Dancing Affect in the Aftermath of Loss: *El loro y el cisne* and Argentina's Generation "In Between"

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Alejo Moguillansky's third film*, El loro y el cisne* (2013), mischievously articulates the dancing landscapes of an outlandish Argentina through an unusual love story with autobiographical components. The film seems to elude a conventional analysis. It could be read as an improbable southern remake of *Swan Lake*, drawing upon the rehearsals of Grupo Krapp, an Argentine experimental, independent dance company. Alternately, *El loro* can be viewed as a quirky rom-com in which the director surreptitiously forms part of the romance while the characters flirt constantly at both sides of the camera. The film could also pass as a contorted musical or as a memoir of first-time fatherhood. *El loro* is most likely all of the above, and more.

Rather than consider *El loro*'s enfolded puzzle of screens, stages, and lives as a threat to the idea of generic purity, I propose that it sheds light on a new body of work, an upcoming hybrid genre within Argentina's contemporary filmic and theatrical production. In particular, I examine how this southern version of a classic ballet fable provides a playful overlap between documentary and fiction, while calling into question traditional boundaries across the arts. In dialogue with Homi Bhabha's theories on postcolonial literature and recent affect studies, I show how Moguillansky's crossover of genres provides a powerful transnational critique of what it means to be a Latin American artist. Ultimately, I contend that *El loro* features a language breakdown for the aftermath of Argentina's last dictatorship (1976-1983). In doing so, it serves to envision the current dramas of a young generation for whom the resonances of the traumatic past are starting to fade away.

Act 1: Meeting the Director

Alejo Moguillansky was born in 1978 in Buenos Aires, two years after a *coup d'etat* led to a cruel bio-political regime responsible for kidnapping, torturing, and destroying politically engaged subjectivities. The experience of terror and loss vanished 30,000 lives, infamously known as *los desaparecidos*. When democracy returned in 1983, civil society was left with no bodies to be mourned. Against that contested background, which led to a decade of poverty and rough neo-liberal policies in the 1990s, Moguillansky's work has defended its right to be political in a non-traditional sense. His filmography includes the short films *Lola/Gonzalo* (2001) and *Un modo romántico de vivir su vida* (1999), as well as *La prisionera* (2006), which premiered at Berlinale, and *Castro* (2009), his second feature film, which was awarded the prizes for Best Film and Best Cinematography at the Independent Film Festival of Buenos Aires (BAFICI) in 2009, premiered internationally at Locarno's Festival, and was shown at more than 25 festivals in 30 countries. More recently, he directed *El escarabajo de oro* (2014), awarded the prize for Best Argentine Feature Film at BAFICI (2015).[1] Alongside Mariano Llinás, Agustín Mendilaharzu, and Laura Citarella, Moguillansky also founded El Pampero Cine, a renowned independent production house that promotes the talented work of his generation. Furthermore, he has been the scriptwriter for many films directed by friends and colleagues and has served as the editor and montage expert for more than 15 films.[2]

In the area of theatre, Moguillansky co-directed *El amor es un francotirador* with Lola Arias and regularly collaborates with the Grupo Krapp, in which his partner, Luciana Acuña, directs and performs. As a couple, Moguillansky and Acuña also staged the theatrical piece *Por el dinero* (2013), which focuses on the domestic struggle of a family of artists who depend on international funding and which could be read as *El loro*'s counterpart and a live bio-drama emerging out of the backstage of the film.[3] Currently, while he prepares the musical *Film por dinero*, Moguillansky is also finishing *La vendedora de fósforos*, a fictional film with a documentary component that draws on the attempts of the German avant-garde composer Helmut Lachenmann to put together an opera piece at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires when the orchestra went on strike at the end of 2012 (Fernández Irusta).

This prolific background has positioned Moguillansky as a main contributor in an emerging circuit of young directors based largely in Buenos Aires. This group of cinema and theatre-makers, born during or after Argentina's last dictatorship, has mostly avoided making political statements or

proposing revisions of the past like those that were made during the Kirchner period (2003-2015). Contrasting with the minimalistic profile of the neo-realist directors included in the so called "Nuevo Cine Argentino," this wave of hybrid artists has staged playful, stylish, and experimental proposals that have populated stages and screens with live compilations of experimental music, surrealist poetry, and dance, thereby contesting traditional boundaries among the arts. Overall, these productions have attempted to maintain a playful and sophisticated tone against what these artists consider overexposed political inquiries, mostly coming from artists who champion normative readings of the traumatic past. In Moguillansky's case, this aesthetic autonomy also hides a silent political platform. "Soy argentino, soy político. Creo que las formas pueden ser algo político, no sólo los argumentos," he has explained (Fernández Irusta). As I will explore here, this impulse has transformed Moguillansky´s disparate *mise-en-scenes* into surreptitious political stages.

Act 2: Mocking the Transnational

El loro was first released in April 2013 at BAFICI, a major event for international cinema and an experimental space for the younger generations. In October of that year, the film was applauded at the London Fest. The international appeal of a seemingly minor and self-founded piece should not come as a surprise.[4] The paradox of creating art from the margins has become a pervasive trope in Moguillansky's filmography, a subtle and ironic force that has circulated from his first piece to his latest while enacting a never-ending series of iterations and displacements. In *El loro*, this query enfolds an extra twist. Rather than being merely "packaged" to fit disparate transnational contexts, the film provides a sharp reflection on its own marginal and presumably amateur mode of production while circulating an impulse of resistance among Moguillansky's contemporaries.

