her life without deferring to the authority of a father or husband. Argüelles understood her younger sister’s decision to marry as a consequence of the persistent restrictions of the regime, and she developed this thematic in *Rings without Fingers*. For this purpose, the choreographer uses images and memories from her real life and analogies to the wedding ceremony to create choreographic metaphors. As Argüelles comments in the interview (Appendix C), she wanted to create a comical-satirical piece, so she brought absurd or strange elements onto the stage, such as the oversized hat, to produce an amusing and magical effect.

Before *Rings without Fingers*, Argüelles chose to start a new collaboration with two male performers who had recently joined the Heura company: Álvaro de la Peña and Toni Gómez. The theme of the wedding of Argüelles sister was developed along with this new collaborative and heteronormative dynamic. The piece was first premiered in 1980 at the Second *Mostra de Dansa Independent* at the Regina Theatre, in Barcelona, followed by the Festival of Cologne the same year. Argüelles used two different endings for the final scene: an open ending which is ambiguous in its depiction of the bride’s destiny, and a closed ending in which she unequivocally rejects marriage and chooses to be single. As Argüelles explains in the interview, the audience’s response varied significantly. In Spain,
where an open ending was proposed, the reactions were ambivalent, even negative, particularly among the feminist groups close to the choreographer. However, in Germany, where the closed ending was used, the piece was understood with the sarcasm that the choreographer had intended as an allegory of the ritual of marriage. *Rings without Fingers* won the second prize for choreography, which led to the recording of a film for German Television. Certainly the existing German tradition of modern dance and dance theatre played an important role in the reception of *Rings without Fingers*. Therefore, this piece is a useful example of relations between Spanish feminism and dance practice at this time, when the Spanish feminist movement started to re-organize in accordance with the democratic times.

During the final decade of the regime in 1965, a number of initiatives linked to women’s interests started to emerge, reflecting women’s need to become organised around feminist matters. These included associations such as *La Mujer y la Lucha* (The Woman and the Struggle) and the *Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres* (Women's Democratic Movement, MDM), which was formed within the illegal Spanish Communist Party (Gil, 2011), and began to organize women around matters of equality, sexuality and gender issues. Silvia Gil, in her genealogy of the feminist movement in Spain (2011), identifies the *Primeras Jornadas de Liberación de La Mujer* (First Days of Women's Liberation) in Madrid in 1975, as the arrival of the feminist movement in Spain. The First Days defined the idea that women underwent a common experience of oppression imposed by the inequalities of patriarchy and capitalism. Consequently, the ‘woman’, as a subject, was felt to include all women’s experiences and interests.

Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, published in 1948, was a great influence on Spanish feminism. Although only translated into Spanish in 1968, this seminal book featured amongst the readings of most Spanish feminists (Gil, 2011). De Beauvoir’s work provided an in-depth interpretation of the secondary position of women in society, with gender no longer understood as a natural condition of difference, but as a category inscribed in social structures. The author’s acclaimed quote ‘One is not born, but rather becomes a woman’ (Beauvoir, 1997), distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is the cultural meaning
allocated to sex. With this quote, de Beauvoir enabled a discussion of the ‘natural’ values associated with each gender. Crucially, with this claim, the feminist movement asserted the cultural constitution of gender identity. If gender was separate from biological sex, then the construction of female identity should not be determined by natural differences or biological inequalities. As a culturally interpreted variable, gender lacks fixity in its construction of cultural identity. In other words, gender should be understood as an on-going, embodied process of cultural interpretation. This realization opens up different possibilities for gender identity.

Other feminist references that framed the Spanish feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s included The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan (Friedan, 1963), Sexual Politics by Kate Millett (Millett, 1970), The Dialect of Sex by Shulamith Firestone (1971), The Main Enemy by Christine Delphy (Delphy, Barker and Ap Roberts, 1977), and Let’s Spit on Hegel by Carla Lonzi (1977). Moreover, under Franco’s regime there had been some Spanish feminist publications, such as La Dona a Catalunya (Woman in Catalonia) in 1966 and El Feminisme a Catalunya (Feminism in Catalonia) in 1973, both by Maria Aurèlia Capmany (1966, 1973).

During the years of the democratic transition, the Spanish feminist movement reconsidered social demands such as education and sexism, the abolition of all discriminatory laws, legalising contraception, the body, prostitutes’ rights or the eradication of prostitution, and an amnesty for all women in prison for gender-related crimes such as adultery, abortion, the use of contraception, prostitution and homosexuality (Nash, 2008). With the emergence of the nascent feminist movement during the final years of the dictatorship, women appeared on public platforms with their claims to equal rights. Women’s bodies were literally invading public spaces in defiance of previously held notions of female bodies and domesticity. They gathered in the streets in groups and collectives to raise awareness of their gender concerns.

By questioning the status quo of women, the Spanish feminist movement enabled the entrance of dissident actions as female bodies moved from the domestic to the public sphere. From domestic work to occupying the streets, women appeared on
public platforms with their claims to equal rights, in defiance of previously held notions of female bodies and domesticity. After living under a repressive fascist regime, these dissident female bodies finally became visible, claiming a new place for women in democratic society. These tactical forms of insistent visibility in public spaces encouraged other women to join and/or create feminist-informed collectives around themes of common interest, such as dance. From Heura to her solo career, Argüelles has displayed the female body in public spheres, demanding equal rights in society. Although Argüelles did not belong to an organized feminist movement, *Rings without Fingers* tackles issues of interest to feminism such as marriage laws and women’s independence from the domestic sector. Argüelles’ pieces are inscribed within the feminist demands during the Spanish Transition.

Dealing with female equality matters in her pieces, although Argüelles tackles at the same time those silent memories of the past dictatorial regime. As the memories of the dictatorship were silenced in order to have a peaceful democratic transition, when Arguelles dances about the situation of women during the dictatorship she helps to agitate those silent memories that haunted democratic society. In this way, her dances may help to listen to the ghosts of the past.

**The Bride, Her Father, The Groom and The Hat**

A man wearing a grey suit enters from stage left, holding an extremely large top hat. He enters in a high leap, a triumphal entrance as a solo male ballet dancer. He stays still, moving his hands nervously with rapid indirect movements of the fingers. The dancer stays with the hat, sitting on it as though it were a stool, adopting different positions with his legs crossed moving his body from side to side. He also stands over the hat: balancing, bending one leg and arching over it. Lifting himself from the hat, he sighs and falls back. It appears that the hat allows him to try these new positions, his leg swinging, lifting and falling. This wedding mimicry has introduces an element, the hat, which stands out because of its awkwardness. This is a white hat which is too big to be worn on the head and it actually functions as a place where the waiting groom can sit.

A female dancer and a second male dancer simultaneously enter the scene from
opposite sides; he wears a black suit and she a white dress. Both bodies look like they have been pushed on, as though they were reluctant to enter the stage. The man in the black suit, henceforth I will call him the father, looks offstage, walking indecisively towards centre stage. The woman, who I will call the bride, seems to be focussing inwardly. Both of them meet back-to-back centre stage. Twice, they meet and bounce off each other, and finally on the third time they turn to face each other and link arms. At the same time they lean outwards supporting each other’s weight, which could be interpreted as showing mutual trust. The bride and the father start a slow-paced walk towards upstage, with a harmonic and slow motion quality. While this is happening, the groom, still sitting on the hat, establishes a relationship with the bride and the father through his movement. Despite being on the opposite side of the stage, and although the bride and father have apparently not noticed him, the groom has noticed their entrance turning his head towards them, and thus replicates their movement from on top of the hat.

When the groom approaches the pair, the father gives the bride’s hand to him. At this moment, when her hand is being given to the groom, the bride does not look at him directly. While this trio is developing in a set of fluid movements of the bodies moving in the space, the bride’s focus seems to be always away from the men, looking outwards in a downwards-diagonal direction or maintaining an internal focus. This suggests that she is passive with regards to the decisions concerning the wedding ceremony. The father and the groom lift her into the air, they take her over their shoulders and she remains in a horizontal position with her arms relaxed, and her gaze focussing on the floor. All the time, she is being supported, passed from one man to the other, given by the hand to the groom. To finish, both the bride and the groom hang from the hands of the father, who spins around lifting both dancers from the floor. Commenting on this scene, Argüelles recalls:

> Despite the fact that now traditional gender values may sound a bit old and archaic, actually at that time they were very much present. My mother and later my sister married at twenty years old and my other sister at nineteen. For example, she has never lived alone. It is a little bit like she was passing from my father to the husband […] This is why I performed her as a package passing from one man to the other.
In 1964, when Argüelles’ sister married, Spain was still under a dictatorship which promoted traditional gender roles that relegated women to the domestic sphere, encouraging women not to have professional aspirations, so they could fulfil their social aspirations by growing up next to their fathers and later on their husbands. In the aftermath of Franco’s death in 1975, Spain was shaping its new democratic regime. Over a period of thirty six years the Francoist regime had created a highly homogeneous society, imposing rigorous conditions for women who were organized around a model of rigid contrasting gender roles: ‘worker/housewife’, ‘production/reproduction’, ‘public/private’. Housework was practically mandatory for women, who were seen solely as mothers and wives, excluding them from the public sphere (Gil, 2011). Class differences worsened the situation for many women. In addition to working at home, some women still had to labour in factories or on the farmland. Only some privileged women could study, but all of them were economically dependent on their husbands. For example, they legally required his permission to withdraw money from bank accounts. However, during the last years of the dictatorship, the regime had loosened the strict traditional sexual division of labour. Argüelles summarizes the incipient openness of the regime with her sentence: ‘then one did not need to get married to leave the family home’ (Argüelles in Appendix C).

In *Rings without Fingers*, the groom takes the hat, which was resting on the floor, and puts it over the head of the bride. As the hat is too big, it rests on her shoulders, hiding her head and face. She is blinded by the hat. However, this does not stop her movements from become more expansive. The bride moves from side to side in a *pas de valse*. Turning and leaping, she now takes off the hat and holds it in her hand. She smiles and seems to take control of her own body, by moving independently, jumping and falling without the assistance of any of the other male dancers. While, the father and the groom start a duet facing each other, they alternate punching the air and half turns in a simulation of martial arts combat. The bride runs in front of this choreographed fight and lifts herself with the hat in her right hand, when the groom takes it and leaps. His leaps suggest a feeling of victory on the various occasions he performs them during the piece. The hat seems to facilitate a state of euphoria, exemplified by the three characters leaping and
spreading their arms when in possession of it. The hat does not apply its exhilarating effect differently in each character, but instead seems to have a uniform effect on the three dancers. However, each dancer does perform the leaps and jumps in their own distinctive physical manner.

The white top hat enters the piece in the groom’s hand, and stays in it while it is being moved around or resting on the floor. The hat is too big for a real head; therefore it does not serve the purpose of an ordinary hat and when positioned over the head it falls down to the shoulders, blindfolding the wearer. However the dancers are not scared of it; on the contrary, they make bigger movements through the space and seem to dance without restrictions when in possession of it. They jump and leap in a sort of ecstatic liberation. When the hat is placed on the bride, it seems to allow her to figure out another way of moving. She smiles and spreads her arms and legs; she moves around the space without needing the presence of the other dancers. The hat allows her to move differently than at the beginning of the piece, when she was constantly held, lifted and carried by one or the other male dancers. By analogy with the contemporary democratic times, which gave Spanish citizens freedom of speech and act, the hat seems to afford agency in style of movement, an option to dance more expansively when possessing it.

The stage is with just the three dancers and one prop: the hat. These minimalist elements bring the bodies and what they are doing into even greater focus.

As a reference to early modern dance, Les Noces (The Wedding), which focuses on the ritual of a wedding in the Russian countryside, inevitably shares some common elements with Rings without Fingers. Premiered at the Theatre de la Gaite-Lyrique in June 1923, by choreographer Bronislava Nijinska under the production of the Ballets Russes, Les Noces choreographs a peasant wedding in post-revolutionary Russia. The dance scholar Sally Banes in her analysis of the piece (Banes, 1998) emphasizes the effect of the sociopolitical transformations of post-revolutionary Russia on the representation of women in the piece. Les Noces, writes Banes, ‘almost seems like an agit-prop theatre piece’ (1998, p.110) created to educate peasant women, who were typically more sceptical of the Bolshevik revolutionary programme, about ‘the social injustices they had long endured,
symbolised by the traditional wedding (although, unlike a typical agit-prop piece, the ballet does not offer a solution to the problem)’ (Banes, 1998, p.110). Representing the struggle of peasant women to exercise agency over their future, the piece, though, does not bring a solution to the problem. Yet, the piece served a reminder function, reminding contemporary audiences of the sexual oppression of pre-revolutionary peasant women and, simultaneously in 1923, demonstrating the persistence of those repressive forms of control of women in contemporary Russia. Even though women are portrayed submitting passively to their fate, Banes sees in this piece the appearance of feminism in ballet (Banes, 1998, pp.118-120). Fifty-seven years later, in Barcelona, Argüelles staged her representation of marriage, recalling in democratic times the status of women during the dictatorship. In a smaller scale production, Rings without Fingers, with just three dancers also deals with the oppression of women in patriarchal structures, in which marriage is understood as an exchange of male authority from the father to the husband. Les Noces was never performed in Spain, and because of the country’s international isolation during the dictatorship, Argüelles did not know about Les Noces when she choreographed Rings without Fingers. She only discovered the parallelisms of her piece with Les Noces when she presented her piece at the Festival of Cologne, Germany. Between the premiere of the piece in Barcelona and its presentation in Cologne, Argüelles changed the ending to emphasize the active participation of the bride in choosing her own fate by leaving the wedding scene and choosing a future of singleness.

Within this parallelism with Les Noces, Rings Without Fingers functions not only as a critique of the status quo of women in Franco’s time, but also as a continued critique of the patriarchal behaviour of Spain after the transition in particular, and the continued patriarchal attitudes of Western society in general. During the interview (Appendix C) Argüelles rationalizes the aims and objectives of the piece. She details her father’s ambivalence regarding his daughter’s wedding. This is performed in the piece with Argüelles as a dancer whispering in the father’s ear just before abandoning the wedding set. Arguelles also comments on the fact that under strict catholic morals women were meant to marry as virgins; she seems to think they should become sexually experienced before marrying. Within this
argument, initially, Argüelles presents the feminine character in the piece as docile and with hardly any initiative in the movements she makes; she is mainly carried away by one or both of the male characters. However, through the development of the piece the female character begins to acknowledge her own agency, either dancing and leaping with the hat at the same skilful level as the male dancers, or taking control of her own movements by not leaning on the other bodies. The final scene confirms the empowering of the female character as she actively takes the decision to leave the wedding ceremony and not to marry the designed groom. It seems that this ending reflects Argüelles’ negative opinions on marriage (Appendix C) and the infinite possibilities of female agency.

Two Endings, One Aunt

When Rings without Fingers was presented at the Second Mostra de Dansa Independent in 1980, Argüelles received some comments from members of the audience about the confusion in the final scene. In this initial version of the piece, the bride and the father left while the groom faced the audience on stage. Argüelles’ intention by leaving an open ending was not well received by many of the audience members, as Argüelles explains in an interview with Dansa 79 (Entrevista a Avelina Argüelles, 1980). She then decided to make a choice, and change the ending for a new one in which the bride would leave the wedding scene alone, while a song by song writer Joan Manel Serrat sounds, describing the lonely life of a single aunt. With this new ending, the piece was presented at the choreographic festival of Cologne, Germany, winning the second prize, the first place being declared void. In Germany the piece was received with interest. A member of the jury, the choreographer Susan Linke, personally congratulated Argüelles, for creating a social discourse around the options open to women, other than marriage. Rings without Fingers remained in the repertoire of Argüelles’ dance company and was choreographed again in Spain, where it was received with more enthusiasm. With this piece, Argüelles made a name for herself on the dance scene for creating pieces in defiance of the social customs in Spain.

At the front right side of the stage, the hat stands on the floor with the groom seated on it. The bride and the father link their arms and advance straight forwards in slow motion. In a reiteration of the opening scene, this mimicry of the walk to
the altar in a wedding seems to close the piece. With the help of his hands on the floor, the groom spins himself around while sitting on the hat, while the bride and the father continue walking towards the front. The bride turns her head and looks at the groom, still seated on the hat, who responds with a head turn towards the bride as well. He then stands on the floor and positions a bent leg over the hat while bending his right arm, almost exactly echoing the position of the father’s left arm which is interlaced with the bride’s arm. The bride lets her shoulders drop slightly back, her body seems to show a reluctance to advance, and she turns her face towards the father whispering in his ear. For twenty seconds all the characters remain frozen in their positions, the father and the groom waiting, and the bride on her feet whispering to the father. With her body again facing the audience, the bride lifts her chin slightly, in a position of pride or strength. Slowly, the bride walks backwards as the father and the groom remain still in their positions with their arms bent waiting to link with the bride’s. The bride moves away in slow steps without hesitation her feet bend and articulate their entrance on the floor. She stares at the audience, maintaining her gaze until the end, her body faces front, while her legs walk backwards retracing the path she just followed to the front with the father, while the song La Tieta (The Aunt) plays. While the bride leaves the wedding backwards, the song keeps playing until the stage is dark, singing about the solitary life of a single aunt. As the song says:

A gust of wind in the shutters will wake her up.

Her bed is so long and so wide, and the sheets are cold.

With her eyes half-closed she will seek another hand, finding none, like yesterday, and tomorrow.

Her loneliness is the faithful lover, who knows her body crease by crease, inch by inch.

Joan Manel Serrat, La Tieta.51

---

51 My translation from the original text: ‘La despertará el viento de un golpe en los postigos/ su cama es tan larga y tan ancha y las sábanas están frías/ con los ojos medio cerrados buscará otra mano, sin encontrar ninguna, como ayer, como mañana/ su soledad es el amante fiel que conoce su cuerpo pliegue a pliegue, palmo a palmo.’
In contrast to the sad lyrics of the song, which emphasize the solitude of the single aunt, and the lack of a partner in her life, Argüelles’ bride resets her body into an encouraging position; her eyes look towards the horizon and she smiles at it.

