SubVersion of the concept of macho.

An actor's catharsis in the liminality of theatre performance

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ABSTRACT

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In *Poetics*, Aristotle mentions catharsis when defining tragedy. This investigation focuses on how catharsis comes to operate in the actor, in an autobiographical solo performance. Specifically, this research project analyses the possibilities that liminality offers for the subversion of cultural paradigms, specifically for the concept of macho.

The research project argues that the ludic nature of liminality in theatre performance facilitates the conditions for catharsis to operate. Furthermore, it claims that in theatre, the subversion of cultural paradigms happens at the crux between liminality and catharsis, and that by exploring the interplay between these, performance can subvert a cultural paradigm such as macho. Finally, by splitting and analysing the 'sub' and the 'version' in subversion, this project understands subversion as an offer — a different version of macho, saturated with contradictions — a performance that springs from 'underneath' hegemonic masculinity, in other words subversion as a subVersion.

This research is constituted of two parts: the building of an academic argument and the demonstration of this argument through performance. Through the written dissertation, this project argues that the liminal space of theatre can challenge and subvert the concept of macho to create a catharsis borne when an actor frees himself from the constraints of normative gender performances. Drawing on theories from Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, Raewyn Connell, Judith Butler, Sigmund Freud, Leon Golden and Erika Fisher-Lichte among others, the thesis comparatively analyses different theatre makers/productions — such as Tadeusz Kantor and The Rabble — and analyses a practice-led, autobiographical solo performance, *el macho experiment* (2016–2017), to foreground the possibility for catharsis through subversion in the liminality of theatre performance.

The second part of the thesis demonstrates, through embodied investigation by means of practice as research, the academic argument developed in the dissertation. The final performance *el macho performance* (extended version of *el macho experiment* analysed throughout the dissertation) focuses on how the subVersion of the concept of macho, in

the liminality of theatre performance, offers an opportunity for catharsis to operate. The embodiment of this argument through the solo performance entails an exploration of the relational oppression of hegemonic masculinity over subordinated masculinities, specifically homosexual masculinity and its relation to the concept of macho.

My research project contributes to theatre studies by offering a new insight into how catharsis operates in the actor, arguing that catharsis is a result of subVersion created in the liminality of theatre performance. The argument for this conceptualisation is built, discussed and demonstrated through a confluence of three sources: theory, praxis and autobiographical material. Through this praxis, social constructions and the concept of macho can not only be challenged, but also opened up in the 'cleansing' power of theatrical catharsis to a new more inclusive definition.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Date: 13 August 2019

Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

Figure 1

"Why are the things you do in theatre always so sad and painful Jaime?" my father asked me after seeing [forced by my mother] one of my performances in drama school.

"I create because I have to, it is a necessity for me, it keeps me sane", I replied.

Why do I do theatre? Since drama school I have always believed in the transformative impact that theatre could have in the audience and actor. In relation to the actor in particular, I believed that the re-enactment of traumatic episodes through theatre performance could purge trauma, in a similar way to draining a wound that has not properly healed. This last metaphor I had in mind in the answer I gave to my father at the end of June 2003 in the small dialogue I cited at the beginning of this introduction. This is also why most of my artistic work has always engaged with autobiographical material, specifically trauma related to homophobia, my relationship with my father, with his death and with fatherhood. Thus, it seems not arbitrary that in its origins this research centred on the study of catharsis and its contemporary relevance in theatre performance, specifically analysing it as a phenomenon that has the potential to induce a healing process.

In *Chapter VI* of *Poetics* Aristotle provides a definition of tragedy. Catharsis is mentioned as a part of this definition, but the concept in itself is not defined. Aristotle not only leaves undefined the term in *Chapter VI*, there is no definition of catharsis to be found in *Poetics* or any other Aristotelian treatise. This is why catharsis is, perhaps, one of the most debated Aristotelian concepts in academic circles. The format and volume of *Poetics* itself is an enigma among scholars. Authors such as G. Murray claim the text to be Aristotle's notes for a lecture, others suggest that *Poetics* might have been written for circulation among Aristotle's pupils in the *Lyceum* and not for public circulation (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 59). Walter Watson argues the existence of a missing second volume of *Poetics*, presumably lost in the second half of the sixth century (Watson 2012, 1). This second volume, presumably devoted to comedy, also contained a presumed explanation and perhaps concept of catharsis. What most authors agree upon is that *Poetics* is an unfinished work. Despite the interesting debate on the obscure format of *Poetics* and whether it does have or does not have a second volume, that is not the focus of this research. What is of interest for this research is the dilemma Aristotle left in *Poetics* with the lack of a definition of catharsis and how this concept might apply to the actor in performance.

This introductory chapter first provides an overall description of this research project, stating the significance, the argument and contribution to knowledge. Then it describes

the methodological triad of this research: theory, praxis and autobiographical material. In doing so, it also explains the function of the two performances constitutive of this research; the practice-led, short performance, *el macho experiment* and the performance as research *el macho final performance*. It is important to clarify here that although I differentiate these performances, *el macho final performance* is the result of the development and extension of *el macho experiment*. I mark this differentiation, as it is the analysis of *el macho experiment* and not *el macho final performance*, which is used to build the academic argument in the written dissertation. This short performance took place in 2016 in front of a small audience comprised of colleagues and supervisors. *El macho final performance* instead constitutes a performative demonstration of the argument of this research. This last performance took place in 2019, and was open to a general audience and examiners. It is also important to clarify that I created and performed both these performances as part of this research project. For clarity in the analysis of *el macho experiment* in the written dissertation*,* I sometimes refer to myself in performance in the third person, as the actor. In this thesis I also use first person [I], especially when reflecting on my biographical material or practice.