Tensions between the local and the global become grounded in the film when an unlucky American producer arrives in Buenos Aires to make a documentary on the current dance landscape in Argentina. The documentary is supposed to be distributed across Latin American television channels in the US, "de Miami a New York." If this point of departure seems to champion colonial binaries, *El loro* ultimately dismantles such normative distinctions. The shooting of the alleged dance documentary —a film within the film— provides the perfect excuse to enhance the film with a stunning series of live rehearsals of different dance companies, including the Ballet Contemporá-

neo del Teatro San Martín, the Ballet Folklórico Nacional, and the Ballet Clásico del Teatro Argentino, as well as the Grupo Krapp. At the same time, sophisticated documentary footnotes contribute to an intimate and playful portrayal of the main characters of the local dance scene. The tensions encrypted in the film's narrative are diachronically highlighted through a series of archival interviews that bear, as the reverse shot, the unpleasant face of the American producer. Drawing upon the cultural exchanges between the center and the so-called "experimental margins," Moguillansky's film ultimately emerges as a lighthearted test of the ways in which "the agency of the colonised can be articulated" (McRobbie 106). Before unpacking the postcolonial aspects of the film, however, there are some autobiographical elements that must be considered.

Act 3: An Experimental (and Unattainable) Dance Group

In 2011, Moguillansky's partner, Luciana Acuña, was rehearsing a new piece with her company, the Grupo Krapp.[5] The rehearsals eventually led to *Adonde van los muertos (Lado B)*, an experimental dance piece whose main theme was death, or rather the possibilities of representing it (Yaccar). In the meantime, Moguillansky became obsessed with the creative process of the company and started filming the rehearsals. As he says in an interview, the Grupo Krapp's spirit reminded him of a romanticized youth in which everything seems to be done without money or resources (Cruz). Still, that was barely enough to make a film. "Cuando comenzamos a filmar la película, no teníamos la menor idea de la forma que tendría, del destino de sus personajes; mucho menos del destino del film," confessed Moguillanksy in an interview (*Cine Documental* 188). At some point, the director decided to call Rodrigo Sánchez Marino (better known as Loro), the sound engineer for Pampero Cine to help record the creation of the dance performance, and it was while watching Loro document the Grupo Krapp's rehearsals that the filmmaker decided to make him part of the story. From early on in the film, attentive spectators might notice Loro's figure, mysteriously reflected in the mirrors of different studios, impassively recording the dance rehearsals with his conspicuous microphone. Loro's attempts at capturing every sign of life generated a parallel choreography, which tended to overlap with what was being performed on stage, the filmmaker said (*Cine Documental* 189). As a result, the narrative of the film increasingly became more biographical, moving beyond the main territory of the dance into a celebration of both fiction and real life.

In fact, Moguilansky's film is informed by neverending layers of documentary and fiction. Loro's character turns out to be crucial in articulating the enfolded game of screens and stages proposed by the film, in which he also acts as the sound engineer working for the American documentary. From the first scene, which shows him reading the letter in which his girlfriend dumps him, his character moves towards the centre of the film. As Loro's emotional breakdown continues to unfold, the documentary team eventually engages with the Grupo Krapp in order to find something "más contemporáneo," as the producer says in the film. While recording the rehearsals of the company, Loro falls in love with Acuña. "Todo lo que pasa en el film es real. Salvo, esperemos, el romance entre Lu [his partner] y el Loro," joked the director (*Cine Documental* 188). Moguillansky follows Jean-Luc Godard's tradition, alleging that, for him, there is no difference between documentary and fiction: "La fusión es lo que más me interesa" (Bernades). In any case, the emergence of the "real" took an unexpected turn; during the dance rehearsals Acuña became pregnant in real life. While filming the fictional romance between his partner and Loro, Moguillansky ended up recording the process of becoming a father for the first time

Act 4: A Love Triangle (and a Gigantic Mic)

A peculiar love story emerges in the background of Moguillansky's film. As a loquacious ballet instructor of the Ballet Clásico del Teatro Argentino de la Plata anticipates in one of the film's early archival interviews: "Todas las historias en el mundo del ballet son idénticas. Siempre hay un triángulo amoroso, como en la vida real. Y también está la lucha entre el Mal y el Bien, y la lucha por la supervivencia." He also recalls his own version of evil with a laugh: "Un señor que debe tener un mambo en su cabeza [a kind of loopy guy] que tiene el poder de transformar doncellas en cisnes." The love triangle that animates Moguillansky's film has a real-life component, which emerges as a twisted reverberation of *Swan Lake*. The sequence finishes in another dance studio with a zoom onto Luciana Acuña's face, ecstatically admired by Loro in the distance. Dressed in a fairy-blue dress, the only woman in the Grupo Krapp strikes a contemporary version of a postcolonial princess and also an unusual kind of swan. This southern Oddette is also the filmmaker's partner in real life. Boundaries between documentary and fiction blur once again.