As the bride leaves the wedding scene, Argüelles creates new possibilities for women outside marriage. The bride’s decision opens up questions about women’s freedom to choose their marital status. During Franco’s regime, the Feminine Section indoctrinated women to fulfil their social expectations with marriage. Encouraged to marry, female bodies were relegated to the domestic sphere, both to help sustain the male partner and to reproduce by having children. In this sense, being single was regarded as a failure to contribute to the nation’s growth, and heterosexual marriage was established as a primary social organisation. The reinforcement of marriage as an institution is not exclusive to totalitarian regimes; from an anthropological perspective, Kathleen Gough considers marriage as a universal institution, performing similar functions in different societies (Gough, 1959). The Russian feminist Alexandra Kollontaĭ also advocated for a society free from institutions such as marriage and family (Kollontaĭ, 1920). Kollontaĭ, whose philosophy during the Russian revolution influenced Nijinska’s perspective on the condition of women, saw marriage and traditional families as legacies of the oppressive, property-based, egotistical social structures inherited from feudal eras and the bourgeois present. More recently, Michael Cobb (2012) has discussed the concept of the heterosexual couple as a totalitarian imposition in Western society. Challenging the victimisation of single people as culturally misplaced individuals, Cobb introduces an active and intentional component in the choice of being single, which can be as fulfilling and legitimate as any romantic arrangement. The narrative of Rings without Fingers critiques the idea of heteronormative marriage as the only option for women. In line with the transition of Spanish society to a new democratic era, Argüelles’ choreographic choices actively argue for singleness, in defiance of social norms in Spain.

Along with second wave feminists in Spain, this piece challenges traditional expectations of gender, which the dictatorial regime had endorsed. Introducing a woman who decides her own fate outside the institution of marriage, I believe this piece opened up for discussion the status of women during Franco’s regime and
the early years of democracy. Argüelles’ choreography invites the audience to consider the possibility of a new way to be a woman outside of the marriage plot. As de Certeau suggested, the citizen may create, with his/her actions, networks of resistance within the hegemonic domains (De Certeau, 1988). A new woman on stage enables tactical resistance to patriarchal expectations of the female body. By using a wedding while a song tells of the loneliness, Argüelles suggests other values for women, ones that might previously have been considered as a negative element of a woman’s life, such as singleness. Ahead of social politics of that time, Argüelles suggests options for women at the forefront of the feminist vanguard.

Argüelles could not change the outcome of her sister’s fate, but she could decide a different ending outside of the marriage plot for her choreography. The question might arise of whether being single really was an option before democracy in Spain. How could an unmarried woman fit into the Spain of the 1960s? Whereas choreography then poses questions without necessarily answering them, dance creates a space for occupying the silence with dialogues about other possibilities of gender norms. *Rings without Fingers*, then, has created spaces to discuss silenced matters regarding Spain’s past, matters which, silenced and oppressed, haunted the democratic society of Spain.

III. Re-thinking Femininity through *Parallels*

Argüelles left the Heura collective after dancing *Rings without Fingers* in Germany. Afterwards, in her solo choreographic career, she found her own style based in dance-theatre methodologies, grounded in working with images and sketches to tell stories and create narrativity, as seen in *Rings without Fingers*. In the post-Heura period, she choreographed several pieces, such as *Zapatos (Shoes)* in 1981, *Ahora Me Toca Bailar con La Mas Fea (Now It Is My Turn to Dance with The Ugliest)* in 1990, and *No Trepitgeu La Gespa (Don’t Walk on The Grass)* in 1993.

In 1987, Argüelles created a new piece, which did not have a story to tell. *Parallels* is a fifteen-minute piece co-created and performed with Joaquim Sabaté, and premiered at the Ricard Moragues choreographic contest in Barcelona in
1987, where the piece won first place. Although the piece was very well received by audiences and critics, Argüelles mentioned in an interview how few times the piece was performed afterwards. The choreographic analysis of this piece is based on a viewing of the piece at the Festival del Teatre al carrer de Tarrega 1997 (Tarrega Street Theatre Festival), with the support of a recording shot at the Teatre Neu in 1987.

The French writer Marguerite Duras in La Maladie de la Mort (The Malady of Death, 1982) contemplates a man suffering from a devastating disease, which eventually kills him: the inability to love. The man hires a young girl for a few nights, hoping to find the capacity to love in her body. In his desperate attempt to survive, he will understand too late that love and life cannot be bought. Argüelles mentions Duras’s story as an inspiration for her piece (in a DVD interview that she provides from her personal archive, Muñoz 2004), in which she aimed to re-create the impossibility of loving, inspired by the enclosed dark spaces of the story. Argüelles drew on the problematization of love as the unity of two versus the individual for the creation of this piece. She also mentions the philosophy professor Siguart at University of Barcelona, for his inspirational phrase questioning love: ‘The lovers’ embrace is an action condemned in advance to failure, because its goal is to eliminate the limits of the body, which is impossible’ (Muñoz, 2004). With the aim of choreographing the impossibility of overcoming both the physical and emotional limits of the self, Argüelles created a piece which imagines the bodies as parallel lines that never meet. Indeed, the two bodies on stage dance between the empty spaces of a bunk bed’s parallel lines. The music, by Benjamin Davis is a deconstruction of a quartet by Beethoven and was added after the piece was finished, to avoid it synchronizing with the dance movements.

This piece is framed by the post-modernist aesthetics which were surrounding the performing Spanish dance scene. Post-modernism arrived in dance in the 1960s with the Judson Church Group in New York, and some influences of this movement arrived during the 1980s in Spain with guest teachers and following

---

52 My translation of the quote: ‘El abrazo de los amantes es una acción condenada de antemano al fracaso, porque su objetivo es eliminar los límites del cuerpo, lo cual es imposible.’
research trips to New York by Spanish dancers such as Àngels Margarit and Alexis Eupierre. This piece, at the beginning of Spanish post-modernism, creates a distance from the choreographer’s previous choreographies. Almost ten years after *Rings without Fingers*, *Parallels* suggested a way to create dances with no narrativity, and with a movement language in accordance with post-modern times. The actions of the bodies are not of a specific gender; instead both the feminine and masculine bodies support each other and partner in equal conditions.

**Love and/or Politics**

A steel bunk bed with two empty bunks remains centre stage, illuminated by a spotlight. The rest of the stage is dark, hardly illuminated by the centre light. Coming from the back and passing by the two sides of the bunk bed, the two dancers arrive on scene. The woman and the man both wear blue costumes; Argüelles wears a coverall and the male dancer just blue trousers and a blue t-shirt. For a moment both of them are motionless on stage, looking out at the audience; their gaze stays in parallel; they do not turn their heads to look at each other. At the start of the music both bodies move in synchrony and at times in different tempos, creating sharp horizontal actions with the arms and legs, which seem to accompany the two bunks of the bed, in parallel positions with one dancer next to the other.

Walking slowly, the dancers approach each other on a diagonal line. When they seem to get close to one another, their steps speed up and their bodies juxtapose in a joint position, with their arms in parallel, pointing in opposite directions. Balancing movements on the right and then on the left, their feet and legs move and form positions (in parallel, in second position) while their torsos draw fluid shapes, contrasting with the stiffness of their arms, which are almost always parallel.

During her career, Argüelles specialised in the Limón Technique, becoming the Limón teacher at The Institute of Theatre. Although this piece has a marked post-modern aesthetic (with everyday costumes and a non-narrative attitude and structure), the elements such as fall and recovery, and the dynamics of moving highlight the Limón style of the movement vocabulary, which appeared
previously to post-modern dance.

The dancers seem to move according to certain internal rhythms independently of the music. The deconstructed Beethoven quartet plays from the beginning to the end of the piece as a sort of accompaniment, but it does not mark the rhythm of the dancers’ actions, which demonstrates the contrast of the fluidity of circles, falling and recoveries with the sharpness of straight arms and legs. The musical phrases work together with the movement phrases to highlight a general deconstruction in the piece. The melody of Beethoven’s quartet is hardly recognisable, considering the alteration of the musical phrases and the addition of other sounds. At the same time, the movement phrases seem to isolate specific movements of embracing and loving the other, and de-contextualize them by performing them with abstract movement phrases. Thus, the deconstruction of music goes alongside the deconstruction of love. The two bodies join on stage in different positions, marking a design point, but soon separate as if looking for a better position to re-join. This abrupt rhythm seems to mark a struggle in the unity of the bodies as the bodies cannot stay together long enough to let the audience see them and acknowledge their unity. The female and male bodies perform similarly in arrangements and roles which are not gender differentiated, nor are there any changes in their facial expression. Instead they have a neutral\(^3\), expression which is distinctive of post-modern dances. Contact between the two bodies, if there is any, seems to happen by chance. The bodies touch, carry and jump over each other, but their gaze does not seem to meet at any time, looking over each other’s shoulders in diagonal lines. Their arms, often straight and in parallel positions, mark the space where the body moves: the arms move in the diagonal if the dancer is advancing on the diagonal.

The bunk bed remains at the back of the stage, almost in the shadows between the spotlights. After five or six minutes dancing in front of the bunk bed, walking together side by side, the dancers enter the negative space of the bunks. Argüelles

\(^3\) The post modern neutral focus has been further analysed by Banes in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Banes, 2011). For a more extended definition of post-modernist features see Banes (2011), Novack (1990), and Burt (2006) in their extended studies of the Judson Church Movement.
sitting on the top bunk and Sabaté on the bottom one, they choreograph the space with their straight lines and angular shapes. From their distinct parallel positions, both dancers mimic each other’s movements. Their actions create symmetries like the reflected movement of a mirror. The dancers change the orientation of the bunk bed, from flat front to diagonal, and enter the parallel space again. Balancing with the weight of the structure, both bodies play with the elevated inclination of the bunks (see figure 13). It seems the dancers try to counterbalance their actions with each other, with the bunk bed in between, searching for the union of their bodies.

Only for a moment do the dancers’ bodies join: both of them keep their arms straight in parallel, not adjusting to the contours of the other dancer’s body, and so their torsos unite in an abrupt embrace. Sitting on the top bunk, they turn their torsos in semi circles, in what seems like a search for the position of the perfect embrace. After several attempts, in a dynamic turn of the torso the two bodies separate again. Their bodies have met for one moment, but they roll and touch each other and then pass over each other without any change in the quality of movement.

Figure 12 Paralels, Avelina Argüelles at Teatreneu, photographer, Josep Aznar, 1989. Museu de les Arts Escèniques, Institute of the Theatre Archive.

The bunk bed is placed vertically, creating a new space for the dancers to transform. They walk in circles, turning around the flat steel in a symmetry that
places one in front of the other, separated by the flat steel, seeing each other through the empty spaces of the bed. In this space, which resembles a labyrinth, the two bodies look for each other without success. Entangled in the bed, the dancers pass through one way and the other, but they do not meet. Placing the bed horizontally again, Argüelles and Sabaté seat each other on one bunk. Their bodies are parallel to each other, remaining still in this horizontal position until the lights go off at the same moment as the music.

Performing parallelisms with their straight arms and legs, the dancers move in circles to find each other, but they never seem to find a way to stay together. As the dancers separate from each union, Argüelles choreographs a piece which performs the problem of being together.

The French philosopher Alain Badiou writes about love as an encounter of two: ‘Love involves a separation or disjuncture based in the simple difference between two people and their infinite subjectivities’ (Badiou, 2012, p.27). From the initial stages, then, love contains an element that separates and differentiates. These differences, Badiou notes, may create a risk of deviation when the individuals encounter each other, yet this encounter of two subjectivities is what creates love. Badiou’s theory of love creates a paradox between the encounter, the union and the two subjectivities. This controversy seems to be in line with the impossible embrace of Siguart’s lovers, from which Argüelles took her inspiration for the piece. Parallels perhaps attempts to emphasise the impossibility of uniting two people. The dry and austere actions of the dancers, creating asymmetries - their faces never meeting - and the parallels of their arms and torsos, all suggest that this thing called ‘love’ may not end as a union. Argüelles choreographs love alongside the impossible embrace of Siguart, as two lines/subjects that will not merge. In this encounter, two bodies search for a way to fit together in a network of steel springs, but the two bodies remain on parallel lines, lines which by nature never find each other. It is difficult to assert whether the ending of the piece, with two perfectly aligned parallel bodies, brings to an end the possibilities of the encounter, or, on the contrary, it encourages future ways of understanding to be found, or maybe both.
Love and politics meet in *Parallels* as the encounter of two standardised bodies. Love, or its impossibility, is the search of two bodies that do not find each other, yet it is an encounter of two equal bodies, two individuals in the same conditions. Argüelles’s dance problematizes the encounter of two bodies in democratic Spain, as an even exchange, an encounter of equal and opposite subjectivities. Two equal individuals form the couple in this piece. On the one hand, one can observe a slight difference in costumes, as the man wears trousers and a t-shirt and has bare arms, while the woman wears an overall with long sleeves; on the other hand, both men and women perform a similar vocabulary of movement, dancing in symmetries and asymmetries. There are no different movements depending on sex or gender, and so contemporary dance enables an engagement with movement regardless of gender norms. In overcoming the physical differences of men’s and women’s bodies with standardized costumes and movements, Argüelles creates equality for both subjectivities.

Whereas the text of Duras, which served as an inspiration for Argüelles’ piece, describes a difficult relationship between a man and a woman, in which there are dis-encounters and rejected intimacies (while the woman in the text addresses the man as *tu*, the French intimate way, the man cannot relate to his female partner and most of the time refers to her as she), Argüelles describes in the interview that her main inspiration in the text was the claustrophobic atmosphere that the text exposed, and not exactly the differences or the issues of gender equality that the relationship highlights. In synchrony with feminist discourses of the democratic Spain, this choreography stages two bodies on stage that perform similar qualities and movements. At the time that Spain was creating a new democratic system, Argüelles crafted a piece that considers the equality of its subjects, as the equal rights that Spanish citizens acquired with the democratic constitution. Like the text of Duras, *Parallels* shows encounters of two subjects, dis-encounters and difficulties in embracing or finding intimacy. The difficulty of finding a consensus in the relationship is not in contradiction with the aim of equality between the two subjects that this reading proposes. In the same way that Laclau and Mouffe (2001) propose the concept of radical democracy that encourages equality together with difference, Argüelles proposes the different bodies on stage, which,
respecting their differences, claim equality in their relationship.

The emergent Spanish feminist movement of the 1980s thought that the transition to democracy would bring a great change in Spanish society’s gender inequalities. However, as the PSOE won votes in the elections of 1979, its victory did not translate into an increased proportion of women in institutions, nor did it lead to an acknowledgement of feminist claims. Subsequently, this realisation would bring a generalised, social disappointment in place of the more revolutionary dreams of a new, gender-equal society (Gil, 2011). As parity was not yet achieved, the feminist movement re-formulated social claims of gender equality in education and the legal system. As well as other feminists such as Lidia Falcón (Falcón, 2014), Capmany notes the need during democratic times to continue the fight against gender discriminations:

Today, at a time when women are very slowly freed from so many inhibitions and alienated pressures, she precisely finds that she has to undertake the fight against the attempt to reduce her to femininity, an attempt well-orchestrated by dogmas and laws, customs and mass media in the service of these dogmas, these laws, these customs. Increasingly, women must get rid of the caricature of themselves that the mass media offers.

(Capmany, 1978)54

Capmany’s words illustrate the ongoing manipulation of female images in the recently acquired democratic Spain. While democracy established common freedoms, and introduced basic civil rights in Spanish society, the status of women and the concerns about equality remained on a secondary level in a male dominated government. With her approach to love as the encounter of two equal bodies, Argüelles’ female body echoes feminist concerns of gender equality during the transition to democracy in Spain.

From Rings without Fingers to Parallels, Argüelles’ female body evolved from an

54 My translation of the text: ‘Avui, en el moment en què les dones s’alliberen, encara que molt lentament, de tantes inhibicions i de tantes presions alienes, es troba precisament que ha d’emprendre la lluita contra l’intent de reduir-la a feminitat; un intent tan ben orquestrat pels dogmes i les lleis, els costums i els mitjans de comunicació de masses al servei d’aquestos dogmes, d’aquestes lleis, d’aquestes costums. Cada vegada més, la dona haurà d’alliberar-se de la caricatura d’ella mateixa que li ofereixen els mitjans de comunicació de masses.’
entity trapped in a matrimonial system to a free personality in a gender-neutral system. While in *Rings*, the woman on stage was passed like a property from the father’s authority to the groom’s, in *Parallels*, womanhood is performed precisely and accurately from a ‘neutral’ angle, which shows a mature woman, sharing an encounter with her partner with equal possibilities. In the expressionist dance-theatre actions of the first piece, Argüelles presents gestures that bring emotions with the movement. In *Parallels*, however, the mode of representation relies on the actions of the body to approach representations of encounters and subjectivities.

***

The young woman who decided on a different future than marriage in the early 1980s becomes, in *Parallels*, a women with equal rights who participates in the creation of an encounter in democratic times. Argüelles seems to be engaged in breaking with long-held traditional beliefs about love and marriage. Through her selection of narrative devices and choreographic choices, the choreographer defines, constructs and later deconstructs the traditional second class position of women. I believe that by performing different female subjectivities Argüelles offers new considerations of these cultural themes which are traditionally Spanish but also universal. In so doing, she breaks with this secondary relegated position of women, and performs the female body in terms which are different than those of the Francoist female body, rooted in traditional concepts of folk dances. Argüelles’ female body appears as an equal individual in love, marriage and society. With the slogan recovered from the feminist fights of the 1960s, ‘the personal is political’ (Gil, 2011, p.53), Spanish women fought during the 1980s for the end of a dichotomy that had relegated them to the domestic sphere in Spain’s recent history. Echoing this slogan, Argüelles transfers her personal, micro-political decisions to the political arena when performing on stage. In so doing, the choreographer opens dance performances up for discussions about new possibilities on gender and politics. At the same time, while tackling the conditions of young women during the dictatorship, Argüelles articulates these long-silenced values and offers ways of performing the silence that is perpetuated over gender inequalities. Her actions draw a path for contesting the collective
amnesia established during the Transition, and with this, her actions relate to the haunted memories of Spain.

As Cynthia Novack (Novack, 1990) notes, dance reflects the cultural values of society, and simultaneously produces new values. Such is the case of Argüelles’ repertoire, where she re-creates Francoist female models to deconstruct them and create new female representations. With these pieces Argüelles created a dialogue with the past, with the memories of women during the dictatorship, in the times of democracy when those memories were silenced.
Chapter 6. Reviving Femininity: The Explosive Body of Picó

‘My obsession is the absolute control of the body’ claimed Sol Picó in the Argentinian magazine Pagina|12 in 2003 (Friera, 2003). Indeed, from the beginning of her dance career in 1988, in the theatre company La Cassola (The Casserole) in Alcoi, Spain, to her extensive choreographic pieces - from Pevequi (1993) to Memories d’una Puça (Memories of a Flea) (2014) - Sol Picó has developed singular performances expressing female reality with her body. In control of her highly trained body, this small, brawny, blond woman performed female representations which have agitated, disrupted and perhaps upset audiences around the world.

This chapter is divided into three sections which aim to give a detailed approach to the female values appearing in Sol Picó’s choreographies. Section one, ‘Collective Choreographies’, follows Sol Picó’s introduction to the choreographic scene with La Caldera (The Boiler), the second most important choreographic collective in the history of contemporary dance in Catalonia, in which Picó created her first large scale choreography. Section II analyses the first long format choreography by Sol Picó, Bésame el Cactus (Kiss my Cactus), which she performed in 2001. Section III investigates a piece that commemorated the choreographer’s fortieth birthday in 2009: El Llac de Les Mosques (The Lake of Flies). Sections II and III both analyse the solo work of Picó, relating to concepts of power, spectatorship and gender performance. However, nine years separate these choreographies in which Picó’s versions of the feminine evolved considerably. Therefore, I have chosen these two pieces to establish the ways in which Picó performs the conflicts inherited from recent Spanish history by investigating the parallelism of the solo performing body.

I. Collective Spaces, La Caldera

Picó was born in 1967 in Alcoi, Valencia, Spain. Valencia is one of Spain’s Catalan-speaking regions (or Autonomous Communities), together with Catalonia

---

55 My translation of the text: ‘Mi obsessión es el control absoluto del cuerpo.’
and the Balearic Islands. Picó studied dance at the Alcoi conservatory and trained in the two main dance disciplines: ballet and Spanish dance, including flamenco. Seeking an education in contemporary dance, in 1985, she arrived in Barcelona and began her professional career as a dancer and performer, mainly in street theatre groups, such as Los Rinos, La Fura dels Baus and Rayo Malayo. Her previous experience with groups working in street theatre, performance and gestural theatre, influenced her choreographic works and pushed the frontiers of dance, street performance, theatre and live music.

Picó founded her dance company in 1993 and one year later joined the collective dance company La Caldera. This association offered Picó a structure within which she could create through a process of artistic collaboration as well as the chance to create her first full-length performance piece *Kiss my Cactus*.

La Caldera emerged as a collective project founded by Catalan dancers and choreographers in response to the lack of dance spaces in Barcelona and Spain. In 1995 Álvaro de la Peña, who had previously been a member of Heura, and was the founder and current artistic director of a new dance company called Iliacan, found an old belt factory for rent in the Barcelona neighbourhood of Gràcia. De la Peña contacted several choreographers and dance companies with the intention of creating a choreographic association which would be located in that space. La Caldera was born when eleven choreographers with their nine companies joined de la Peña in the creation of a non-profit choreographic collective. With a cooperative spirit, this association created a space for creative exchange among artists who were not only of different ages, but who also had differing experiences and methodologies, prioritising the element of artistic collaboration as essential to the project. De la Peña (Iliacan), Montse Colomé, Inés Boza and Carles Mallol (Senza Tempo), Alexis Euppierre (Lapsus), Lipi Hernández (Las Malqueridas), Toni Mira and Claudia Moreso (Nats Nus Dansa), Maria Rovira (Transit), Carles Salas (Bûbulus), and Sol Picó were the eleven founder members.

Heura (1979-83) was the first choreographic collective in Spain, with each of its members having equal status in the group. After Heura, other associations were born with a collective aim, among them La Fàbrica (The Factory) (1981-92) as a
primarily pedagogic project, bringing foreign, avant-garde dance teachers to Spain. It also had a performance space for pieces resulting from their workshops. In 1992, when La Fabrica closed, a parallel institution, La Porta (The Door), emerged with the aim of creating a network for the performance of alternative dance pieces. These two earlier associations were based around pedagogy and the performance circuit respectively, but they did not function as collectives. La Caldera, in 1995, would be the second collective working on choreographic productions in Barcelona.

In a similar way to Heura, the La Caldera project was embedded in a new economic system. In 1983, a Time Magazine article, ‘The New Economy’ (Alexander, 1983) described the transition from an industry-manufacturing based to a technology based economy; this shift accelerated with advances in telecommunications and especially the Internet. After an economic slowdown in 1972, in 1995 U.S. economic growth accelerated driven by faster productivity. This period, characterised by high economic growth, low inflation and a high employment rate, was also marked by excessively optimistic economic forecasts, which led to overly optimistic business plans, and their failure. In this regard, Richard Sennett (2006) describes the transformations that have taken place in postmodern capitalism as corporations have become decentralised and unstable: modern corporations provide no long-term stability, social benefits or interpersonal trust. This new capitalist structure contrasts with the previous social and economical context in which individuals knew their place in the corporate structures and could plan their future. Spain, as with most European countries, also experienced the economic euphoria of the 1990s.

Similarly, both artistic collectives were created during times of change: Heura during the transition from dictatorship to democracy, and La Caldera during the shift from a manufacturing economy to an economy based around new technologies. Working collectively allowed the members to collaborate in overcoming the uncertain economic times. Creating collectively resulted in

---

56 For more information on the roots of this change in the economical system see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s books Empire (2009) and Multitude 2005
beneficial sharing of the costs of company maintenance, such as rehearsal space and performance production. Both collectives initiated during the democratic period, were born out of scarcity: Heura needed a collective structure to overcome the lack of dance infrastructure in order to create dance performances and tour with them; La Caldera, on the other hand, came together at a time when governmental structures had been approved to support dance, yet it was a specific lack of space that initiated this association.

However, unlike Heura, La Caldera aimed to share a space rather than a choreographic concept or to create collectively. Although there were some artistic exchanges and shared choreographies, the main objective of La Caldera was to provide a shared space for rehearsal and performance, which would have been too big and too expensive for one company alone. As Florian Schneider comments in his study of new artistic collaborations in the 1990s, working together emerged as a random mode of collective learning processes (Schneider, 2007). La Caldera was a cooperative of nine dance companies creating and touring independently that shared a common rehearsal space. Working together in La Caldera was far more than acting together, as it extended towards a network of interconnected styles and practices among the different dance companies.

This second instance of collaboration has become one of the leading tenets of an emerging political sensibility, raising different issues in a different historical context. Within the ground of cultural production, as mentioned in Chapter 5, collaboration is nowadays widely used to describe new forms of labour relations: the absence of a leader or director, equality in decision-making, and the replacement of individual decisions by the common ‘we’. Collaboration demands overcoming scarcity and inequality and struggling for the freedom to produce. Despite the fact that collaboration had major presence in the artistic production of the 1990s and the following historical period, there is very little academic research on this phenomenon (Laermans, 2012). As seen in Heura, the initial concept of the egalitarian regime of production and decision-making was problematic when considering different processes of creation. La Caldera, as an artistic production project, went along with the cooperative system of creation, discussion and decision making, yet sustained the figure of one person initiating and coaching the
project. As a nine-company cooperative, the artistic exchanges were fluid and yet every project was ultimately under the direction of the artistic director’s company; there was no discussion of individual versus collective copyright. In this sense, the problems that Heura experienced were not reproduced in the new collective some twenty years later.

La Caldera supported and developed young choreographers, as they became recognised artists on the Spanish dance scene. The building of the institution consisted of four floors with four rooms in total as rehearsal space for the nine companies. At first, born as a shared space among new contemporary dance creators, the collective’s main activities were company rehearsals, and company classes. With a stable place for rehearsals, the original members of the collective saw their projects grow, and became established artists themselves. In 1998, La Caldera initiated a programme of international workshops and seminars for professional dancers, which even today is virtually the only contact between Spain and the most radical choreographic and pedagogic concepts. The techniques invited by La Caldera included:

Jennifer Lacey, Contact Improvisation (1998); Monica Valenciano; Julyen Hamilton, Contact Improvisation; David Zambrano, Flying Low (1999); Andres Corchero, Butoh Dance; Alexis Eupierre, Release Technique; Cathie Caraker, Body Mind Centering; Jordi Cortes, Physical Theatre; Ana Buitrago, Improvisation; Bob Madvig, Contact Improvisation (2000).

With this new programme of workshops, La Caldera offered new concepts of dance style and creativity to a community of professional dancers. Searching for dance forms not taught in public institutions (such as the Institute of the Theatre in Barcelona), these guest dance teachers offered different approaches to dance, in line with a somatic concept of the dancer. Overcoming difficulties of the techniques of the body, the philosophy of La Caldera prioritised the distinctiveness of each dancer, with a personal movement technique orientated towards a holistic harmony between mind and body. These were the choreographic bases for the eleven choreographers when their projects began. Sol Picó, for example, developed a personal movement style very characteristic of her tiny and muscular body (for example, staccato, short and intense movements,
virtuoso ballet figures such as splits, pirouettes and ronde-jambes among others). With these workshops, not only the members of the association, but also other professional dancers could work on emphasising and developing their own particular skills to create personal statements with their bodies.

The centre evolved over time and developed a system of supporting creativity, not just for its members but also for outside artists who could apply for a limited residency. In response to its precariousness, La Caldera was effective in facilitating a successful professional career for its members. However, when they achieved a stable position on the performance scene, some of its members such as Sol Picó, Maria Rovira and Lipi Hernández decided to leave the collective for a solo career. During the collective’s most recent period, in 2013-14, La Caldera underwent structural changes that extending its membership base, and which would result in a total of twenty-two new projects based in the building. Since its origins in 1995, La Caldera has become a national and international centre of reference for artistic creation. In 2006, the Catalan government recognised La Caldera’s work in training alternative dancers, bodies and choreographies and awarded the National Dance Prize to the association for its work in supporting dance creation in Catalonia.

Sol Picó has not said in any interview that there were tensions that caused her to leave La Caldera. Having participated in this collective movement, Picó saw her company growing and it needed a whole creative structure for itself. In contrast to the dissolution of Heura, Picó left La Caldera with other career interests in mind, such as establishing her own company independently from collective structures. In 2003, her dance company won a year’s residency at the National Theatre of Barcelona to produce a new piece. After that, Picó continued expanding her company and she needed a bigger space to store her equipment as well as full-time availability for rehearsals. As La Caldera could not guarantee this, she decided to establish herself independently. La Caldera still exists today (2014).

II. Constructing Femininity in Kiss my Cactus

In 2001, Sol Picó presented Kiss my Cactus, or as she prefers to call it when she translates it into English ‘Kiss me the Cactus’ (Kourlas, 2007), an embodied piece
of research into her own conceptions of fear and risk. ‘For me, the cactus is a symbol of risk,’ the choreographer said in an interview (Friera, 2003). Premiered in 2000 as a work in progress at the showing room of La Caldera, the piece was first performed to a small audience of choreographers and dancers. A year later, the National Theatre of Catalonia commissioned the final version of the choreography. This piece was very well received by Spanish and international audiences, which established Picó as a renowned choreographer and the piece became the most award-winning contemporary dance choreography in Spain.57 In *La Vanguardia*, one of the main Spanish newspapers, one critic wrote:

> With Kiss my Cactus, this creative alphabet, has been ordered into a sentence, a homogenous, original, attractive and surprising spectacle. [...] The risk factor appears again and again in each of the wonderfully coherent scenes, and with dramatic prompts. Sol Picó’s dance is endowed with powerful energy, with a physicality which contrasts with the fragility of her persona, but to this she adds a capacity of expression clearly visible on her face as she projects her humour in a constant game with the audience as she tries to catch them out.

(Fontdevila, 2001, p.67)\(^58\)

Similar reviews accompanying the premier of the piece appeared in other newspapers. In Spain the reviews focused on the energetic movements and risky physical actions of the dancer and choreographer but did not mention any gender element or other political identities that Sol Picó articulated with her female body. Again the reviews maintain silence about any unveiling of the past and, in so doing, they emphasize the silence and the amnesia that dominated the construction of democracy in the Transition of Spain. In the following movement analysis, I

---

57 The piece received the 2002 Max Performing Arts Award for Best Choreography and Best Female Performer, and the 2003 Max Performing Arts Award for the Best Dance Performance. The Max Awards are the most important Performance awards in Spain.

58 My translation from the text: 'Bien puede decirse que con “Bésame el cactus” ese abecedario creativo se ha ordenado para conjugar una frase, un espectáculo homogéneo, original, atractivo y sorprendente. [...] El factor riesgo aparecerá una y otra vez en cada uno de los fragmentos, magníficamente cohesionados. El baile de Sol Picó se nutre de una poderosa energía, de una rotundidad física que contrasta con la fragilidad de su persona, pero a ello se añade una capacidad expresiva claramente visible en su rostro que proyecta su humor, su juego sobre los espectadores para atraparles una y otra vez'
focus on how Picó’s body writes about fear, risk and gender identities in relation to the forgotten memories of the previous regime.

For a Spanish dancer to talk, laugh and show herself as a genuine individual on stage amazed both audiences and critics. In the piece, Picó talks, sings and asks questions directly to the audience. Breaking the fourth wall with her questions and gestures, she invites the audience to abandon their comfortable, dark anonymity and participate actively in the performance work. Crossing the fourth wall has been researched in performance studies for its ability to create self-awareness in the audience. Richard Schechner (2003) mentions the different relationships of dramatists such as Brecht or Stanislavsky with the fourth wall. While Stanislavski advocates a staging that immerses the audience in the particular reality of the text, Brecht directs the attention of the audience to the layers between the theatre and the script, alienating the audience from the cathartic process and creating at the same time a reflection on the plot. Directing the audience to look at the seams of the performance is a way in which to prevent, as Schechner (2003) suggests, the audience from being absorbed by the plot of the theatrical event, and even to invite the audience to pay attention to the piece’s limitations as it is a fake representation of reality. Constantly breaking the fourth wall and addressing the audience towards the seam of the performance, Picó directs the audience to reflect further on what is being presented on-stage and how the audience relates to it.

The press reviews in Spain, where the piece toured first, were very positive (Casas, 2001; Massip, 2004). Nevertheless, when performed in New York in 2006, Kiss my Cactus did not have an enthusiastic reception. Gia Kourlas in The New York Times articulated her appreciation and, at the same time, disappointment with the piece:

But the tone of ‘Bésame’, set to an invigorating cinematic soundtrack by Jordi Riera, was excessively cute, right up to the ending, in which actual tomatoes crashed from the ceiling onto the stage. Ms. Picó might have been confronting her fears, but the danger wasn’t prickly enough to warrant a gasp.

(Kourlas, 2007)
In a context where Spanish contemporary dance had been left behind after many years of dictatorship, any critique that emphasized the lack of enthusiasm for its reception affected the international profile of the piece. However, as André Lepecki mentions in his article ‘Caught in a time trap’ (1999), by the late 1990s New York’s dance scene had failed to fulfil its promises of renovation and, by 2007 Europe and North America were separated in terms of the ways in which dance making and performing was done. It is then logical that a New York critic at that time did not engage with that piece. However, I will not debate the reception or quality of the piece here, but instead will focus on how the performance articulated the silence around the unveiling of the past.

*Kiss my Cactus* is a fifty-five minute long dance theatre performance. This is a piece for one dancer, Sol Picó, one actor, Joan Manrique, and various props, including a large cardboard cactus, a mirror and a chess table. In this piece, Picó collaborated with several artists on the performance production, some of them later becoming regular collaborators. The scenography was by Lali Canosa; the costumes by Valeria Civil, the music by Jordi Riera and Eva Brown, the dramaturgy by Txiki Berraondo, and the lighting design by Sylvia Kutchinow and Gina Cubeles.

This analysis of the choreography is based on watching the piece as a member of the audience in La Caldera in 2000, with the support of the DVD of the performance issued by the Teatr e Nacional (National Theatre of Catalonia, TNC), in 2001, as well as several interviews in person, and by telephone and email with the choreographer between 2007 and 2012.

**Greeting The Audience**

Sol Picó enters the stage from the back of the auditorium, walking slowly, step by step, and indecisively along curved routes towards the audience. She wears armour and has a bag hanging from her left arm. After wandering around, she extracts tomatoes from her bag, one after the other, which she gives to each member of the audience. While distributing them, she explains that the tomatoes are to be used as a means of physically showing contempt, giving the astonished audience a form of participation that is deemed unacceptable by modern
standards. In a major theatre such as the National Theatre of Catalonia, nobody would dare throw a tomato during the performance. However, during the performance at La Caldera some people, for amusement or to show disdain, did throw their tomatoes, only to see Sol Picó react by shrugging while watching the tomato break on the floor.

According to Michael Foucault’s analysis of power (Foucault, 1980), power is conceived not only as the property of an institution or a social class, but as a strategy, technique, and manoeuvre to consolidate the dominance of a single class: ‘power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual’s consolidated and homogeneous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others’ (Foucault, 1980, p.98). Power becomes more visible and identifiable when it is exercised, thus, when it is circulating. Picó’s distribution of tomatoes becomes an exercise of power, in other words, a subversion of traditional hierarchies of power between the audience and the performer. By offering tomatoes as weapon and herself as a target, she explicitly confronts the traditional power relationship between performer and audience, which traditionally gives the audience anonymity in judging performances. Picó also seems to execute a public self-torture by offering the tomatoes as a tool for immediate and public judgement. At the same time, she seems determined not to be reduced to a spectacle, but to give agency to the audience enabling them to participate in the performance. Rancière (2007) talks about the emancipation of the spectator, which might begin by the realisation that viewing actively transforms and interprets its objects. Yet, following his previous texts on the equality of intelligence formulated in his book, The Ignorant Schoolmaster (1987), Rancière argues that the spectator is not passive; on the contrary, like a reader, the spectator makes connections, and selects and frames the performance. Unlike Debord (1997), who argues that ‘the spectacle’ manages our desires to the extent of alienation, Rancière states that the audience or the spectator has never been passive: ‘Spectatorship is not a passivity that must be turned into activity. It is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know, as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamed.’ (Rancière, 2007, p.279).
In line with Racniere’s emancipation of the audience, I argue that by making the members of the audience visible to the performer (and vice versa) Picó highlights the active role of the audience in the piece. The members of the audience can now express performatively by throwing a tomato to the stage, their likes or dislikes during the evolution of the piece. With this action, Picó makes power circulate, by empowering the audience and giving them the tools to declare publicly their opinion on the piece, at the same time adding an element of risk in the performance.