Loro's nonstop attempts to register each piece of the experience delineate a clumsy anti-hero character who could be thought of as Moguil-

Photo: Fernando Lockett

lansky's alter ego. He appears to embody the filmmaker's archival anxiety, suggesting an enhanced form of subjectivity in which his old-fashioned microphone is not simply a documentary tool, but rather a virtual prosthesis of his own self. The mic not only reminds us of how much technologies frame the way reality is perceived in contemporary times, but also highlights the overlap of temporalities that coincide in current societies, a process that Bhabha has described as the "jet lag" inside the contemporary. Assuming that Loro's expanded hearing can actually *listen to* the resonances of that jetlagged postcolonial twirl, I propose to read the transcultural atmosphere emerging in Moguillansky's film in connection with the resilient effects (and affects) of the experience of loss embedded in contemporary Argentina

Act 5: The Transnational Swan

As with all classics, *Swan Lake* invites iteration and resistance. Variations of this traditional ballet have covered all possible genres and themes, including Japanese *manga*, the Hollywood version *Black Swan* (2010), and the recent race queries in *A Ballerina's Tale* (2015).[6] Yet Moguillansky's film performs another task; he proposes a twisted version of the classic in order to transform his own marginal background into an empowered critique of postcolonial regimes of cultural production. *El loro* is all about mimicry, translation, and subversion. This dynamic can be seen early on the film, when spectators are shown a magnificent rehearsal by the Ballet Clási-

co del Teatro Argentino de La Plata. Surrounded by a team of dancers and a pianist, the ballet's instructor mimics an archetypal sequence from *Swan Lake*, which is shown on a small TV inside the studio. First choreographed in Imperial Russia during the 1870s, the sequence also quotes Greek legends of swan maidens. The local instructor's loose re-enactment offers an empowered translation of the classic. His "translation" brings to mind the work of memory scholar Aleida Assmann, for whom the prefix "trans-" in "translational" not only relates to "transit" but also to "translation" (547). Assmann recasts the transnational as "the cultural work of reconfiguring established national themes, references and representations, images and concepts" (547). In this vein, the local ballet instructor's previous interpretation of the love triangle as well as his version of the classic *jeté, jeté, jeté* of *Swan Lake* reveal unexpected textures and tonalities, which connect the audience with an experience of translation that can also be read as a political appropriation of global tropes.

As Gabriele Klein argues, popular dances work as eruptive expressions of social and urban feelings (4). In Moguillansky's film, bodies become "surfaces of multi and transcultural adherence" (4), ultimately positioning affective encounters as expressive of epidemic tensions between regionalization, globalization, and renationalization. From this perspective, *El loro* envisions how traces of local trauma intersect with a broader fight in the context of Latin American cities. In particular, the postcolonial turn of the film is connected with two simultaneous but different critical operations. The first involves the subaltern translation of a hegemonic classic and the simultaneous entailing of a moral perspective. The second is the subversion of colonial power's attempts to exploit Latin American cultural production as "exotic." Both intersect in Moguillanky's film and are given a particularly mischievous turn, a frisky and humorous tone that also becomes a landmark for a generation of artists mostly born after an experience of terror and loss.

Within this process of translations-iterations, *El loro*'s screen has been populated by an alternative series of postcolonial heroes and villains. For instance, Moguillansky portrays the American producer—the ballet instructor's putative incarnation of Evil—spying through a window, making endless calls to sell his product to avid global publics. *Swan Lake*'s traditional captive damsels have evolved into hardened Southern Cone warriors, who, dressed in gracious tutus, are ready to promote their battle on a global scale. The trumpets of a stunning Tchaikovsky classical orchestra mute the impish conversations between the American producer and his local partner, making

room for vaulting bodies to offer a magnificent spectacle of postcolonial redemption against hegemonic power.

Moguillansky accentuates the self-reflexive dimension of this battle through a hectic spectre of montage operation, using inter-titles, excerpts of documentary interviews, and the superimposition of screens, among other techniques. He also combines text footage and overlapping images to stress how hybridity not only works as a disruption of genres but also as a source (or even a surplus) of irony that irradiates throughout the haptic surface of the film. Contagion is the rule. I suggest that all of these overlapping montage experiments act as a visual "excess" that finally spills over national borders. The idea of transnational "excess" identified by Assmann is a leading force that circulates throughout the film via different states of embodiment. It expands its visual and affective power with the use of graceful ballerinas and brave folkloric performers, finally landing at the Grupo Krapp's rehearsals, which are supposed to fulfill the postcolonial North's request of "algo más contemporáneo."

Act 6: Mimicry and Resistance

As Bhabha expresses in *The Location of Culture*, the manner in which colonised societies take on the culture of the colonisers is always part of the process of mimicry, which exhibits a fluctuating balance of ambivalence. This insight can be useful in exploring the figure of the American producer in Moguillansky's film. His attempts to capture the "authentic" dance scene of the Southern margins is one of *El loro*'s ongoing jokes. The producer also has a local partner, a naughty director/self entrepreneur (masterfully portrayed by Walter Jacob), who acts as the key interpreter (and translator) of cultural differences. The foreign producer and the local director ultimately embody a dynamic duo in which stereotypical tensions between the local and the global are displaced onto a witty and self-conscious parable of postcolonial ambivalence.