By empowering the audience, Picó also gives it material to challenge the relationship with the authorities in modern society. In a euphemistic attempt to minimize his dictatorial nature, Franco was identified as a paternalistic figure who, in a way, could take care of his citizens. At the same time, the regime would be identified as a patriarchal power that observes and censors its population. As an analogy, Picó’s piece highlights the power of the audience that can impose censorship by throwing tomatoes at the stage. The ability to judge brings the audience out of its traditional passive status (in the theatre but also under authoritarian regimes, and Debord’s sceptical societies (Debord, 1997)). Nonetheless, Picó’s decision to continue her performance regardless of the public reaction can also be analysed as an act of resistance towards the agreed audience authority.

Analyses of spectatorship were pioneered in film studies by feminist thinkers such as Teresa De Lauretis (De Lauretis, 1987), E. Ann Kaplan (Kaplan, 2013) and Laura Mulvey (Mulvey, 1989). In Visual and other Pleasures, Mulvey argues that the concept of the ‘male gaze’, which she develops in relation to cinema spectatorship, is not contingent on the sex of the spectator, but the masculinisation of the spectator position (1989, p.29). However, the difficulties of applying ideas of screen-based work to dancing bodies on theatre stages have been echoed by feminist dance scholars (Daly, 1992; Foster, 1996; Albright, 1997). In this line Albright noted that ‘dance, as a representation grounded in live moving bodies, held the potential to resist and disrupt this repressive paradigm’ (Albright, 1997, p.xviii). Albright clarifies this repressive paradigm as the male gaze discussed by feminists in film and performance studies. Thus, perceiving dance conveys more
than a flat visual gaze, because dance creates kinaesthetic, somatic and spatial sensations that engage the viewer’s bodily presence. Although the viewer might be engaged in different manners, depending on their cultural background, dance perceptions are experienced somatically at a very deep muscular level.

Picó’s feminine body on stage resists and disrupts this repressive male paradigm. By revealing the power relationship between the audience and the dancer on stage, Picó also exposes traditional gender representations. Distributing tomatoes that might potentially be used as a very physical critique of her work, Picó takes a risk and at the same time takes an ironic look at herself and at the audience. By acknowledging the audience and making them visible, Picó exposes the objectifying gaze and returns its look, reversing with it the relationship between audience-observer/performer-observed, and also de-objectifies her performing body on stage. Timidly, while offering the tomatoes, she talks to the audience. In a soft voice and a very polite tone she says, ‘please do not hesitate to throw the tomato’. Certainly, Picó adopts an excessively benevolent attitude. She plays with the constructed role granted to women, traditionally objectified, docile, awaiting external approval, and by exaggerating her play of it, or jumping against her own reflected image on the mirror, she reverses this relationship throughout the piece. Likewise, in feminist theatre studies, Sue-Ellen Case reviews the analysis of the audience’s gaze: ‘In the realm of audience perception, the gaze is encoded with culturally determined components of male sexual desire perceiving “woman” as a sexual object’ (Case, 1988, p.85). In this way, despite Picó being the sexualised object on stage, she is not the victim of an over-sexualisation of her body. Albright’s study of Rainer’s Trío A (1997, p.20) deconstructs Rainer’s process of choreographing the piece. This deconstruction, Albright notes, gives agency to the choreographer, as Rainer is evidencing the efforts and choices of creating, and with this, she refuses the traditional position of the dancer as an object of desire. In a similar manner, by emphasizing the efforts on performing the choreographic sentences, Picó seems to demystify the female dancing body as the object of desire, and to take agency over her actions.
The Cactus, The Woman and The Man

After removing the armour, Picó appears standing over a green square carpet that marks the left-hand edge of the stage. She wears a very short black tutu, red low-heeled shoes on, and a black blindfold over her eyes. On the carpet, real small cacti surround her, making her steps hesitant. Picó takes off her shoes. The silence is broken by an arrangement of Barber’s Adagio for Strings. At the sound of the music, Picó lifts herself in a relevé and initiates a long adagio over her feet, a passé, développé and a plié over her relevé structure the sequence of the phrase. Picó whispers words, which, as she increases the volume of her voice, become audible, ‘greed and gluttony’. Between the silences of what seems like her attempt to remember, she continues repeating the two capital sins. Then she adds ‘envy’ and, with the repetition of the three words, the speed of her ballet exercises increases. If at the beginning of the scene, her steps were slow and seemed to be inhibited by the proximity of the cacti, Picó now moves in harmony with the music and does not touch any of the cacti while dancing. With this increase in her speed, her développés and attitudes become larger and make her body unbalanced. Despite of the risk of the cacti, it seems that the music eases her fear and gives her the chance to move more freely between them.

While repeating the three capital sins, Picó abruptly ends the cathartic dance amongst the cacti. The music stops, Picó removes her blindfold and the dim spotlight over the square switches off. General spotlights illuminate the rest of the stage. There are four props on the stage: the carpet of cactus remain on the left hand stage, a large cactus made of cardboard is located on the right hand edge, a mirror is situated up-stage, close to a table with a chess set, and there is a man smoking in the chair who does not seem to be involved in what has happened and what is going to happen on stage.

The lyrics of the Spanish bolero ‘Bésame mucho’ play during this scene. Picó makes a feline, clawing gesture in a subtle and delicate way. Afterwards, she starts a series of ballet movements: port de bras, pas chassé, déboulé; but before finishing what seems like a choreographic phrase, she drops to the floor violently, a-rhythmically, clumsily, in what looks like a proper fourth Graham position. She
helps herself to stand again, moving in a cycle of standing and falling in difficult, uncomfortable and risky positions. Using ballet vocabulary, Picó again begins a series of lines in déboulé, which she stops abruptly just as she approaches the spines of the cactus. Picó rips off the blinder limiting her movements in the previous scene. She can now see the large cactus, and all her movements are directed towards it. Defying her previous fear of moving freely, the dancer now takes the risk and confronts the cactus, a large and phallic version of the small cacti that previously limited her movements.

The dancer plays with the repetition of these grotesque movements: moving backwards, advancing in déboulés, approaching the spines of the cactus and stopping abruptly, falling again, throwing her body against the floor repeatedly, as in the coda of the movement. Opening her legs in incredible splits in the air, she shows through her facial expression the difficulty and pain of these splits. Lastly, when she stands up, she puts her hand on her pubic bone with a theatrical expression of pain in her face. The lyrics of the song play against the ordered movements of the dancer; with strength and violence she seems determined to hurt herself in the forced falls and splits.

By wrenching her limbs into the splits and faking facial expressions of pain, Picó brings a sense of grotesque to the scene, and recovers the old Spanish tradition of absurdity, which characterised the performing arts in the first half of the twentieth century; namely, the esperpento, the literary dramatic genre devised by the Spanish writer Ramón María del Valle-Inclán. Its main characteristics are grotesque stylisation of character and situation, the predominance of verbal violence, extravagant detail and a degraded vision of reality; all of this was in order to make an implicit criticism of the Spanish society of the time. As in esperpento, the grotesque stylisation of the dancer, in the performance of the movement, reflects a bitter and degraded view of reality. Picó forces herself into exaggerated splits, violent stops next to the cactus, and painful falls and

59 As Valle-Inclán claims in Luces de Bohemia (Bohemian Lights, one of the most representative work of the esperpento style), 'the tragic meaning of Spanish life can only be shown with a systematically deformed aesthetic' (‘el sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede ofrecerse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada’).
stretching, making her discomfort evident with facial expressions (see figure 14). Like in a distorted mirror, the dancer offers a damaged image of Spanish women.

Figure 13 Kiss my Cactus, Sol Picó. National Theatre of Catalonia Archive, 2002.

Sol Picó is the soloist in Kiss my Cactus. However, the presence of a man on the stage, gives another perspective to the piece. Throughout the first scenes of the piece, the man barely moves, except to change the position of a chess piece or light a cigarette. Picó shows herself, her body and her charms, including her sexual attributes. She does it through incredible splits in the air and other balletic movements, risking injury to herself. Nevertheless, the man does not need to move any part of his body to be part of the show, and with his presence on stage he makes this piece a duet. The labouring woman’s body is contrasted with the passive male figure observing the scene. Picó with her dance offers the tools to explore power relationships and national anxieties. In an intimate atmosphere, with plants and mirrors that emulate the domesticity of a home, the extra-labouring female body moves around the stage. As in a domestic scene, the female body labours while the male body sits on an armchair. The indoctrination of the Feminine Section suggested that women should stay/work at home in order to be ready for the arrival of the man, who, working outside the home, may arrive very
tired (Sección Femenina de F.E.T. y de las J.O.N.S., 1952). Picó displays expressions of effort in developing the physical actions; her face expresses pain every time she makes a split on the floor, while the male body remains unemotional. With the contrast of the two bodies on stage, the active female body and the passive male, the choreographer exposes the different expectations that male and female bodies had in the past history of Spain, or even in a traditional set in contemporary Spain. In line with Foucaultian (Foucault, 1980) accounts of resistance and power, I argue that these performing bodies, as docile as they might appear on stage (trained in codified movements, and perhaps showing traditional gender values of women as entertainers, subject to the male gaze), are empowered through their own agency when performing gender. In her repetitions, metaphors of beauty, of effort and fear, I consider Picó’s performance to be a way to reflect and at the same time resist historical memories of gender subordinations.

The sound of the Metro Golden Mayer lion is heard and Picó emulates it with her mouth. At this time she is sitting on a ladder and when she says the words, ‘music, master’, a French song begins to play. Picó says in French, ‘un, deux, trois’, she is absorbed in her own worlds, her arms move to the beat of the music, making shapes in the air around her face.

Manrique, the man on stage, starts to dance following Picó’s command. In diagonal and straight lines, Manrique dances ballet steps, in one, two and then three jumps: écarté, chasse and grand écarté. He performs a mixture of movement vocabularies including a typical male ballet repertoire, tap steps, and hip hop, anything that could exhaust him. Manrique is an actor not a dancer, his body is not trained in any dance technique and his steps are awkward. The male performer finishes his vigorous dance and returns to sit on the armchair, where he writes, watches and helps to deliver and move the props for the rest of the performance. Dictating the movements and tempos of Manrique’s body, Picó takes a commanding position, defying the domestic body, one of the traditional values imposed by Francoism that she learned at school when she was younger under the direction of the Feminine Section (see Chapter 3).
In this piece, Sol Picó dances different qualities of feminine performances: the hyper-physical women, the grotesque, the commanding and the angry femme fatale. The understanding of gender as a deeply routine performance in culture has been discussed from several perspectives by poststructuralist, feminist, and dance studies scholars. In line with Butler’s performativity of gender (Butler, 1993), Susan Foster in *Choreographies of Gender* exposes gender as a performance itself:

> [If] gender is ‘only’ a performance, albeit deeply routinized and ingrained, then the theoretical space exists wherein such behaviour could be resisted, altered and refashioned so as to alleviate the prescriptions for gendered behaviour that are experienced as oppressive by so many

(Foster, 1998, p.1)

With these performances Picó opens up several possibilities for female performances, and opposes a single restrictive idea of womanhood and the traditional polarization of good-evil woman. In other words, gender is not an essential quality of being human, but instead is a performance of cultural aspects of physical sexual differences. Tackling a wide range of gender possibilities, the choreographer comments on the construction of feminine identity and offers possibilities for reversing and resisting the hegemonic discourses about gender which are the origins of gender inequalities.

**Reflections on Gender and Spanish Identity**

Starting with her back to the audience and wearing a long platinum blond wig, Picó turns to face them with a lighted cigarette in her hand. She smiles, gives a seductive look to the audience and slowly moves into different positions, noticing her legs, her arms and her breasts. She brings the cigarette to her lips, inhales and exhales the smoke slowly while blowing a kiss to the audience.

Picó does a port de bras with both arms above her head, then makes a quarter turn with a cambré, looking at the audience. She identifies the mirror in the left corner, approaches it and watches the reflection of her face, neck and skin. She turns to the audience with a leap, her movements becoming bigger.
She throws the cigarette away, and repeatedly runs and jumps launching herself strongly against the mirror, falling to the floor while the mirror moves. She follows the mirror and tries to see her reflection in it, maintaining a ballet position of preparing for a jump. After four failed attempts, she stops abruptly, takes her wig off and throws it to the floor. Personifying a platinum blonde, smoking a cigarette, displaying her curves, sending slow motion kisses to the audience, Picó emulates images of *femmes fatales*. The dancer is in control of her sexualized body on stage rather than being a victimized version of female objectification. She checks her beauty in the mirror, places a hand on her neck, and, turning towards the audience, initiates a series of choreographic actions, pas de bourrée and port de bras, when she suddenly runs and jumps against the mirror. It is not a soft jump but a strong and aggressive jump that denotes violence against the mirror and her body when it falls on the floor. Is the dancer angry at her reflected image in the mirror? Perhaps jumping up against her own vanity, she fights the subordinated place of women as beautiful accessories. Her performance of a *femme fatale* reflected in the mirror reveals a reality that she might not like. Playing the *femme fatale*, yet still looking for the approval of the audience, Picó sees in the mirror the conflicts in the construction of feminine identities, a commanding woman, a *femme fatale*, and an obliging wife. Which woman does she want to be?

Finally, Picó appears on stage, now in black sports trousers and a black top. She wears red ballet pointe shoes and stands *en pointe*, facing the audience. We begin to hear the sounds of Spanish *caja flamenca*, and an exclamation of ‘*Olé!*’ Picó shows the audience a serious facial expression. We now see her frown lines; she looks particularly focused. The wrinkles in her forehead remind us of those expressions of deep concentration characteristic of flamenco dance. Picó is not a flamenco dancer, and, technically, she is not dancing flamenco. However, by twisting her arms and elbows with her head making strong and short movements, she is now dancing a *zapateado*, but *en pointe*, hitting the floor with her red ballet shoes where a flamenco dancer would with high-heeled shoes. The dance plays with the rhythm of the acoustic percussion; following it, filling the musical silences with the distinctive noise of her red ballet pointe shoes.
Franco's dictatorship attempted to construct an image of Spain as a unified culture. Franco privileged elements of flamenco culture (*sevillanas* and bullfighters) as the only elements of Spanish popular culture. Indeed, that was the Spanish image exported to foreign countries. Over a period of forty years, Franco’s regime was able, with the tacit consent of the international community, not only to repress any plans of subversion in the Spanish population, but also to manipulate their memories and history. Through the celebration of fictional and manipulated historical events, Francoism appealed to Spain’s collective memory to celebrate and reinforce an invented ‘national’ identity. As Hobsbawm (1992) notes, many practices which are considered traditions are in fact quite recent inventions, more often expressly constructed to serve ideological purposes. Nevertheless, this is not to question the validity of flamenco as an ethnic tradition, but to question the use of these ethnic traditions to impose an artificially unified cultural image of Spain. Since Franco's death, there has been a movement to restore the cultural diversity that had been suppressed for almost forty years.  

Sol Picó had a small amount of ballet and flamenco training during her dance studies at the conservatory of Alicante. This conservatory was a clear example of the dance education offered during Franco’s dictatorship; thanks to the country’s political, social and cultural isolation, the only dance training offered in public and private schools in Spain was ballet and Spanish Dance, which included flamenco.

In this piece, Picó celebrates a specific national identity. She recreates flamenco movements and rhythms with flamenco music, in a particular custom: in red ballet pointes, which have never been used for that purpose before. Picó performs flamenco and ballet forms and comments on notions of mixed cultural background, such as a woman from Valencia (Spain) wearing red ballet points dancing to the rhythm of flamenco music. Picó performs her *zapateado* following the flamenco rhythm of the music. Facing out towards the audience, she marks the end of the dance with a dry, direct footstep. She gets down off the pointes and walks up-stage, when a rain of tomatoes falls from the ceiling on centre stage.

---

60 The republican government (1931-36) just before the civil war was an example of tolerance among the different nationalities living in the same Spanish territory.
Picó stops, looks at the tomatoes on the floor and throws the chess pieces off the table as the lights go off.

The tomatoes from the beginning of the piece return to mark the end. As an old judgement, recovered from popular medieval theatre, when audiences used to throw vegetables to express their discontent, the tomatoes add a critique to the piece. In the same way that Savigliano (1995) used tango to ‘deconstruct’ her national and gender identity (O’Shea, 1999, p.132), Picó also uses elements of Spanish identity, such as popular songs like bolero, the grotesque esperpentico woman, flamenco mannerisms, and several images of women to deconstruct herself. Kiss my Cactus could be read as a metaphorical tango for three; it is a three-way power struggle between a man, a woman and the fear and risk of a cactus.

Dancing with the cacti, Picó wears a blindfold that does not allow her to see the danger of the prickles on the cacti; the dancer moves in between the cacti with her actions limited by the blindfold. In an analogical representation of Spain, the dancer’s fear conveys the country’s fear of confronting the dictatorship that led to the dictator dying in his bed. Overpowered by fear, Spanish society has acquired a feeling of not doing enough to end the dictatorship. In fact, it has been suggested that while the dictatorship only ended because Franco died, fear continued to haunt Spanish society during the construction of democracy. Even after Franco’s death, when most of the population demonstrated on the streets demanding democratic change, there was also a fear that democratic change would bring back the old conflicts of Spain’s history: the confrontation of the two Spains during the Civil War (Humlebaek and Aguilar, 2002). Sol Picó says on her company’s website: ‘all the scenes refer to fear and risk, which form the basis of the show’ (Picó, 2004). I see this fear as haunting Picó’s piece, with the presence of the cacti as a constant threat, similar to the fear of the dictatorship, which does not allow the dancer to move freely on stage. When Picó dances about feminine values from the history of Spain, she simultaneously dances about contemporary female values and those forgotten values of Francoism that were not re-examined in democratic times. With references to fear and to feminine values of the past, the choreographer dances, moves and agitates the ghosts that haunt Spanish history.
III. Re-thinking Femininity through The Lake of Flies

In 2009, eight years after the premiere of her debut piece Kiss my Cactus, Sol Picó created El Llac de Les Mosques (The Lake of Flies): a celebration of her fortieth birthday to a backdrop of live rock and roll music, a leather-clad toy boy and a washing machine.