One scene in particular helps us to further grasp this precarious balance. At one point, the producer and director are watching the Grupo Krapp's rehearsals. As usual, Loro is obsessively recording every detail with his gigantic microphone. One of the performers is attempting to put together some unutterable movements. He stands alone in the middle of the studio, wearing a white hat and unnerving dark glasses. The musicians are absorbed, sketching some tones. The performer does not look human. He flexes his knees and slowly raises an arm towards the ceiling, accompanying his contorted

movements with disturbing high-pitched screams. The ineffable passage disorients the duo. The producer follows the enigmatic choreography with clear scepticism: "Is this contemporary?" he inquires doubtfully. The local partner looks as puzzled as the producer. His painful ambivalence is almost palpable; he looks trapped, almost helpless. But suddenly he sees the light: "Yes, this is contemporary," he asserts, quickly adding, "This is contemporary *résistance*!" He finishes the sentence in French with an enchanted gesture. "*Ré-sis-tance*," repeats the American producer, as if savouring the French word in his mouth. A smile starts to appear on his face: "In Miami they will love that," he states exuberantly.[7]

The sequence is exquisitely performed by Luis Biasotto, a founding member of the Grupo Krapp.[8] The resonances of the scene unleash various layers of uncertainty: Who is being mocked here? The producer? The director? The experimental dance group? Ambivalence prevails. The figure of the local director seems to confirm the extent to which the colonised looks "almost the same but not quite" the same as the coloniser (Bhabha, 226-27). It could be argued that the local director has developed a "double vision" that allows him to disclose the ambivalence of colonial discourse while at the same time disrupting its authority. Moguillansky portrays the local director's pressures well; since he has a product to sell, he opts to mimic a complicity with the foreigner to gain his favour. The ludicrous scene appears to be planted inside of Moguillansky's film, as if the Grupo Krapp's members

Photo: Fernando Lockett

(in some putative sense, the colonised) are mocking the pretensions of documenting the local scene as a type of exotic treasure. The sequence emerges as a kind of "untranslatable residue," to borrow Walter Benjamin's expression, that haunts cultural difference, showing how mimicry —and, broadly, also translation—provides space for contestation (McRobbie, 101).[9] The scene can also be thought of as a provocative laughter coming from the margins.

In the following sequence, the Grupo Krapp's members are interviewed about the meaning of the term "contemporáneo" in their work. Biassotto speaks about an association of resistance with a sense of dislocation: "La idea de resistencia tiene que ver con la sensación de sentirte descolocado todo el tiempo. [. . .] Es estar todo el tiempo descolocándote, como cayendo," he argues. Interestingly, this idea of resistance does not seem to be related to any sort of empowerment, but rather to a sense of failure: "Sabés que va a fracasar, que todo puede fracasar en cualquier momento. Sabés que te estás hundiendo pero seguís ahí, escarbando, en el medio de la oscuridad," the performer adds. This sense of vulnerability, of being off-centre all the time, can be associated with the feeling of "giving over to others," or, being "undone by each other," to borrow Judith Butler's words (23). In this vein, it stands in strong contrast with the figure of the local director, who mimics braveness. Those opposing layers show the precarious balance that rules Moguillansky's film. However, the force of the local also iterates a dissident impulse, which flows from the Grupo Krapp's rehearsals to the film's spectators, who can exit a screening feeling empowered and chanting "*Résistance, Résistance*. . . !"

Act 7: The Appeal to the Collective

Aleida Assmann asserts that the transnational can be defined as that which "spills over and seeps through national borders" (546). Drawing upon this, I suggest that an attention to the transnational "surplus" that arises from Mogillansky's film might also help to articulate a particular tension between the local and the global in place in contemporary Argentina. In particular, I want to make the case that Moguillanksy's film registers a fascination for the collective that became quite poignant during the Kirchernist period (2003-2015) and simultaneously highlights another stage in the experience of mourning.

Moguillanksy's film does not portray bodies in the public sphere but rather in dance studios and theaters. Yet *El loro* effectively nurtures the flows of intensity that circulate through the dancing bodies, ultimately harness-

ing this collective energy and making it its own. The particular atmosphere that circulates throughout the film, I propose, draws upon a rediscovered appeal to the collective that grew in importance during Néstor Kirchner's (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's administrations (2007-2015). Moguillansky's attraction to documenting the voluptuousness of the dancing bodies on stage mirrors the affective tonality of a period in which the power of the multitudes retook the streets. This could be witnessed during the anniversary of the military coup on March 24 every year; the celebrations of the bicentenary of the May Revolution in 2010; the impressive mourning rituals in the wake of Néstor Kirchner's death that same year; the enthusiastic interventions of La Cámpora, a youth movement within the Frente para la Victoria party that made a cult of the former president's remembrance; as well as the demonstrations in support of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, which continued as an expression of solidarity and resistance even after the official party was defeated in December 2015 by a right-wing economic coalition led by businessman Mauricio Macri.

In line with recent work in affect studies, I consider "affect" to be the particular vector or force that "arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (Seigworth and Gregg 1). In that sense, I suggest that Moguillanksy's film explores what a body can do and how it can affect others in a particular political period, which eventually might become expandable to other landscapes. This proposal is also attached to my long-term interest in finding ways of "thinking beyond or outside of representation," as Jo Labanyi has phrased it (223). Indeed, there was something very much "corporeal" during Kirchnerism, when multitudes went back on the social surface, willing to remake the public sphere. It was an epoch in which the multitudes emerged not as the dangerous, terrifying, and unpredictable forces that Sigmund Freud and Argentine writer José María Ramos Mejía proposed—an attitude championed by typical anti-Peronist literature—, but rather as capable of displaying a joyful and contagious intensity while staging alternative forms of being together.[10] This affective tone is also present in Moguillansky's film. The flows and rhythms of the performers on stage highlight how bodies interact with one other and are transformed by the effect (and *affect*) of those encounters. This appeal to what bodies can do seems to overturn Moguillansky's denial of the political in his work. It sheds light on a bodily "excess" that suggests alternative forms of cultural identification and belonging.

Act 8: The Third Space or a Generation "In Between"

The performative character of cultural translation is exacerbated in Moguillansky's film. Ultimately, a film documenting the rehearsals of different dance companies introduces a fragile play of gazes where screen and stages reflect and unfold in each other as in a hall of distorted mirrors. This mediation gives shape to a virtual area "in between" genres, an ambivalent space of enunciation that also suggests an embodied form of knowledge. I propose that this hybrid space might help rethink the idea of community in other societies emerging from loss. Drawing upon Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), I propose that Moguillansky's film suggests an appealing encounter between the postcolonial trauma and the local resonances that Argentina's last dictatorship left on the generations born during or after the military dictatorship.

If Rothberg's approach provides the opportunity to build dialogic forms of solidarity across traumatic pasts (Assmann 551) while proposing a cultural translation of Argentina's national drama into a broader context, I want to explore the relationship between affect and the way in which embodied memories can be addressed as corporally lived, rather than crystalized in fixed forms of memorialisation. Moguillansky's film helps to give a sense of the latest turn in contemporary Argentine production. In particular, it contributes to the identification of the unexpected doorways that have emerged out of grief, mainly a non-normative and playful approach to loss. To address this, however, it is necessary to consider first the particular ways in which the Grupo Krapp's rehearsals are incorporated within *El loro*'s narrative.

For the first part of the performance *Adonde van los muertos (lado A)*, the dance company invited 15 fellow artists to propose different possibilities of staging death.[11] Although the different proposals were not included in Moguillansky's film, the responses were surprising. Death was either pictured as a personal rhythm, a texture of time, an unattainable sound, or the moment in which a performance gestures towards its end. To some extent, they all gave a sense of an aftermath. The proposals were recorded and shown on a big screen during the Grupo Krapp's performance. On stage, the group enacted those ideas, providing a novel virtual crossover of images, bodies, and sounds, which created a generational platform of embodied ways of responding to death. To some extent, art worked as a collective instrument in addressing the ongoing traces of mourning.[12]

In the second part of the performance, *Adonde van los muertos (lado B)*, a playful spirit dominated the stage, as already suggested by the sequence of the bizarre screaming creature included in Moguillansky's film. That bouncy spirit worked as the common code, a sticky fluidity that managed to circulate from the Grupo Krapp's production to Moguillansky's film. The playful style of the group also draws from real life: "Tenemos un código compartido. Recorrimos una vida juntos. El humor es inherente a nosotros" (Yaccar). Moguillanksy's film goes a step further: It makes a festival of seemingly minor episodes in which the performers chase each other, improvise a skate contest or try a new choreography outside traditional spaces, ultimately just enjoying the fact of being together. This tone helps to create an alternative sense of the collective and, in doing so, the film also captures an alternative sense of the comical, which is embedded in the new wave of Argentine production of which Moguillansky is a part. This bouncy mood is not necessarily the dark humour previously enacted by the descendants of those disappeared by the dictatorship, but is more childish and indeed autoreferential.[13] If black humour functioned as a silent platform that informed the children of the disappeared's production, within this emerging body of work there seems to be no conflict that is politically grounded. The source of drama has become more existential and even unattainable. The humour that has emerged is naïf, unrelated, almost immature. Nevertheless, it still provides the lens through which a new wave of producers perceives reality, including their relationship with death.

As suggested by the screaming creature with the dark glasses in the film, by 2011 the Grupo Krapp's interrogations of death seemed to have reached a level of absurdity and even stagnation. The radical eccentricity of that odd creature gestures toward a deconstruction of movements where traditional disciplines have been dismantled. Its contorted movements also bear witness to a certain reluctance to being translated into a global language. The bizarre creature ultimately displays an uneasy form of stillness—almost an oxymoron for a dance company—, which suggests an alternative dynamic of work. As Klein suggests, "Dance forms are an element of power relations, which manifest themselves as 'body politics'" (4). The feelings of ambivalence and fragility emerging in the Grupo Krapp's performance suggest cultural tensions and crossovers that also illuminate the moment in which the process of translation becomes specific, or rather, political.