I am going to look at this piece as an example of the way in which feminist ideas circulated in the public discourse in Catalonia at this time. There is a majority belief that structural reforms during the transition to democracy resulted in the disappearance of all of the gender inequalities that had shaped feminist demands during the last two centuries (Falcón, 2014). This common belief’s also impacted on the feminist movement, which faded in strength and political activity during the 1990s and 2000s. The feminist philosopher Lidia Falcón reviews the late feminist movement and the emergence of new forms of machismo in democratic Spain in her book, Los Nuevos Machismos (Falcón, 2014). Falcón observes that the new equality laws, approved in 1983 and 2002 to palliate gender differences, have not brought about the total disappearance of gender inequalities. Falcón lists contemporary laws and structural practices that still perpetuate forms of inequality and have left women defenceless in the face of economic, political and labour differences.

This choreography invites the audience to revisit the choreographer’s repertoire through memories and objects on stage that refer to previous pieces from her career. A plastic cactus on the washing machine and a mirror are directly extracted from Kiss my Cactus, whereas mermaids, paellas and leather costumes make allusion to other pieces. In The Lake, there is also a final scene in which Picó wears her characteristic red ballet pointe shoes, and performs a zapateado to flamenco music; this has become an emblem of Picó’s choreographic career, involving sense of hybridisation of dance styles, gender roles and bodies.

The analysis of this choreography is based on the DVD film recorded at a live performance in Spain. It is supported by footage from a ten-day residency with the Sol Picó Dance Company, in preparation for a new piece, as well as an interview with the choreographer in 2012.
The Lake of Flies was first premiered on the Mercat de les Flors theatre’s main stage in March 2009 in Barcelona. As a major production, the piece had four musicians on stage, under the direction of saxophonist and vocalist Mireia Tejero; a new male dancer-assistant for Picó; and some old, regular collaborators: the scenographist and actor, Joan Manrique, the costume designer Valeria Civil and the lighting designer Sylvia Kuchinow, in addition to Sol Picó as director, dancer and choreographer.

Again the piece was very well received by critics and audiences in Spain and also in the rest of Europe and Latin America. The Lake of Flies invited audiences to question their ideas of female roles:

Picó, in this work, invites the audience to travel through her previous choreographies. It is not just a nostalgic trip, but an exciting and energetic path on which the author rises up again, renovated. She is a snake that changes its skin to a rock beat.

(Del Val, 2009)  

Even amid this much anarchic stage activity, the dance shone. Picó and Valentí Rocamora as her macho, Gucci-model Prince, shared electric-bright physical and comic chemistry, whether they were playing cheesy pop video choreography for laughs or getting involved in a brutal duet exploiting the uncomfortable contrast between his hulking physique and her tiny frame. If there was a coherent thread, it was Picó's own magnetic presence. Her climactic solo, a Fosse-tipped piece to flamenco rhythms, performed entirely en pointe, provoked gasps and applause. Last gig? Say it ain't so, Snow.

(Dance review: Sol Picó: El Llac de les Mosques, 2011)

However, the piece received very bad reviews when performed at Sadler’s Wells in London, as Judith Mackrell’s review in The Guardian reflects:

Sol Picó, the Catalan dancer and choreographer, is 44, and El Llac de Les Mosques (The Lake of Flies) is a tribute to her own mid-life

---

61 My translation of the original text: ‘Picó en esta obra invita al público a viajar a través de sus coreografías anteriores, pero no se trata de un viaje nostálgico, sino de una ruta trepidante y llena de energía en la que la autora resurge renovada, es una serpiente que cambia de piel a ritmo de rock.’
crisis. At Sadler's Wells on Thursday there was certainly a core of middle-aged women in the audience, ready to root for the cause. But what looked splendidly insubordinate on paper, a celebration of defiance, a blueprint for unsuitable fun, turns out to be disappointingly disengaged.

(Mackrell, 2011)

In fact, questioning gender expectations through a rock & roll style and format did not convince London audiences. Mackrell claims it is a ‘disengaged’ performance; disengaged from the audience’s expectations, perhaps? Like *Kiss my Cactus, The Lake of Flies* reflects on the female world: female realities, desires, frustrations and matters around a woman getting older, performed and directed by a woman. Once again, with her distinctive choreographic style, Picó performs a female character on a stage cluttered with props, which are used and thrown away to the soundtrack of a live rock and roll concert. The frenetic rhythm of this solo (and duet) about age tackles the gender expectations of a woman reaching her forties.

**Welcome to The Theatre**

Four musicians in four black squares divided by a white linoleum cross set up the first scene. Rock music begins to play while Picó enters the stage in a white tutu, white vintage corset, black low heel shoes and a black braid wig.

‘Thanks for coming’ Picó says on the stage, talking through a microphone to the audience. Picó shows a different self-image from the woman of *Kiss my Cactus* in 2001: from short to long hair, blonde to brunette, from a black tutu to a white vintage tutu and lingerie. Gradually, the lights show the rest of the stage and we can see an armchair and a man sitting in it smoking, dressed in black clothes. There is a washing machine, with a large cactus on it, both reminiscent of *Kiss my Cactus*. Coming out of the dark, the hand that was holding the microphone becomes a second man in dark trousers and a shirt, wearing dark sunglasses. The man, Valenti Rocamora, stays in the unlit part of the stage while Picó stands with a glass of wine over her head. She sinks down to the floor, balancing the glass, and stands up again. Quietly, her body is stiff and static, reminiscent of a plastic doll. The music escalates faster and louder, and, in slow motion, Picó leaves the wine glass on the floor while Rocamora comes from behind and takes her over his
shoulders, passing her from one side to the other. Picó’s small body contrasts with the tall Rocamora with his stubble and sunglasses. He is reminiscent of the stereotype of the ‘macho’ Spanish man. Picó remains suspended on Rocamora’s shoulders with her legs opened in a ‘v’. Rocamora starts to walk all around the space. He walks towards up-stage, to the left and right, carrying Picó and changing positions. Picó talks to the audience and Rocamora but the music is so loud that nobody can hear what she says. With her arms, it is obvious that she’s steering him and directing his movements (see figure 15). As has become common in her choreographies, Picó uses physically extreme movements, such as wide splits and grotesque positions showing both strength and pain.

![Image](image.jpg)


Picó introduces the beginning of the piece herself, presenting her body in white tutu and vintage clothing. She does not wear the armour from *Kiss my Cactus* anymore. She has also covered her short blond hair with a brunette braided wig. All props on her body: her outfit, wig, and actions, show a very different woman than the one who gave tomatoes to the audience. Maybe the audience does not interest her anymore. It seems fear and risk has vanished with the years. In this black and white space, Picó has chosen to highlight the differences with her male
partner: woman/man, white/black, short/tall, commanding/obeying. Picó seems determined to command, use and direct the movements of her male partner to explain the different vicissitudes in the life of a woman aging in her forties. In fact, like all women of her time, Picó is strongly influenced by the gender values transmitted throughout the Transition.

Picó’s welcoming scene demonstrates the possibility of having a woman in power. Beginning with a stereotypical re-creation of traditional gender roles, Pico may present herself as the complacent woman who welcomes guests at the theatre: her tenuous and sensual voice makes me feel comfortable as an audience member. Moreover, her costume is also intimate and sensuous: she wears a tight corset that reveals her feminine curves. However, as the scene develops and Pico gets onto Rocamora’s back, we begin to see a woman in command, which defies the traditional gender roles suggested at the beginning of the piece. At first Rocamora takes Picó over his shoulder, moving her from one part of his back to another. Although she appears to be a package being transported on Rocamora’s shoulders, we realize it is Picó who directs the movements of the couple, specifying the directions and the places where she wants to go. In contrast to Argüelles’ image in *Rings without Fingers*, the dancer on the back of the male dancer has agency over her actions, as she is actively deciding the movements of the couple. With these actions, Picó performs possibilities of other gender relationships, which do not discriminate against individuals because of their gender. As Falcón argues, equality between men and women, which feminist movements have claimed since their beginnings, does not aim to instil women with the hegemonic masculine values of aggressiveness or authority; rather it aims to forge men and woman who, in their personalities, combine the best qualities of the feminine and the masculine (Falcón, 2014). The duet of Picó and Rocamora in this piece is significant because it enables the man and the woman to acquire interchangeable attributes that are generally regarded as being masculine or feminine.

Rocamora leaves Picó on the floor, and again she has the glass of wine in her hand. The music stops suddenly. Picó says ‘but all I wanted to do was a solo’ and the audience breaks into laughter. She continues ‘with one person or none, with Tchaikovsky’s music and beautiful cotton-wool clouds […]’ From the beginning,
there have been six people already on stage besides Sol Picó, playing music, smoking cigarettes and dancing duets with her; making the idea of a solo difficult to imagine. The previous, virtuoso duet is interrupted as Picó asserts her agency by revealing her wishes for the performance to be a solo piece. Playing with the audience in the contradiction of her words and actions, Picó to some extent, refuses to be just a female body on stage for public display. She exposes her efforts in working on a duet, her sweat and her disappointments with the piece.

**Mirroring Age and Sexuality**

Changing her shoes, from black to red heels, to barefoot, walking indecisively, Picó stops to talk to the musicians. She later asks Rocamora to help her take off the wig, and they both have some trouble with it. From different directions, they pull, jump and finally take it off Picó’s head. She removes her white tutu, ending up in her underwear. She falls to the floor and has little spasms that contract and stretch out her body.

Placed in the middle of the stage, she folds onto the floor in a mermaid pose, sitting on the floor with her legs folded to one side. Supporting her weight with her right arm, she uses another icon from a previous piece, *Sirena a la Planxa* (*Mermaid on the Grill*). Manrique and Rocamora place the washing machine in front of her. They turn the washing machine around, and position the back, which has a mirror, facing the mermaid Picó. While she observes the reflection of her face, body and silhouette, a male voice-over says ‘mirror, mirror, who is the most … old in this disgusting show?’ Picó shrugs her shoulders, stands up and, looking at the audience with the look of someone who feels victimised, points at herself. Rocamora and Manrique have been standing next to the washing machine, and now turn it around again as Rocamora opens the door. Picó gets inside the laundry machine and Rocamora sets up a wash cycle.

Picó impersonates a grown up Snow White who has become a woman, or perhaps she satirises the evil queen on a stage designed for younger characters. In her book *Ageing, Gender, Embodiment and Dance*, Elisabeth Schwaiger (Schwaiger, 2012) confronts assumptions in Western cultures about the performance ability of ageing dancers. The role of dance as a spectacle in Western cultures puts more pressure
on the dancer’s physical capital, which might decline with age. In an exhaustive cross cultural analysis Schwaiger draws on examples of mature dance artists whose performances are culturally understood as subverting hegemonic discourses of ageing, gender and dance performance. In this way, looking into the mirror for sign of age, and afterwards sadly climbing into the washing machine, Picó challenges ideas of youth and beauty for women in performance. Expressions of female ageing are a constant challenge to contemporary Western paradigms of beauty. Picó insinuates that she might not be the traditionally graceful female figure who is desirable on stage, the young effortless dancer. With her facial expressions of effort, exhaustion and disappointment, Picó claims another place for women beyond Western standards of beauty.

Later on in the piece, Picó asks another mirror to ‘tell me, am I the most beautiful?’ ‘You are not the most beautiful anymore, the most beautiful is Snow White’ replies the male voice-over. However, Picó replies again ‘No, no, no this is not possible. I can see her, she doesn’t walk like a young person, she walks like those people that have all kinds of problems with arthritis, and bend their legs or their back’

While Picó is inside the washing machine, Rocamora initiates a tango with the machine. Accompanied by tango music, Rocamora turns and makes the machine (with castors attached) turn, advancing his feet and moving diagonally backwards. He lifts his leg over the machine and collapses his body over it. Rocamora leaves the machine in a corner and continues the tango alone, advancing diagonally. He reaches the upper left part of the stage where the musicians are signing, and where Manrique is sitting in the maroon armchair (similar to the one in Kiss my Cactus).

Rocamora, the young macho-man, embraces Manrique, the quiet man who as observing throughout Kiss my Cactus, both versions of male partner join in a tango dance. Transgressing the intimate space of each other's bodies, their faces almost touch. They brush each other’s backs with their arms, and their legs proceed to mark out the space in the squares and diagonals of tango steps. This male-tango celebrates alternatives to the heterosexual model of partnership, in line with feminist critiques of heteronormativity developed in Spain in lesbian feminist
groups who highlighted the impossibility of homogenising the sexual experiences of all women. The tango displays intimate scenes of passion between two men. Holding each other tight and feeling each other’s movements in the dance, Rocamora and Manrique reflect what Savigliano has called the political economy of passion (Savigliano, 1995). By introducing this duet, Picó’s performance illustrates the acknowledgement of diverse body realities in the Spanish feminist movement that supported the legalization of gay partnership and marriage in 2005.

The tango then transforms into a choreographed Kung-Fu fight between the two macho men, a fight between ‘old’ and ‘new’ concepts of masculinity, perhaps? When one falls to the floor, the other extends a hand to him and lifts him up, ending in the tango position of leg-over-waist. The two tango dancers join the two male musicians: the guitarist and the bassist, who are singing next to them. Divided between two microphones, one musician and one dancer on each side, they begin to shout over the sound of the music until the shouts are too loud, and the four of them collapse on the floor, in silence. Centre stage, under the spotlight, the woman musician sits on a flamenco box and begins to play it. Picó opens the door of the washing machine and gets out of it, lying on the floor.

The negotiation of passion between the two men develops into a fight and ends with them shouting at each other over the rock and roll music in an evocative exercise of virility. The fall and collapse of the four men at the same time (the two musicians and the two dancers) invites the audience to think about the collapse of a male dominated system: the fall of the macho man brought about by his own shouts. Next, the female musician and dancer take the stage. With this new scene, where female bodies replace the collapsed macho-shouting males, Picó may signal the beginning of a new era, where new identities for women and men are possible.

The Writing Body

Landing on the floor, Picó comes out of the washing machine. She is wearing a black, sparkly jersey, black kneepads and red ballet pointes. Mireia Tejero, the musician, plays the flamenco box, marking the rhythm with her hands. Picó balances her body from one diagonal to the other, struggling to stand up: first, with one leg and the other knee on the floor, she tries to stand and falls again. On
the floor, she curls up like an animal and tries to stand again, moving across the floor to up-stage, moving her legs like a spider, and falling in a ballet split. Slowly, she finally stands on her feet, in her red ballet pointes. Picó marks the rhythm played on the box with her body, with arm and leg actions, which move from the elbow and the knee respectively, creating angular shapes that start and end with the percussion accompaniment. The rest of the musicians now join the flamenco drums, and Picó moves through flamenco mannerisms and positions, adapting her particular ‘flamenco pointes’ to the style: from a deboulé over the pointes to the arms raised from the elbows, as in a flamenco dance. After this, the four musicians remain in silence together, yielding the space to the dancer. Picó begins a zapateado on her pointes, creating a rhythm in crescendo with the blows of her shoes on the floor. Is it the dancer, who now creates music with her legs and feet. Standing in the same posture as in a flamenco zapateado solo, Picó accelerates the rhythm of the pointes hitting the floor – one, two, three / one, two, three / one, two three … and for the final movement she joins her legs in a big jump, landing on her points, and accompanied with an exclamation of effort and a flamenco position. Pico turns back and walks towards up-stage, receiving euphoric applause from the audience.

The band is now together in the back left corner of the stage, playing festive music. Picó appears back on stage in her black sparkling jersey, in her red pointes. Her arms are held loose pointing down, and her hips move to the rhythm of the music. She says nothing but smiles. Turning her back on the audience, she takes off the black jersey, and ‘the two beautiful attendants’, as she refers to Rocamora and Manrique, fit her with white armour. Immobilised by the armour, and supported on a manual forklift, Picó talks into the microphone, held by Rocamora:

As I said at the beginning of the piece, I invite you to, I offer this body for you to write anything you wish: desires, thoughts, maybe a telephone number. […] Perhaps a good force can change our lives, but as always, thank you. Ti amo. Bye.

The lights do not fade out, but stay on as the guitarist plays a slow song, while the members of the audience approach the stage and write on Picó’s armoured body.

Picó again exposes the audience’s gaze and reverses the expected power dynamic
of criticism. She allows the audience to come across the stage to participate by writing about the piece. She literally offers her body as the site upon which to write comments. With these actions of commenting, expressing and just performing, the audience participates in the process of creating and reproducing what is being performed.

With her dancing body, Picó writes her realities, her desires and her relationship with the world. Using her female body, she breaks the silence traditionally reserved for women’s culture, and dances about traditional gender values, and how she resists them, advocating common values regardless of gender conditions. However, while Picó breaks the traditional feminine silence discussed by Cixous (1976) and Rich (1980), she simultaneously rouses the national ghosts of the past by questioning female identity issues that are embedded in memories of the Dictatorship; these, such as the domestic indoctrination of women during the dictatorship are the memories that were forgotten through the Transition.

***

Sol Picó emerges from a silent space for women, to speak out about women. She directs, choreographs and dances her pieces, creating a feminine framework from where she can speak and dance about women’s realities, outside of the patriarchal norm. With her body on stage, Picó dances female desires, and female thoughts and anxieties. She shouts at the audience about what a woman may want. Sol Picó speaks about women from a woman's perspective, by creating her own movement vocabulary and personas to express herself: the femme fatale, the vain mermaid, and the exhaustingly physical body. She self-references her seminal choreographic motifs: the splits, zapateado in red ballet pointes, the cactus, the armchair, and the smoking man, among others. By defining her own movements and work, it seems she is establishing a history / genealogy for that work:

Women have learned. They have been silent for so long that new female dancers and choreographers need to say what, for many years, they could not, would not, or did not know how to express. We live in hypocritical societies that are just trying to perpetuate the structures, yet these have to change and evolve.
While Picó, with her body, which at different times is androgynous, strong, aggressive, delicate and sexual, offers up new models for considering feminine identities in Spain, the audience is literally invited to inscribe their thoughts of what this femininity might become on her body.