In *Adonde van los muertos (lado B)* the Grupo Krapp presented death as a sort of dislocated poem. The following are some of the questions that

were incorporated into the performance: "¿A qué hora preferirías morir? ¿Te gustaría ser el último humano sobre la Tierra? ¿Creés en Dios? ¿Cómo harías para desaparecer? ¿Sabés dónde dejaste tu auto? ¿Las palabras 'arte contemporáneo' tienen algún sentido para vos?" (Cruz). These ruminations function as haikus that speak to the sense of disengagement of a generation, its feeling of being "in between" languages, even while inside its own city and culture. I propose that the Grupo Krapp's haikus show how a younger generation is trying to build an alternative connection with a culture that has become strange. Drawing upon those live rehearsals, *El loro* suggests embodied forms of memory transmission that might help this generation to work through this experience of loss, against certain forms of institutional mourning. In doing so, Moguillansky's film also addresses the internal vibrations of a generation for which the traumatic past might have started fading away.

In both parts of the Grupo Krapp's production, trauma and performance were knotted together. Death worked as a space of creation, a stimulus that mobilises dance. This new entanglement between creation and loss shows how much grief has gone through the process of "countersignature," to borrow Jacques Derrida's term (220-21). It might also be related to a sort of "belatedness" in the experience of grief, following Marianne Hirsch's ruminations on the "postmemorial gap," which she first explored in her essay "The Generation of Post-memory." Rather than destroying any political meaning, the convoluted movements of the bizarre creature enacted by the Grupo Krapp not gave shape not only to a collective form of creation but also to an embodied response to death. Drawing upon this, Moguillanksy's film shows how the productions of the group responded to a communal atmosphere that exceeded its individual members. It is precisely this collective environment that sheds light on a generational imaginary in which the effects of mourning are translated into an experience of body-to-body transmission. This resilient mode of bereavement has created novel imaginaries for transnational gateways, which show how the aftermath of loss has also brought new pleasures to the present.

Act 9: The Performance of Life

If death was at the core of the Grupo Krapp's rehearsals, life bursts into Moguillanksy's film. Following the ambiguous inter-title "Después de las vacaciones," spectators might jump in their seats at the sight of Acuña showing off a prominently pregnant belly. There are no explanations regard-

ing a father. Instead, her pregnancy seems to come from nowhere, as if the group's ruminations on death created new life itself. Life and death are knotted together once again. The belly occupies the centre of the scene. As if it holds the embodied promise of an imminent but still unintelligible future, the tummy is first scrutinized from a distance and then examined and even recorded with scientific concern by the rest of the Grupo Krapp's members. The whole scene is muted until Loro turns on his ever-present microphone. The film then takes another musical turn and the celebration of the pregnant body yields to a different dance, which takes place beyond the stage. Arguably, the love triangle between Acuña, Loro, and Moguillansky has been completed behind the camera. Moguillansky has admitted that:

"No es una película que yo hice para el público, es una película que hice para ella [Acuña] y para los otros cuatro cretinos de Krapp. [. . .] No lo hice pensando en ustedes o pensando en la gente del BAFICI. No es un gesto. Es una película que hice como un pintor trata de retratar a una persona que admira." (*Cine Documental* 193)

The lines between fiction and reality again blur: Moguillansky is not only the father of Acuña's baby in real life, he is also the "father" of the film. The pregnant belly can also be read as Moguillansky's own relationship with a new body of work and arguably a new, upcoming genre.

Act 10: The Bath

In a memorable scene, spectators follow Loro inside the toilet, where he finds Acuña taking a bath. Her body is completely submerged in water, except for her belly, which becomes, once again, the center of attention. She inquires about Loro's breakup. Unable to cope with his own feelings, he interposes his huge microphone, seeking to obtain not only a toothbrush but also the mother-to-be's fears. His desperate attempts at recording *life* contribute to the portrayal of cinema (and art) as the spectral substitution of something that is lost. At the same time, Acuña looks troubled. She talks about a dream in which her dead mother was still beautiful and young: "Me tenía que despedir porque mis vacaciones ya se habían acabado. [. . . .] Ahora hay algo de eso, como si se me acabaran las vacaciones," she says. "Lo del bebé me da mucha felicidad pero también estoy triste por lo que se termina," she continues. The scene conveys a strong intimacy, a sense of closeness connected to the uncertainty about the future that marks younger Argentine generations, those who were not first-hand witnesses of the dictatorship's terror. If Acuña's pregnancy embodies a new space of liberty

that marks the emergence of an upcoming genre, her dream also captures the broader feeling of uncertainty of an entire generation, for which another kind of "holidays" might also be over.

The bath scene thus emerges as a secret layer of the local aftermath of trauma. It provides the sense of "jetlag" that imbues the generation of those born during or after the dictatorship. Within this collective atmosphere, hybridisation functions as a response to a dialogic overlap of traumas. On the one hand, it shows how this emerging body of work exhibits a feeling of disengagement in relation to loss. On the other hand, it also addresses a sense of being "in between" cultures, which has become particularly crucial for a group of artists whose strategies of survival are tied to a transnational management of the arts. The bath scene brings both tensions together. It captures the precarious sense of being an artist in a Latin American landscape as well as the "in between" feeling that highlights the belatedness of the post-dictatorial past. This double disengagement also provides the fluid surface where classics such as *Swan Lake* can be unashamedly iterated and re-signified.