Picó’s constant movement between the different personas she created is a highly choreographed production, which serves as a tactic for the constant renegotiation of identity within a network of hegemonic thinking. As an ironic site of the ongoing production of resistance to structures of domination, Picó’s search for a way to think through difference proposes a tactic for bodies to extend their corporeality. As female identity in contemporary Spain was still under the impact of the political amnesia, the Pact of Silence, my argument draws from poststructuralist feminism to claim that her female performances help to create new spaces for women in contemporary society; spaces that allow for bringing back the memories of the past. With these performances of different and, at times, opposite women on stage, Picó reflects on female identity: taking into account on the one hand, the domestic and secondary role of women indoctrinated during the dictatorship, and on the other hand, the acknowledgement of the newly-liberated female identity of the democracy. These diverse female bodies on stage allow for remembering memories of the female models enforced during the dictatorship. Hence, these performances offer possibilities to confront the forgotten memories, the ghost memories that are haunting the present of Spain.

62 My translation of the text: ‘Las mujeres se han espabilado. Es que estuvieron tanto tiempo calladas que las nuevas bailarinas y coreógrafas necesitan decir lo que durante muchos años no pudieron, no quisieron o no supieron cómo expresarlo. Vivimos en sociedades hipócritas, que sólo tratan de perpetuar las formas, pero éstas tienen que cambiar y evolucionar’
Chapter 7. Conclusions: Choreographies of Silence

Through an analysis of gender dance performances, I have examined democratic Spain’s relationship with its past. Memory and silence are arguably underlying concerns in Spain’s relationship with its own history, and so acknowledgement of the past would help to release the oppressed memories and thus better understand the present (Benjamin, 2009). I have shown that a generation of contemporary dance choreographers opened up with their pieces the possibility of articulating different gender values which were forgotten during the transition to democracy. The choreographers Anna Maleras, Avelina Argüelles and Sol Picó display different relations to their bodies, and to silence. My research focuses on the tactics of those female bodies to articulate female values and overcome the collective amnesia that affects the country.

In Chapter I, I first introduced the political context of the transition to democracy in Spain and the interconnections it had with the dance scene. Using the example of Guernica’37, I have illustrated the current problems in Spain to engage in further discussions about the memories of the Civil War. I have also proposed a literature review which highlights three main interrelating concepts in choreographic analysis: memory, resistance and gender. An analysis of memory in Spain emphasizes the problems with the past, and the ongoing silence about the atrocities of the dictatorship. Following its tacit political agreement on collective amnesia during the transition to democracy, Spain did not confront the issues from the previous dictatorial regime or the Civil War. Consequently, this research argues that those oppressed memories lived on in the unconscious of Spain’s democratic society as the ghosts of the past haunt the present. An analysis of resistance shows that female choreographers can resist the silence by using choreographic tactics. In this sense, I use de Certeau’s concept of the resistance of the ordinary man and woman who create everyday tactics to resist the power structures that govern society. A reference to analyses of power also helps to conceptualise the idea that power circulates through a network of relationships, rather than being possessed by particular individuals or institutions. Indeed, women choreographers did not resist a defined institution that imposed this silence, but instead they contest power structures inherited from Francoism.
Finally, a discussion of feminist gender theories allows me to challenge traditional performances of gender rooted in essentialist notions of female and male during Francoism and the democratic period. Judith Butler claims that gender values are created through performative repetitions of stylized acts (Butler, 1990a, 1993). Through their performances, I argue that these female choreographers constructed new gender identities by proposing new ways for women to move in public spaces.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the Spanish government’s problems with dealing with the repressive past. The collective amnesia erased the memories of the dictatorship and the previous Second Republic through the Amnesty Law of 1977. The appearance of the Association for the Recuperation of Historic Memory (ARMH), in 2000, challenged the historical amnesia and started to awaken those memories of the past. However, the election of the PP to form the government in November 2011 left that association without funds. At the same time, the commemoration of the Blue Division illustrates the problematic relationship of certain sectors of Spain’s democratic regime in acknowledging the repressive past and the urgent need for Spain to deal with its own ghosts: the missing memories and people of the Civil War and Francoism. Although some political elites have praised the way Spain moved to democracy, as a model for other places in Europe, this research has contested those approaches and has warned of the fact that repressed memories do not disappear; instead they remained buried in the democratic bodies of contemporary Spain.

As María Delgado argues (Delgado, 2013), Francoism did not end with Franco’s death. Fear of the continued power of Francoism may explain why the Spanish population was slow to demand democratic aims during the Transition and during the democratic era. In Anatomía de un Instante (Anatomy of a Movement), the novelist Javier Cercas (2012) records that all democratic experiments in Spain have ended with coups d’état; in the last two centuries there have been more than fifty. It is perhaps not surprising that there was a climate of fear as Spain transitioned to democracy. During this process, the collective memories of Spanish history were under consideration. As Paloma Aguilar (2001) contends, it is fear of conflict that promotes passive acceptance of the attitudes of those
responsible for the process of the Transition and the institutional framework established during this period. If political and judicial sectors have failed to confront Spain’s own past, it is civil society that has articulated responses to the imposed silence from a variety of different perspectives. The realistic literature of the 1960s, films featuring ghosts, and the transgressive bodies of La Movida are among the tactics that Spanish society have employed within a network of silence and oblivion.

This research has undertaken the historiographical task of reconstructing historical events through bodies and bodily memories. While Chapter 2 analysed the social and political actions which created a network for oblivion and remembrance, Chapter 3 focused on the appearance of modern dance in Spain, and the possibilities it created for the female body.

In Chapter 3, I have investigated the dance scene during the pre-Civil War period and showed how dance studies have facilitated an analysis of the female body and its cultural production. Spanish modern dance pioneers brought new concepts of gender to be discussed through their performances. By positioning female bodies on stage, they created alternative spaces for them to exist outside the domestic scene. They invaded the public space to demonstrate how a female body could begin to question long-standing gender norms. My research has re-introduced the figures of Carmen Tórtola Valencia, who had already been discussed in academia (Solrac, 1982; Garland, 1997; Queralt del Hierro, 2005; Clayton, 2012) and Aurea Sarrà, who appears as an emerging field of study, into the history of modern dance in Spain, arguing for the importance of these dancers in the international modernist scene.

In Chapter 3 I also proposed an analysis of the female body during the Spanish Civil War. While the Republicans highlighted equality of women and men, for example displaying images of women wearing similar clothes to men, the Nationalists created, almost exclusively, images of women restricted to the domestic sphere. The following thirty-six years of dictatorship silenced the female body which was relegated to the private spaces of domesticity. Women lost the ground they had gained in gender equality during the previous period, and modern
dance disappeared from the public scene. Notwithstanding the secondary role of woman in society, the dictatorial regime commended volunteer women for the laborious task of dances and creating a history of Spanish folk dance. Women were sent to observe, collect and then modify dances to be archived in the fascist history of Spain. Their actions contrast with the next generation of female dance pioneers, who would move and travel internationally in order to familiarise themselves with new trends in contemporary dance, creating an active archive in the history of democratic Spain.

Chapter 4 follows the reintroduction of modern dance in the Spanish scene after Franco’s death. With a movement language referred to as liberating and Westernised (in contrast to the codified vocabulary of ballet and the folk vocabulary of flamenco), the reappearance of modern dance in the Spanish society of the Transition brought a new paradigm for freedom. Dancing modern dance was then a celebration of democracy and it could be argued that it is still today a way of securing the stability of it.

A historiographical analysis was necessary to research modern dance figures of the early 1960s and 1970s. Modern dance does not appear in the official records of Spanish history, especially in the case of female pioneers. A study of the voices silenced during Francoism and the transition to democracy has brought to the surface the necessary elements to write a genealogy of the female dancers and choreographers who introduced modern dance to Spain. Placing the performance pieces in relation to Spain’s historical circumstances is a way of evaluating not only gender and national identity construction, but also the evolution of modern dance itself in relation to its society and time.

The reappearance of modern dance in Spain was brought about by Anna Maleras. Spanish dancers welcomed modern dance language as a liberating technique that would enable them to express the new ideas and values of the democratic times. Maleras’ liberating experience remains in the form of her choreographies, music and costumes. She created choreographies that reflected possibilities of moving in new ways, yet the content of her pieces still reflects the silence surrounding sociopolitical matters under democracy. The issues that are absent in Maleras’
choreographies, such as gender, nationalism or the dictatorship, talk more about the structures of power and the imposition of a political amnesia over the democratic society of Spain. Nevertheless, if not in her choreographies, Maleras’ introduction of modern dance displays a new dance vocabulary for future generations to use and articulate the issues silenced in the history of Spain. Alongside *La Movida*, Maleras’ dances did not directly tackle the imposed silence of the Transition, but by introducing modern dance she allowed audiences to see different bodies on stage, bodies which challenged the traditional values enforced during the dictatorship.

With an analysis of two prominent female choreographers of the era of democracy, Avelina Argüelles and Sol Picó, I articulate the ways they have adopted modern dance languages to move, and shaken, the silenced issues of gender and the nation. As dance moulds the body and proposes different models of subjectivity (Novack, 1988; Albright, 1997; Foster, 1998; Franko, 2006; Dempster, 2010) these women choreographers have spoken of the way women look at (and are looked at by) society. This making and unmaking of gender subjectivities could only be done through modern dance, as it offered a new vocabulary that challenged essentialist gender conceptions, those that had been silenced by the dictatorship and which the pact of oblivion had helped to silence in democratic Spain.

Chapter 5 shows how Argüelles’ pieces, either with her narrativity or movement choices, display tactics of resistance regarding expectations about women during Francoism. During the transition to democracy, Argüelles embraced modern dance as a liberating technique which allowed her body to express national issues of gender, power and memories. While the emergent Spanish democracy created a pact to forget the memories of the past, Argüelles choreographed paths to remember the situation of women during the previous regime. In *Rings without Fingers*, Argüelles challenged notions of authority in a patriarchal system by dancing an escape from a woman’s fate of married life. By refusing to pass from the father’s authority to the husband’s, Argüelles redefined singleness from negative loneliness to an active freedom. In *Parallels*, the movement syntax offered a repertoire for women to dance in equality with men. The symmetrical
phrases with the male partner and the dancers constantly holding each other suggest similar bodies which fight impositions of gender inequalities. With her pieces, Argüelles seems to challenge universal ideas of love and marriage, which were endorsed not only by Franco’s regime, but also, essentially, by universal patriarchal structures.

In Chapter 6, from a different perspective, Sol Picó often dances a female body that challenges the general attributes of femininity. Strong, violent, aggressive, and sexual, Picó’s body is no less female for having these qualities. In so doing, Picó dances the struggle of women to find a democratic identity, while simultaneously proposing new identities for women on stage. Her performance of risk, aversion and excess breaks with traditional constrictions on femininity and explicitly articulates new female possibilities. In Kiss my Cactus, Picó also tackles the construction of mixed Spanish identities by choreographing a new ballet-flamenco-modern style. Wearing red ballet pointe shoes to dance flamenco, Sol Picó performs and adapts flamenco techniques that she had learnt when younger from the nationalistic dance academies, at a time when Franco’s project was to unify folk dances under a national homogeneous culture. In The Lake of Flies, Picó repositions her early claims on femininity seen in previous pieces. She dances multiple possibilities for female bodies, from submissive to tyrannical, and invites the audience to question hegemonic conceptions of the female body. Simultaneously, problematizing women’s status in democratic Spain, she opens possibilities for challenging current power structures constructed on the foundations of the Pact of Silence.

I have situated dance in relation to particular historical circumstances in order to show how the construction of the body changed over the different political regimes: from Franco’s dictatorship (1939-75) to democratic Spain (1975-Present). I have drawn from Novack’s interpretation of movement as being sensitive to the centrality of the body in culture, as well as to the ways in which culture shapes dance and is shaped by it. I offer an interpretation of Rings without Fingers, Parallels, Kiss my Cactus and The Lake of Flies that locates the work as a tactic that resists an imposed politics of amnesia.
Picó and Argüelles’ performances of femininity on stage have shown dance’s ability to question the silence and write from the perspective of women, breaking the silence allocated to female roles in patriarchal societies. They have written their bodies, as Cixous (1976) notes, and their desires, which previously were only talked about by men. Argüelles and Picó’s bodies have created atypical characters of women on stage, opening up alternatives for female subjectivities.

Spanish women endured a double silence; firstly, the silence coming from their gendered condition which made women invisible in any patriarchal society, and secondly, the agreed silence surrounding memories of recent Spanish history. I argue that by creating narratives that confront expectations of women’s positions as wives and mothers, or dancing movements that are not in line with what women must be or do, these choreographers have talked about what was kept silent. Thus, within their choreographies, they tackled the forgotten memories of Spanish history.

Spain’s history of ghosts pushes to be acknowledged. Judith Butler draws attention to lives that are negated and therefore non-existent; these lives cannot be mourned because in a sense they never were: ‘The derealisation of the “Other” means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral’ (Butler, 2006, pp.33-34). The choreographies of gender which both Argüelles and Picó performed may play a significant role in bringing those hidden memories and identities into the public sphere. By enacting dissident bodies of women, powerful women, femme fatales, and diverse gender narratives, these choreographies offer possibilities for remembering the forgotten and the silence of those that do not exist in the hegemonic structures of power.

I have argued for the interpretation of ghosts as the suppressed memories of the Spanish past. Derrida writes of ghosts that haunt the present. These spectres are not psychological projections of traumas, but they ‘are’ existent in the present (Derrida, 2006). Indeed he argues that ghosts are the return of the historically repressed; the historical traumas that have been erased from memory, but which exist in this ontological state of being and not being, present and absent. If, on the one hand, ghosts do not need to be exorcised, on the other hand, these spectres do
need to be acknowledged. The repressed memories of the history of Spain have often been identified with these ghosts, but also with the bodies silenced during the dictatorship: dissident bodies such as the female, the queer, the democratic etc. Jo Labanyi in theorising culture in modern Spain (2002), and María Delgado in exemplifying the problem of the exhumation of the graves of the disappeared in Spain with the use of Lorca’s legacy (Delgado, 2013) are only two of the numerous examples of how current hispanists are re-thinking the existence of historic traumas through Derrida’s spectres. My research has re-visited the silenced memories of the history of Spain. Resisting the Pact of Silence, I have analysed prominent choreographies of the democratic times to articulate readings which challenge the hegemonic cultural system.

The three female choreographers analysed in this thesis danced the silences and ghosts affecting democratic Spain in three distinctive approaches. Although Maleras settled the ground for the use of modern dance as a liberating language, her pieces and dancing are concerned more with formal liberations of performance elements, such as music and the technical skills of the dancers. Her inspiration, she says, is as simple as the music. Maleras’ reluctance to talk about the political events surrounding her first encounter with modern dance exemplifies the silence imposed in the transition to democracy in Spain, and her objections to tackling the ghost of the past. Maleras’ concept of dance, as an a-political form, stands in contrast to Argüelles’ politicisation of women’s condition in her pieces. Articulating a critique of the secondary role of women during the dictatorship, Argüelles’ work builds an argument for dance as an expression of attitudes of resistance to hegemonic gender discourses. The staging of her own memories of the dictatorship concerning, in this case, the wedding of her sister, opens a space in which to revive the silent memories of women during the dictatorship. This performance of gender memories helps to exorcize the ghosts of the past that are haunting the democratic scene.

Finally, I see Picó’s perspectives of performance and the female body as a conciliation of the two previous opposite statements: the silence inherited in Maleras bodies’ and Argüelles’ politicisation of female conditions through dance. Even though Picó does not refer specifically to memories of the past, she dances
numerous feminine values that were preponderant during the dictatorial times, referencing images of women that have long been silenced and repressed. Dancing through several female identities, Picó opens up possibilities to revisit gender and national silenced memories. In so doing, Picó dances with the silence of Spanish democracy, and, at the same time, provides possibilities to discuss the memories that haunt the present. These three female choreographers have facilitated an understanding of the female body and femininity that highlights the complexities of female democratic identities in contemporary Spain. They have provided an understanding of the silence that surrounds the contemporary Spanish scene through an acknowledgement of the ghostly memories that troubled the construction of the democratic times. And with this, their performances opened up possibilities to confront the haunting memories of Spain.

While the United Nations urges Spain to resolve its problematic relationship with the memories of the past, continuing the work of exhuming mass graves, for example, the silenced memories of the Civil War and Franco’s regime persist in the Spanish consciousness, take shape in the performing actions of these female choreographers.

**Further Research**

The circumstances that framed the evolution of modern dance in Spain inform current choreographers and contribute to the development of the discipline as a whole. It also allows political and governmental structures to acknowledge and take responsibility of the past.

However under the critical conditions of a financial crisis, which has eliminated public budgets for education and culture, the protection of archival heritage is threatened. Therefore, working with historical archives appears to be an urgent matter in Spain.

Research needs to be done on *Guernica’37* as the only (recorded) piece that tackled the memories of the past in the transition to democracy. Still today the piece has not been properly examined. The silencing mechanism in Spanish society allowed the piece to vanish along with the choreographer Palomares.
Where there is limited historical archive, it is critical to retrieve more information on those pioneers that brought modern dance to Spain. Josefina Cirera Llop for instance, still remains unknown and vanished from the historical records. The legacy of Tórtola Valencia and Aurea Sarrà may need further archival research. What was their role in their early retirements in Barcelona? What did their bodies do in the aftermath of the Civil War?

A comparative study with other contemporary artists would allow an assessment of the extent to which these conclusions can be generalised, particularly to other regions within Spain, but also to other countries as well.
Bibliography


Floridor, 1921. La vida del teatro. *Blanco y Negro*, ABC. 27 Nov.


Appendix A

Chronology of political trends in twentieth-century Spain

- 1900: Monarchic restoration
- 1931: 2nd Republic
- 1936-1939: Civil War
- 1975: Dictatorship of Franco
- 1981: Transition to Democracy
- 2000: Democracy
Appendix B

Transcript of Interview with Anna Maleras

It was Wednesday 12 September 2012; my interview with Anna Maleras was at 11:30 in the morning. Previously, when I contacted her by email and telephone, she suggested holding the interview at her dance school. It was early September and the school was not very busy yet.

I arrived at the school on warm sunny morning. The door was open and Anna Maleras was at the reception, a 7 metre-square room with a table. Next to it was the only dance studio and the dressing rooms and bathroom. There was a ballet class in the studio and we could hear the music of the exercises: plies, tandues, gettes.

Anna Maleras is in her 60s, of petite build, with short white hair. She welcomed me in sport clothes, common for a contemporary dance class.