In this context, I propose that Loro's antihero character comments on Moguillansky's place in the artistic field. The director is also an underdog within this new genre. He has also been "in between" worlds, not only as a filmmaker and montage expert but also as a translator of various artistic languages at home. As much as his films highlight the unexpected spaces of contestation that have emerged inside subaltern cultures, they also show how lateral characters can jump into leading roles.

Act 11: Dancing Affect

Moguillanksy's film finishes in San Francisco, a small, provincial village in northern Argentina. San Francisco has nothing to do with California, as the film insistently reminds its audience. Rather, it is Acuña's hometown and also the place where her father lives in real life. There, she has sought refuge to give birth to her daughter, Cleo. Loro eventually arrives, chasing the mother-swan. In another temporal jump, viewers are shown Cleo as a blossoming girl. While mother and girl play, Loro records Acuña's father and his friend, a retired choreographer, recalling old glories.[14] Moguillansky's camera playfully registers the "excess" of locality of these bodies; the director once remarked that he loved the idea of showing these bodies happily drinking a beer as the final landscape in his film (Cruz).

Captured in an ecstatic summer joy, the end of the film seems to take place "off the map." In this peaceful scenario, away from Buenos Aires'

theaters, *El loro* offers a last, gripping eruption of the real. Acuña and Loro are seated next to the swimming pool. She tells him about another dream. It is mostly a nightmare, in which suicidal babies immolate themselves in the name of the official party. Baby Cleo is also a fanatic martyr of the government, eventually also jumping into the void. In horrid contrast to the tranquil summer, Acuña's nightmare points to political activism as the cause of the infants' death. Her dream initially seems to offer an extreme possibility of staging death, a continuation of the work begun by the Grupo Krapp in *Adonde van los muertos*. As I have argued with María Delgado, the dream also appears as the horrid and distorted face of the Kirchnerist narrative, a period in which younger generations recovered a pleasure for politics (244).[15] However, next to the pool, words do not seem to matter. Loro's attempts to lecture on Acuña's dream fade into an undistinguished "blah, blah, blah" that appeas on the screen. With no script to follow, spectators are left to observe the couple swimming. What matters are bodies, skin, the tactile experience of the summer light. In this local fairy tale, Loro kisses the swan.

I suggest the last scene of the film could be read as a dance, a strange choreography of bodies under the summer light. For Klein, there is something "untranslatable" about dance (256). This condition does not emerge from its physical focus. Rather, she argues that what is indescribable in dance, or what "fails to be described," is some sort of "transcendental occurrence" (256). It seems to me that Moguillanksy's film can offer an alternative perspective. The last scene in the swimming pool envisions how the sense of "untranslatability" that Klein associates with dance can be more productively related to the "pre-conscious" and the "pre-linguistic" ways in which affect works (Massumi 30). In particular, it acknowledges the way in which affect always exists in excess, an argument that also reminds me of the way in which Assmann recasts the work of the transnational. By combining these insights, I suggest that dance emerges in Moguillanksy's film mostly as a rhythm, a fold, a timing, and even as a continuous passage of intensities that can be associated with a generational atmosphere, the particular twist embodied by what I call Argentina's generation "in between." It is precisely this sense of "in between-ness" that blurs boundaries between fiction and reality, stages and screens, private and public.

While referring to *El escarabajo de oro*, his following film, Moguillansky mentions that the final process of montage works, for him, as a form of music, a type of beat: "Yo en el montaje busco sobre todo una musicalidad. Que los planos y las secuencias se sucedan como formas musicales, siguien-

do ciertos patrones rítmicos y 'melódicos'" (Bernades). A similar sense of musicality marks the swimming pool scene, providing the opportunity to grasp in a very physical manner the ways in which affect, as well as dance, work on an everyday basis, in opposition to the "transcendental" character of dance championed by Klein. Rather than theorizing, Moguillansky's film literally dance*s* affect in the aftermath of loss, not as a representation or an illustration, but rather as the very material, tangible force that circulates in between bodies while proposing a process of contagion, iteration, and subversion, which ultimately takes over lives, stages, and screens.

Within these endless vibrations, the characters of Moguillanksy's film expand into reloaded forms of autobiographical fiction. They show how lives are formed by multiple layers of rhythms and memories suspended in time. In this movement of translation, bodies become surfaces of "multi and transcultural adherence," as Klein would say (4). They illuminate the circulation of affect that has emerged behind, underneath, and around the local experience of loss in Argentina in a new exchange with postcolonial landscapes. In doing so, Moguillanksy's film envisions what might come after trauma: a new, playful skin that addresses the re-contextualisation of a fight, the choreographical and ostentatious gesture that is ultimately related to a certain sensuousness of the bodies coming back from loss. As the last scene at the swimming pool beautifully grasps, this affective skin also speaks about the potential of a hybrid, self-reflexive genre to connect different fields, especially when words and scripts seem to fall apart.