The interview was conducted in Catalan. I have translated the transcription in order to facilitate comprehension. While I have tried to maintain the fluidity of an oral speech, I have also modified certain moments of silence and murmuring to keep the fluidity of the text.

There is another woman sitting in one of the chairs. She witnesses the interview and even comments on it at some points. She appears in the transcription as ‘X’.

As an ethical compromise with my informant, I have decided not to show the public the excerpts that Maleras asked me not to reproduce, to preserve the private life of some of the persons Maleras mentions. Some content of this interview has not been transcribed, at Maleras’ request. A phrase noting the omission appears in square brackets in the text.

The sign ‘(…)’ marks long pauses and Argüelles hesitating but not actually articulating words.
Anna Maleras (AM): Let’s start then, you have to tell me what you want to know

Eva Aymamí Reñé (EA): Yes, I would like to talk about your experience with contemporary dance. You first studied dance with Magrinyà. How did you decide to study contemporary dance if there was no contemporary dance here in Barcelona at that time?

AM: It is not that I was studying with Magrinyà; rather, there was nothing else if you wanted to dance. I was studying ballet and Spanish dance at the Institute of the Theatre. I was doing ‘Maleras’, Emma Maleras’ [her aunt] Spanish dance, and escuela bolera. Flamenco no, because I have never been very good at it, and I was already doing one of the Spanish dances: escuela bolera that I was really good at it. And because I played the piano, the castanets also worked for me. And escuela bolera is very difficult: a mix of ballet technique and the castanets and all the arms technique. It is very beautiful, but has to be done really well, otherwise it can look ridiculous, corny (...) Now, it is not really taught outside of the conservatories. They are doing it, yes, bolera at the Institute of the Theatre, where Spanish dance and escuela bolera is a course.

EA: And when did you decide to go abroad to study dance?

AM: So I went outside the country to study ballet. The first trip was to Cannes, because Emma Maleras was very close friends with Josep Ferran, and he was Rosella Hightower’s right hand at her school in Cannes.

(...) Josep Ferran was a Catalan man who had been at the Liceu, he danced with Mrs Hightower at the Ballets of the Marquês de Cuevas. And when Hightower decides to start her dance school, Josep Ferran goes with her. He helps her a lot, and teaches at the centre, which is very beautiful by the way. And Emma Maleras said to me: ‘I think that you have to go there to study’, but always thinking about ballet.

EA: Yes … [nodding]

AM: Always thinking of ballet, there [at Rosella Hightower’s school] I found out that
there are more things. I discovered Lin McMurray and I fell in love with jazz. I discovered a Graham [technique] class that for me was a very ‘unusual’ thing. (...) I discovered this in Cannes, and from then on, I have stayed in touch with Linn McMurray. At this time, I opened the studio, in 1967 in Barcelona.

And all of these people that I met [at the school in Cannes] collaborated with me and came to Barcelona when I opened the school. And then this is a never-ending flow. I stayed in Cannes a lot, I met a lot of people and I brought them to Barcelona. Until that moment when I opened the school, ‘we’ were going outside, I started to discover things: the stages of Germany, Cologne and Paris. I say ‘we’ because I was never alone; I always went with a group of students, for example with Cesc Gelabert. For example we went to London, to participate in a workshop with Mad Mattox. There were at least 8 of us there. It was a time when we were moving a lot. During the summer we did not go on holidays. We looked for workshops, and ways of studying and broadening our knowledge.

(...) Gradually, I discovered that there is more than classical dance [ballet]. I opened the studio, which is the centre of this effervescence. Young dancers come to the school and are influenced by all of these new tendencies. During the summer we go out to attend workshops, or I bring in guest teachers. So, in the shortest time, only three or four years, we built this ‘bubble’ of openness in contemporary dance. After that, contemporary dance companies started appearing in Barcelona and Spain. Everybody was eager to see new things, we see new things and I bring new things. I carried on going out to do workshops and more workshops, always with other dancers. And then I created the Anna Maleras Study Group [her dance company], which is a showcase for all of this that is brewing, right? This is the beginning, and from this it has developed in many ways, for young people who look for new things. And from here, Cesc Gelabert, La Gran Companyia, Avelina Argüelles, and Margarit etc, can make their way out.

(...) However, the beginning, the real beginning, is this: went abroad and we ‘put ourselves in the emptiness’ as Cese always says. Because when we went to the first
stages in Germany, we took the classes thinking about the schedule, otherwise we did’t know who the people teaching were. For us everything was new. For example, I said before, that Alvin Ailey taught one of the stages; we did not know who he was at that time. For us, everything was ‘names’, no … no … no. For example, one time at a festival one of my choreographies was compared with one piece by John Cage and Merce Cunningham. I thought that Merce Cunningham was a woman [Mercè in Catalan is a female name]. I did not have any idea! We had been totally isolated here in Spain. The most avant-garde thing that had come was West Side Story, the movie!

EA: I am interested in knowing or understanding how this happened. Why do you think there was this sudden explosion of new techniques when you started bringing guest teachers here to Barcelona?

AM: Everybody wanted to free themselves, but we didn’t know how, because we didn’t have anything. And suddenly when attending the workshops, we started seeing new material. Because I did not fall on the greedy trick to go outside, maybe learn four steps and copy them and pass them on in the studio, and become a millionaire with these new steps. On the contrary, when I had seen a good master teacher I tried to ‘seduce’ him to bring him to Barcelona, so it was him who transferred the knowledge to us. Avelina Argüelles is part of this group that was eager to learn new forms. In a minimum of time they learned a maximum of things. During this first period, we carried on going abroad and continued bringing people here. And I started to organize the International Stages. Delfí Colomé helped me a lot to organize them.

EA: Do you remember who were the first people with you at the Grup Estudi Anna Maleras, and what year did you create it?

AM: Yes, and moreover there is a poster, with all of us. And now there will be an exhibition [Maleras goes to a cupboard and brings over some pictures and posters]. Look, it is like I’m going to die soon: because all the things, the exhibitions, books about dance and me, all of them coming together, now. Ha ha ha.

[X also laughs]
Appendix B

(…) The Sta. Mónica centre will host an exhibition of dance or something like that, I don’t know exactly. Because Noguero asked me several things, and the other day a photographer was here. But look, these are the pictures that I prepared for the photographer. I can look for the picture of the first Grup Estudi for you, you will see the people … here … it’s been a long time since then

[Maleras shows me several pictures while she is looking for the picture of the first Grup Estudi]

AM: This is the first group: here is Avelina Argüelles, Cesc Gelabert [Maleras shows me the pictures and hands it to me] Look, this is the first Estudi: Avelina Argüelles, Anna Griñó. Cesc is hiding here, look, here he is with this long hair. [unintelligible words from Maleras] Gorget, before she created the Gran Companyia, which was very advanced for its time. This is Lizzet Bubblet, a very beautiful dancer. Mari Barbeiro, Montse Catarineu.

EA: Catarineu?

AM: Catarineu

[Maleras leaves the room to check something in the studio, where a ballet class is going on. She comes back after a minute]

EA: Can I take a picture of this poster?

AM: Yes, this is 6 December, 10.00 pm, the Alianza Theatre in the Poble Nou.

[The phone rings and Maleras replies. From what I can hear, it seems to be a woman asking for the time the class finishes]

AM: [on the phone] Wait a bit, until ten, because it finishes at that time more or less. [to me] I feel like everybody asks me things.

[Maleras goes back to the pictures]

AM: These are the first programs.
EA: Programs of the choreographies and performances you organized?

AM. Yes. This might be from the 1970s …

EA: Regarding these pieces, were they created collectively?

[Maleras makes a sign pointing at herself]

EA: So did you do the choreographies?

AM: Most of the time yes. And eventually we invited somebody to choreograph. But let’s see … most of the time we were fishing choreographers. When I had seen a good master teacher I tried to ‘seduce’ him to bring him to Barcelona for him to transfer his knowledge to us. This [unintelligible]

(…) Antúnez was at the Harriets Ballet company and was one of the dancers there. One day I saw him in the Rambla having a coffee. I recognized him, and I asked him to come to the studio with me and work for us. He came and in two or three mornings he choreographed a piece for us. This is how we were functioning basically. The point is just to be open-minded and just go for it, to be aware that we were nobody, and that is how it worked.

EA: Going to these European cities, which had so much tradition in contemporary dance was … [Maleras interrupts my question]

AM: Yes, jazz, we were crazy for jazz. Oh, but look at this picture, playing the piano was Joan Albert Amargós. He was starting to play jazz at these time as well, we were all stating together. And well, the truth is that … well let me see …

[Maleras takes out other pictures and comments on them with me]

AM: This is my boy [pointing at Cesc Gelabert]. I always call the men of the company ‘my boy’: Cesc, was my boy.

[Maleras leaves for a moment and goes into the studio again. She comes back in less than a minute with more pictures.]
AM: [Pushing the picture towards me.] This is me making Spanish omelette during the summer. Because these were dancers from the Liceu, who did not know how to dance anything else but ballet and Spanish dance. However, during the summer tourists were coming to the Costa Brava, and there, we were dancing ‘Spanish shows’ for them.

[Maleras, who has spoken the entire interview in Catalan, changes to Castilian for the last phrase]

[Another picture] And look, this is Cesc and me, [another picture] and this is Gerard Collins and me. Now, look at how lucky you are, you will have a lot of material with these pictures, just by chance because I was preparing these pictures for the exhibition at the Santa Monica Centre. [art and culture centre in Barcelona]

EA: Yes, this is very good for my research. I see that one of the problems we have is that there is not enough archive of our own dance history.

X: No, no. We don’t sell ourselves enough.

AM: I have forgotten what you told me, what was this study for xata? [Maleras uses a loving nickname to refer to me.]

EA: I am doing my doctoral degree at a university in England

AM: ah!

[Maleras keeps silent for a couple of seconds.]

X: Well, let’s see if you sell us well there.

EA: Of course.

AM: This is the original picture of [incomprehensible]

EA: How did all these activities happening in Barcelona connect with Madrid? Carmen Serna also opened her studio of contemporary dance in Madrid some years after you had opened in Barcelona, right? What was the role of Carl Paris in …
AM: Excuse me, excuse me [with an increased volume] Anna Maleras brought Carl Paris! Carl Paris asked her [Anna Maleras] for a steady position here in Barcelona, but I could not see how I could afford him in my studio. And then he decided to go to Madrid with Carmen Serna.

EA: Ah! Where did Carmen Serna encounter contemporary dance?

AM: Carmen Serna had studied jazz, and in her moment, when she was young, she danced jazz much better than I did. It is true, I saw her do a solo on stage: she was a dancer! She had studied a lot in New York, but not like me: one month here and one-month there. She was really good, better than me. But I caught Carl Paris for my workshops. And during the summers Carmen would come to these workshops that I organized in Palma de Mallorca, and there she contacted Carl Paris to work at her school in Madrid. But this was very good for me, because this gave work to Carl and then he stayed in Spain.

EA: Do you know when Carmen Serna opened her studio in Madrid? It was a bit after you.

AM: Yes, it was after me, but I don’t have any idea of the exact time. [Maleras goes back to look at her pictures.] Look, what a beautiful picture! This is Mr Cesc. He started with me.

X: Oh, look at the hair here! [X maybe was making an observation about the fact that Cesc Gelabert had a lot of hair on his head when he was young, in the picture, but he is now bald and shaves his head completely.]

AM: Of course, he was nineteen or eighteen years old here.

X: I was a student of his, when I was really young.

AM: Ah, really? On Saturdays, I taught classes to them, to this group [the initial Grup
Because the school was a fashionable thing, during the week we were all working, and then we could live from that.

EA: Do you mean that your dancers from the Grup Estudi were working as dance teachers?

AM: Yes, here at my school. My studio was really over worked.

X: I am leaving now, are you leaving tomorrow Anna?

AM: [To X] I am leaving tomorrow. Today I will go and have a swim in the sea and have a coffee on the beach. Then tomorrow, at four pm, I will be in front of the Liceu, and we will go in with the students. And then we will stay two hours there, because the performance by Alvin Aley starts at eight pm, right? I will be there with the tickets.

X: Yes, yes. Ok, bye bye.

AM: [Returns to me.] This was also the picture of a programme of a performance.

EA: How would you describe the themes of your choreographies?

AM: Do you mean the inspiration?

EA: Yes, considering the historical period you lived in during the 1970s and 1980s, during the transition to democracy, what would you consider to be your main influences and inspirations? [Maleras interrupts my question.]

AM: No, no, no, it is not exactly this; do you know what always inspires me? Music. Music for me; it is fundamental. For example, this [she shows me a picture of an earlier choreography] was something very funny, you see, we had guts; in the 70s we were wearing these leotards with red and green stripes. For this piece we used music by Bach, it was when electronic music appeared. There was a bit of theatre here as well. And the music inspired this story. I always went for music, unless it was something more straight and limited, like for example the homage to Frederick Montpou.
EA: I am thinking about the first *Mostra de Dansa Independent* organized [Maleras interrupts].

AM: It was Hermann Bonnín and me. When he was made director of the Institute of the Theatre, he looked for me. We became very good friends. And Barcelona owes Hermann Bonnín … You should definitely state this, very clearly: all of the movement, and the department of contemporary dance owe their creation to Hermann Bonnín for listening to irritating Anna Maleras (...). We got along very well. Hermann Bonnín is very important in the history of modern dance in Barcelona. Because, of course, I annoyed a lot of people who did not even consider what I was saying. But with Hermann Bonnín, no, they listened to him. And later on in the 80s, he created the department of contemporary dance at the Institute of the Theatre. He now directs the *Espai Brossa* [an alternative theatre in Barcelona] and he has also made a movie, and a bit of theatre. He is a very nice person. All of this is documented at the Institute of the Theatre.

(...) We both liked oysters a lot, and in one of these lunches that we were having eventually, there was always a new project coming up. And one of these projects was to organize a festival of contemporary dance, with *L’Espantall*, by Gerard Collins, and other choreographers.

EA: I was thinking of the piece *Guernica’37* presented at the first *Mostra de Dansa Independent* in 1977 and how this piece expresses the horrors of the Civil War and the years of dictatorship that came after it.

AM: *Guernica* was choreographed by Guillermo Palomares. He was a dancer at the José Limón Company. I brought him to one of my workshops in Mallorca, then I brought him to Barcelona - and we became very good friends. Here in Barcelona, he created *Guernica*, a very nice piece. I think it is recorded, but I am not sure. Like I just told you, I have to organise my archives a bit.

EA: Did *Guernica* win any awards?

AM: No, it did not win any awards. We went to Poland but [looking at the pictures]
this is Gerard Collins. And this is the person that made all of this possible, Walter Nicks.

EA: I see, Walter Nicks, was he your teacher at Rosella Hightower?

AM: No, no. I met him … [Maleras is silent, thinking] this is a very funny story, when he was living in Sweden, these Nordic people you know, they were working all year to afford the best holidays in Spain. They came to Sitges

[Fragment not reproduced at interviewee’s request]

And next year this man was in my studio at four pm teaching the first jazz class in Barcelona. And after that we never disconnected again. He always advised me about the teachers I should invite; he helped me to negotiate the price for the guest teachers.

[The ballet class in the studio next door finishes and the students begin to leave the class. At the same time several women arrive at the school and they seem to wait in the hall, were Maleras and I stay, waiting for their daughters.]

EA: Well, I don’t think I have any more questions.

AM: This is the first workshop in Sitges, I had organized some before in Palma de Mallorca, but this is the first in Sitges where I spent 21 years. After that, it was in Vilanova, then in Sabadell at L’Estruc, and for the 30th anniversary of the workshops, I celebrated in Barcelona in La Caldera, two years ago [in 2010].

EA: And now there is the centenary of the Institut [Maleras interrupts]

AM: Yes, now with the Institut celebrating 100 years, there will be celebratory events from next year, and I don’t know exactly what will happen. There is a book being written by mister Fábregas. [Looking at pictures] And look this is Carl Paris, look at his body!

EA: Oh! And Carl Paris stayed in Madrid, or did eventually go to Madrid to do the workshops? Because now [Maleras interrupts].
AM: Now he is in New York. No, he stayed in Madrid for a long time. But he returned to New York, because he was mugged in Madrid’s subway, and he panicked because he was badly beaten.

EA: [Nodding]

AM: He got beaten up. It was in the newspapers! And after that he decided to go back to New York; he did a PhD in dance history there.

EA: Oh, I didn’t know that!

[I change side on the cassette recorder]

AM: [About Carl Paris] But he has an incredible body and you couldn’t guess his age. He is a father; he had a baby boy when he was young, around eighteen years old. He even went to the Vietnam War. He is very happy now, he has a son, and this son when he was twenty also had a son. So now Carl is a very happy grandfather! He lives in New York in a very nice apartment. I have been there; it is a very nice area.

EA: When did this happen? When did he leave for New York?

AM: A long time ago! Because he panicked, and in particular he had his son and grandson there. And he also had Alvin Ailey who always welcomed him. This is what is good about these big companies; they can take care of their dancers.

EA: Nodding. I think I have finished. Do you want to tell me anything else?

AM: Well, it’s up to you if you want to ask me more questions.

EA: Thank you for offering me your time Anna.

[Maleras continues talking about tonight’s performance by Alvin Ailey at the Liceu in Barcelona. She will go tomorrow to an open rehearsal with her dance students, mostly teenage girls who attend the ballet and contemporary classes at her school]

--- End of interview
Appendix C

Transcription of Interview with Avelina Argüelles

Thursday 13 September 2012, Argüelles suggested we hold the interview in her office at the Institute of the Theatre, where she is the Head of Department for the Contemporary Dance speciality.

I am waiting at the hall; Argüelles arrives slightly late. She smiles at me and greets me, opening the door of her office. Argüelles sits on her office chair and suggests I sit on the other. She is a 64 year old woman, wearing a black shoulderless dress. She wears her long hair down as I remember from the classes she used to teach at the conservatory.

In a previous interview with Argüelles in 2007, we discussed her career as a choreographer and she discussed the insights of the main pieces, such as Rings without Fingers, Parallels and Do not step on the Grass. In this interview I wanted to tackle her participation in the female collective Heura and the piece Rings without Fingers, which created controversy and allegedly lead to her departure from the collective.

The interview was conducted in Spanish. I have translated the transcription in order to facilitate comprehension. While I have tried to maintain the fluidity of oral speech, I have also modified certain moments of silence and murmuring to keep the fluidity of the text.

As an ethical compromise with my informant, I have decided not to show to the public the excerpts that Argüelles asked me not to reproduce. Some content of this interview has not been transcribed, at Argüelles’ request. A phrase noting the omission appears in square brackets in the text.

The sign ‘(...)’ marks long pauses and Argüelles hesitating but not actually articulating words.
Avelina Argüelles (AA): How do we start?

I set up the sound recording and ask her if she minds if I record the interview. Argüelles says that she does not mind.

Eva Aymamí Reñé (EA): I would like to talk about your participation in Heura.

AA: The collective was formed within the Institute of the Theatre (IT). An initiative of Alicia Pérez Cabrero. At that time Avelina Argüelles was at the IT as a ‘free student’. After finishing the BA in philosophy I studied with … I knew about the IT through Anna Maleras, because I came to substitute her as a teacher. This was around the 1970s. My main influences in dance, I think we already talked about that, right? In a nutshell, I first started dancing in Juan Tena’s company. He was teaching and choreographing a very different ballet technique. It was very avant-garde during the 1970s. After that I discovered Anna Maleras, and we were doing a big mixture of dances, ballet, flamenco and some modern dance and modern jazz.

(…) After that, when Maleras helped to bring contemporary dance to the IT with Hermann Bonnín, Giancarlo Bellini came to teach Limón, he was the first Limón dance technique teacher in Spain. When the IT first introduced contemporary dance as an class at the conservatory, Núria Piera became the first student to graduate in contemporary dance, this was in 1977 or 1978. At the beginning, first off, the contemporary dance courses were not official. The teachers came and went and sometimes we were left without teachers, then we taught the class to each other.

(…) And Alicia Pérez Cabrero said, ‘so many classes, we are taking so many classes, why don’t we organize a group, an independent collective?’

EA: and what was the theme that united you in this collective?

AA: well the collective started because we thought we were all good, and that we all knew. But actually, we had very different experiences. For example there was Remei who was twenty years old, and then me, for example, I was already twenty-nine and I had some previous experience in dancing, with Tena and Maleras, before.
(...) And with the collective we began to experiment with choreography. *Com et dius nena* and two other choreographies were the first pieces presented at Heura’s introduction: *Ausencia* by me, and *Caixes* by Gilberto Ruiz Lang. This was in autumn ’78 and we premiered them in 1979 at a festival (…)

E.A: Was this at the *Mostra*?

AA: yes at the *Mostra*…

EA: what were the themes of these pieces?

AA: well, the themes came from a workshop held at the IT. [Argüelles’ words unintelligible]

(...) It is an abstract thing. There is a poem, but it is abstract. And in *Com et dius nena* as well! We did some word games, like repeating: rrrrrrrrr. With regards to the themes, what we did not look for was form for the sake of form, but we looked for something personal, something that would motivate us. And *Laberint*, the first piece Gilberto directed for us at a workshop at the IT, was more aesthetic, yes… Because Gilberto gave us a study of textures, I think. He suggested investigating different textures. So it was a study about quality of movement. We worked like we were creating poems.

[Fragment not reproduced at interviewee’s request]

EA: So what happened with the members of the collective? Elisa Huertas went to dance with Pina Bausch, right?

AA: Yes

EA: When did she return?

AA: She didn’t return. She died.

EA: Did she die there in Germany?

AA: No, she came back to die here in Barcelona.
AA: Actually, the relationship of the members of Heura with the outside word was very poor. They did not know who Pina Bausch was. I did! Because I had been going to Germany, to her workshops. Bausch was starting her company at that time; she came to the workshop classes in Germany and sat and watched. Bausch was doing exactly the same as Kurt Joss, who was coming to the classes, and after the class you could talk to him.

(…) I remember when I was going there to take classes I always came back crying. Because there was so much there and here it was like a desert, not contemporary dance at all.

(…) At that moment I thought that something needed to be done, because every time I did auditions I realized I did not want to be the dancer of another choreographer, to dance things that I was not interested in. I wanted to dance things, to communicate things. But I did not know how to do it; there were a lot of motivations. You also have to take into account the historical times; this was a country, being repressed: politically, physically, all kinds of repression. We were living in a kind of apartheid, yes that was it. This was a backward and poor country. And in dance as well (theatre on the contrary was more advanced but not dance). There were dance companies of Spanish dance and the opera, but nothing else. As might happen in the theatre, when starting an independent company, we were very excited at the beginning… I remember going to Cologne (with Anna Maleras), I was doing five hours of classes a day! I was taking notes of the classes in my very old notebook, because we felt like we had to take energy and ideas for the rest of the year. And of course we had very little savings and we were spending all of them there. And when we were back here, we were teaching dance classes to survive right?

(…) Here I had already served my purpose with my family, because I had my university degree (in philosophy), after that I tried to survive as I could, do you understand?
EA: I see. When you mentioned the political repression of the country, how do you believe the repression may have influenced the development of Heura? (AA interrupts me)

AA: Well it was a way of … dance was a principle of freedom. When I was young, during Francoism, repression was everywhere. As a woman, you had to wear clothes that were not very provocative. It’s not just that we had to go to Perpignan, France, to see uncensored movies, but it was everything: at school, girls had special education with the things that they [the regime] tried to put in your head.

(…) At the beginning of Heura we were very excited: who are we? What do we want? It was not like now: ‘how much will they pay me?’ We were a collective that was not making any money. At the beginning there were no subsidies. We were selling pieces of sandwiches at the entrance to the theatre to earn a bit of money. (…) I remember once, a friend of mine gave me a ham, and we raffled it in the theatre, just to get some money to be able to … well it was like that. Then, I got a couple of performance contracts in a theatre, and the money we got from there we did not keep it for ourselves, the money we made we kept to have some left over for the company. And I remember when I left the collective; two years later I left without anything (any money). They kept the van, and everything else.

EA: Why did you leave Heura? How long were you in the company?

AA: I was there for two years, two performances. After that, after Isabel Ribas left. (…) With Isabel we premiered her first piece Com et dius nena. After, they went to Frankfurt, it was like a fashion show for them, and they went there without knowing what it was all about. And finally the surprise was that Pina Bausch at the beginning was interested in both of them: Isabel and Alicia. In the end Pina chose Isabel [Unintelligible]. And then I thought, ‘how silly I have been thinking of doing something by myself alone, instead of going to an existing company that appealed to me’ (referring to Pina Bausch). Pina was something more than just movement, and I then realised I should have gone with Isabel and Alicia to audition for her.
(…) That same year, in 1979, we sent some of our choreographies to Cologne to take part in the festival, and they selected *Com et dius nena* and *Ausencia*. However, *Laberint* had already won an award in Bagnolet. It was not a choreography for a contest really, but we passed the first selection and we were finalists, but we did not win any prizes. Then with the same choreography we went to Lyon, or no, to Switzerland, and this time we did win a prize.

(…) The second year we presented at the Regina Theatre [I interrupt Argüelles, she is giving me a lot of information, that I cannot contextualise, so I interrupt her to clarify the information]

EA: At the second *Mostra*?

AA: Yes, at the second *Mostra*, and this is when I premiered *Anells sense Dits*

[Fragment not reproduced at interviewee’s request]

*Anells sense Dits* became the icing on the cake, and I became certain at that moment that I did not want to work anymore with any of them. Two men had joined the company, Álvaro de la Peña and Toni Gómez. I thought about making a piece with both of them, and what came to me was the idea of my sister’s wedding in 1964, which was a moment of repression. [*Anells sense Dits*] won the second prize in Germany, but actually the first prize was not awarded, so it was like a first prize. Ah … and another piece that was selected in Cologne was *Passatge*. This choreography was supposed to belong to Huertas, but really … it had become a collective piece in which Alicia Pérez Cabrero, Álvaro de la Peña and Àngels Margarit were dancing. It was about a man and a little girl, you know it was a little bit creepy [contemptuous gesture], and this choreography did not win anything, which was a little bit bad for them, because I was dancing with two men, one of them was a beginner, and I won the award and they did not. However, this piece and mine were selected to be recorded by German television. And when the recording started, the black mail also started. I don’t know if I have already explained it to you …

EA: No
AA: Just as we started shooting, Álvaro de la Peña told me that he would only dance the piece if I was going to hand over the rights to my piece to Heura.

EA: Do you mean the copyright to perform it?

AA: Yes, the piece itself to be performed by Heura. Then I said that I was leaving the collective. I had not received any money or anything at all, and (…) Toni also left the group with me, he was also tired of them. It is difficult, you know, when it is a collective. But actually the conflict originated a bit before, when we were thinking about who could replace Isabel Ribas, who had left the collective for Pina. There was one candidate, Anna, I don't remember her last name, she was a choreographer and she was very specific, but we were looking for something else maybe, I don’t know. I liked Àngels Margarit a lot, I had her as a student at the IT, giving her ballet classes, she was one of the only ones resisting … and thanks to her I also survived there at the IT. (…) I survived teaching ballet technique to the contemporary department, and contemporary technique to the ballet department, it was 1977-78. I really backed Àngels to be in Heura, I insisted a lot, because overall it was in my pieces that I needed someone to substitute Isabel. However, sometime later she became the trigger, Àngels Margarit. She was the youngest of the members, but the one with most character.

[Fragment not reproduced at interviewee’s request]

_I turn the cassette over. As I turn the cassette recorder on …_

AA: You don’t have to put this in your writing…

EA: I will not put everything in

AA: No, not everything. So, some tensions were created. It became a kind of a collective of power, with very bad habits. It was like: the young ones were a bit weak and they were the good ones, and the older ones were the bad ones. There were things that irritated me, such as, people who were real hippies, for example [Fragment not reproduced at interviewee’s request], who were always smoking joints. And when we
were going to gigs abroad, it was like we had to spend all our time together, like we were at primary school, and I really couldn’t stand that. I remember I suggested and wrote some statements to try to resolve these tensions, and when I was reading them I said, ‘you know, fuck it!’ I was tired of it. When we were going to a little town, for example, we all had to be there just to take seven cardboard boxes that were very light. We all had to be there as we were ‘doing something’; do you know what I mean? Like we were a community. Then there were these lunches that we would have, all together, just before the performance, talking in a way that got on my nerves, like hippies, like we are all good. It really was driving me crazy. There were things that started to make it more difficult, little by little. Eventually there was an abyss between them and me, and Toni as well who was with me.

(...) After that, at the second *Mostra de Dansa Independent* we had to create one choreography, which I was not interested in at all. As I was telling you, we were there for hours and hours trying to create something and there was nothing there to pull out. I found myself in a situation that I had to do something that didn’t interest me. Because, I think there are moments of creativity and others which aren’t so blessed, and that moment was not blessed. Also I began to look for other things, for my own methodology. Besides, there was also another choreography in the second program, choreographed by Remei I think. In that piece we were impersonating monkeys, a very surrealist thing, which we had to spend hours and hours in creation, and the dancing part was very little. There was another part of the piece that was about questions and discourses. Well, so after that we went to Cologne and … you know what happened. We had the shoot for German TV and we did not receive any money for that. You know, they (the collective) ask me to leave the choreography with them when I hadn’t received any money. Anyway, I decided to leave Heura, I left everything, even the costumes for my pieces. But I re-performed my pieces afterwards, when I was on my own … *Ausencia* and *Anells sense Dits* as well, *Anells sense Dits* several times, with two different male dancers, and the re-construction did not work very well, but I was performing again.
EA: Avelina, when you talked before about the repression surrounding *Anells sense Dits*, could you explain what you meant by ‘the repression at that historical moment’?

AA: Well, the repression by Franco, by which women had to marry virgins.

EA: Do you mean gender repression? (AA interrupts)

AA: No, although traditional gender values sounds a bit old and archaic, at that time they were actually very much present. My mother and … and my sister married at twenty and my other sister at nineteen. She has never lived alone, for example. And I knew that she was a virgin, and that she was getting married to another virgin, a man who was coming from the Jesuits. It is a little bit like she was passing from (…) She spent all the night crying, and I did not understand why, because I asked her, ‘why are you crying?’ You don’t have to marry if you don’t want to.’ Well, six years earlier she wanted to become a nun, and her head was a mess at that time. Well, I wanted to study to become a doctor and I did not know if I could, but she was crying that night, and actually, her marriage is the only one that has survived through time! They still live together. However, at that moment it bothered me that she was getting married. Because the thing of the white dresses, the nuns in the middle, and the groom. On the other hand, my father was not sure about it, telling her the day of the wedding ‘if you have second thoughts you just need to tell me.’ Everything bothered me a bit. Because it seemed to me that she had to try other things before. And it confirmed to me at that moment: ‘I will never get married! It is not in my priorities.’ This does not mean that I would not have done it if later I would want. But this is also why I represented her (in the choreography) as a package passing from one man to another. Well, in a lot of countries it is still like that, right? At the end, at the Regina Theatre, I set up the end [unintelligible].

Afterwards I ended up adding another ending, the one with ‘The Aunt.’ I added the song ‘The Aunt’, which was another type of repression. I remember the mother of Mireia Font who was a feminist, asking me: ‘why did you use that? This is like an insult!’ It was an insult, but it was a reality.
EA: How do you think your piece insulted this reality?

AA: Well, it was a criticism of ‘mmh, this mmh … that’ [makes approving noises], so I think, rather than having a marriage, I masturbate alone and so I am at ease! ha ha ha. This is better than being with a premature ejaculator, or a drunk who cheats on me with other women, or whatever. Well, I do not believe deeply in marriage. Moreover, it [marriage] has been perverted so much, and overall lays in the execution of the traditional roles of women and men. It is in everything, you know. In Anells sense Dits, the title means that the rings are left there (without fingers). Just so as not to fulfil the role that is assigned to us, you know?

EA: Yes, that is why I find your pieces interesting because…. (A.A. interrupts)

AA: And this piece was very short, only ten minutes, right? But, there in Cologne, among the judges, there was Susanne Linke. She came to congratulate me saying that the piece was very ‘uncomfortable’. You know here, the piece was not understood because it was narrated in a language of parody. Like Alice in Wonderland, with elements like the big hat, which is what you imagine when you are a teenager: the groom using the hat as a support for his movements. For me the characters were very precise and clear: for example the stranger who arrives and gets in the middle of the relationship between father and daughter. At that moment this relationship was a bit, kind of incestuous, just because at that moment the man interpreting the role of father was Toni (…).

[Fragment not reproduced by interviewee’s request]

I was imagining my sister’s wedding happening to me, and at one moment my father and I would be waiting for the groom to ask me: ‘Do you want to get married?’ And I would say ‘No’, and I would leave, ha ha ha. And I choose that topic for a piece because it was a man-woman-man trio and I somehow had this situation pending in my mind. I think the piece was more successful in Germany than here, because there they understood the critique through parody more; here maybe the audience was used to more aesthetic pieces, which focus on the form and technique rather than the
content of the dance.

(…) The conflict in shooting *Anells* was Álvaro de la Peña, who stood there, on the day of the shooting, seven hours while we were waiting for him to agree to dance it and shoot it. He was very stubborn, saying that he would not dance if I did not give the piece to Heura, and of course I didn’t want to do that. After that, I left Heura and Toni and I began our careers alone. We both choreographed *Zapatos*. (…) I was using, without knowing it, Gestalt methodology for creating, which is very widely used in German theatre. I used scenes interrelated with each other, kind of sketches. *Zapatos* was inspired by my brother’s death. When he died in the mountains, he was found barefoot and his trainers were lost in the mountains.

(…) We premiered the piece in Sitges and could not even have a dress rehearsal. When we started to dance the music was at a double speed. So I stopped dancing and said to the technicians ‘stop’ and explain to the audience: ‘sorry we did not have any time to rehearse with the technicians before, and the music is at a double speed. What do you prefer, that we continue like this or that we start from the beginning at the natural speed of the music? … Well, as you haven’t said anything, we are going to start from scratch.’ Ha ha ha, and so we did.

(…) Regarding Heura, I left in July 1980, and then they did another performance without my pieces. In 1981, Àngels Margarit took over the leadership of the group and she choreographed *Temps al Baix* with geometric inspirational forms. After that, they performed the piece and the group dissolved. But you know, they kept everything, all the materials that we had before. At the end, Lola Puentes and Mónica who had recently joined Heura, were the only ones left.

(…) But just before the dissolution of the collective, Isabel Ribas came back from Germany. She knew that she was already dying, and she came to choreograph her final piece, *Le ciel est noire*, which was inspired or almost choreographed by Pina Bausch. She could not finish the choreography because she died, so, her boyfriend … hmm what was the name of this man… Arthur Rossenfer continued the production. This production was already far away from the style of Heura, because it was more
along the lines of Pina Bausch. It was totally a Pina Bausch aesthetic. You know, there were images of women in circles, holding hands, or wearing shoes, etc. And it appears that during the final stage of the production there were already a lot of problems among the dancers: Colomé, Roselló, Elisa Huertas, Carme Vidal and Carme Fuentes were the old ones left but the rest were new members, and some men as well. So, it seems that there were some frictions at the end, because on the one hand, some of them wanted to do something more formal-aesthetic and on the other hand, others just wanted to follow Isabel’s indications. Finally the piece was performed. But when somebody is dying and there are other people being annoying; it is a bit extreme, no? So after performing the piece, some people left the group. Finally the group reached its end. The problem is that she [Margarit]) always wanted more power, and to control the group.

EA: When were you active until as a choreographer?

AA: Until 2000. Actually, I think I did a small thing at the Lliure theatre, Doce coreografos bailan Serrat in 2002. My old piece No trepitgeu la gespa is a piece for six dancers, among them Joe Alegado and Rick Merril. There were ego problems there.

[Fragment not reproduced as at interviewee’s request]

After that I did the solo piece with the stick, Bailando con el 3. I think it is tiring to continue as a choreographer, in my studio alone, I got tired. But actually the last time I performed was last year [in 2011]! Yes, with a cellist. I danced while he played. It was a little thing, a little piece … yes … and …

[It seems like Avelina is losing the logic of her discourse trying to remember things without a clear purpose]

EA: Thank you Avelina for so much information, I think I can call the interview to an end now.
AA: If you want to know some more about Heura, you could also ask Alicia Sánchez Cabrero, because she was there from the beginning, not like ‘the other’, I won’t even say her name, ‘the other’ ha ha ha. You can contact Alicia on her home phone … [Avelina gives me Alicia’s phone number]

--- End of interview