Conclusions: Lives in Plural

Within Argentine discourses of nationhood, bodies have had a relatively lateral role.

I propose that Alejo Moguillansky's film suggests a different entanglement with the delayed resonances of the dictatorship's trauma, which also helps to highlight the centrality of the body in affective scenes. *El loro y el cisne*'s ruling principle is as ludic as it is festive and addresses a new distance that has been created in relation to Argentina's traumatic past. This gap not only speaks about the different types of stories that have come to be expressed but also about the bodies that make those stories possible. This ludic principle works as a platform of contagion, signalling a transgression of genres, which highlights the "post-traumatic" times.

While affirming the sense of belonging of an urban, hybrid community, Moguillansky's film embodies the internal vibrations of a generation trying to

come to terms with its past. Against the myth of the Global South as an embodiment of the exotic, *El loro* ultimately shows how local processes of grief can also be "inherently and externally relational" (Assmann 547) and inevitably implicated in larger processes of dialogue and exchange. Yet it also shows the extent to which the local aftermath of loss resists translation into a global language. Thus, Moguillanksy's film contributes to a sense of a broader community—perhaps a privileged community—, a post-traumatic, "in between" generation that feels off-centred, possibly trapped within an endless jetlag. As the film portrays, this generational limbo is also interrupted by moments of political irruption, mostly coming in the form of dreams. The dream scenes help address two additional features of the period: the emergence of fiction as one of its most surprising reinventions and the renewed autobiographical characteristics that this re-emergence of fiction exhibits.

In this context, *El loro* can also be seen as a language breakdown, an aesthetic midpoint in which biographies return empowered by fiction. I suggest that Moguillanksy's film manages to capture a bright moment of a poem in which lives are written in plural. It is a moment that emerges from a "third space," as Bhabha would say, from the outskirts of the postcolonial, where stages, screens, and real lives are intimately mixed. A new postcolonial community might emerge precisely at the junction of those layers. Yet, the idea of community needs to be recast here; the poetics of this community are as contorted as the Grupo Krapp's movements. This community has learned that failure is always around the corner. It is an "interstitial community" (Bhabha 331) that has arisen from the reverse side of a death poem. Precisely there, however, certain forms of joy might also be waiting.

Universidad Nacional Tres de Febrero

Notes

[1] In the film, Moguillansky portrays an Argentine filmmaker who, at odds with his Swedish partner, undertakes an improbable mission to discover gold hidden in the north while at the same time pretending to be shooting a documentary on the 19th-century politician Leandro N. Alem.

[2] The list includes *La rabia* (Albertina Carri), *Viola* and *Rosalinda* (Matías Piñeyro), *Historias extraordinarias* (Mariano Llinás), and *Ostende* (Laura Citarella), among others.

[3] This group of artists has learned how to create personal pieces by drawing upon their everyday conflicts. See Philippa Page's article in this issue.

[4] The body of work discussed in this issue shares the same international profile and marginal self-founding, which Moguillansky describes as "películas huérfanas del sistema de subsidios" (Fernández Irusta).

[5] For more than 15 years, the Grupo Krapp has put together international shows that combine experimental dance performances with fabulous installations of screen and images, which reflect the different backgrounds of the five members of the company. In Moguillansky's film, they say they don't identify themselves as dancers, but rather as musicians and performers, or in some cases as "malos actores."

[6] In *A Ballerina's Tale* (2015), a documentary on African-American ballerina Misty Copeland, director Nelson George examines the ballet world alongside themes of race and body image.

[7] Except for the French word "résistance," the sequence is spoken in English during the film.

[8] Luis Biasotto is also the director of the recent independent dance production *Africa* (2014), which was exhibited at the Teatro San Martín and celebrated by the critics.

[9] As Angela McRobbie argues, Judith Butler's idea of "resignification" also echoes Homi Bhabha's notion of cultural translation (101). In both cases, iteration is perceived as a space for the unexpected.

[10] In his piece *Las multitudes* (2012), the dramaturge Federico León also addresses the pleasures of being together. For this colossal production, León brought on stage 160 performers of different nationalities. In the piece, seemingly biological processes such as adolescence and aging are revised as experiences of bodily encounter, knowledge, and social exchange.

[11] The guests comprised a renowned list of theatre and film-makers, including Lola Arias, Fabiana Capriotti, Fabián Gandini, Federico León, Mariano Llinás, Mariano Pensotti, Rafael Spregelburd, Diana Szeinblum, François Chaignaud (France), and Stefan Kaegi (Swiss).

[12] The piece was also inspired by the sudden death of the illuminator, a close collaborator of the Grupo Krapp.

[13] During previous research, I have explored the ways in which dark humour worked as a platform of survival for the children of the disappeared, empowering them with a new generational language to cope with the absence of their parents. See "Humour and the Descendants of the Disappeared."

[14] The sequence portrays Blas Massafra, a friend of Luciana's father and a famous choreographer who passed away after the release of the film.

[15] The parable of the dream is so extreme that it mocks the common allegations against former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, for instance, her constant use of public broadcasts to channel her long presidential speeches.

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