Most common interpretations of Aristotle's clause on catharsis seem to locate catharsis as a process that takes place in the audience, without taking into consideration how it might operate in the actor. In this thesis, the focus of the study is the actor's catharsis. There are three reasons to focus the study on the actor in this research project. The first arises from my own experience as a theatre practitioner. When I studied *Poetics* in Drama School (2001–2005, Chile) the translation we used understood the clause on catharsis as a purgation of emotions that took place in the audience. However, as an actor in training, I never understood why the actor's catharsis was not part of the equation. When performing, I always felt that the process of making theatre provoked in me a cathartic effect, which I associated with the 'sense of emptiness' that followed the emotional discharge after performing. Furthermore it was never clear to me what constituted the workings of the cathartic process. Secondly, and in relation to the first point, there is a lack of academic work centred on catharsis as a process that affects the actor, but there is a plethora of debate and study on catharsis in the audience, as evident in the prolific debate from Jacobs Bernays onwards. Lastly, during this research I have observed a dichotomy that exists between practice and theory when defining catharsis, with most of

the academic understanding limited to a theoretical [re]interpretation of the Aristotelian text, which is rarely anchored to contemporary performance.

The starting point of this research is the claim that Aristotle's treatment of catharsis, and the subsequent translations and interpretations, do not encompass the range of effects that theatre has in contemporary praxis. Thus, the aim of this practice-based research project is to fill this gap: to analyse and apply the concept of catharsis to the actor, using as a case study the practice-led, autobiographical solo performance: *el macho experiment*. Furthermore, the significance of the present research emanates from the contextualization of the argument and its demonstration in the praxis. In doing so, this research goes beyond a presumable Aristotelian understanding of catharsis in *Poetics,* as it applies the term to the actor, in a contemporary, solo autobiographical performance.

This research is constituted of two parts: a written dissertation — thesis — and performance. Three sources are intrinsic to these two constitutive parts: theory — from academic literature — practice and autobiographical material. In the first part, thesis, practice-led *el macho experiment* is employed to anchor theory and autobiographical material with the practice when building the argument. In the second part, performance as research, *el macho final performance* demonstrates the argument built in the written dissertation. This last performance, as I clarified before, is an extension and development of *el macho experiment.* Finally, it is important to mention that the present research project is conceived as an ongoing, nonhierarchical conversation between theory, practice and autobiographical material. In this conversation, theory is not always the starting point, sometimes it is the autobiographical or the practice [performance] that leads to theory. Therefore the academic literature review is integrated throughout this thesis, and not separately.

This research project argues and demonstrates that the liminality of theatre performance offers the possibility for catharsis to operate in the actor through the subversion of gender paradigms, masculinity for instance. If we consider masculinity to be a social construction, a fantasy, it is in the realm of the construction-fantasy where a subversive act can operate by attempting to replace it with another construction-fantasy, a better one tailored to the specific performer and not tailoring the performer to the specific role. Furthermore, it is this subversion through the transformative power of performance that

can activate catharsis. The performer's transformation/subversion of his/her body in performances of masculinity enables him/her to contest or subvert of both, normative notions about gender. This thesis claims that the performance of masculinity in a theatre performance opens a possibility for catharsis through subVersion. This thesis aims to analyse how in the liminality of theatre performance, the so-called toxic performances of masculinity can be subverted, triggering catharsis in the actor. The subversion of the concept 'macho', in practice-led autobiographical solo performance *el macho experiment* is used as case study. This research applies Golden's intellectual clarification to the actor, particularly its inferring *modus operandi*: from something specific, for instance an event from the plot, something general is illuminated about human existence. I also argue that this process of intellectual clarification results in the actor's liberation from the constraints of normative gender performances. Catharsis as intellectual clarification is a notion first addressed by Leon Golden (1963, 1969 & 1973) in his writing, aiming to interpreter the obscurity of catharsis in the audience in *Chapter VI* of *Poetics*.

The argument of this research project is built through the interplay of four main concepts: masculinity, liminality, subversion and catharsis. The relevant academic theory of each one of these concepts is analysed in Chapters 1 to 4 respectively.

Chapter 1 provides a snapshot of the academic discussion on masculinity as a social construction. The analysis in this chapter relies particularly on the work of sociologist R. Connell on hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2012 & 2015), Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity (Butler 1988, 1993, 2004 and 2005) and Sigmund Freud's Oedipal complex (Freud 1909, 1924). Subsequently, the chapter proposes a conceptual constellation for the understanding of the gender performance of macho. In doing so, this chapter briefly touches on concepts such as patriarchy, machismo, toxic and hegemonic masculinity, all of them in relation to my own biography. Finally, Chapter 1 uses Alfredo Mirandé *Hombres y Machos* (Mirandé 1997) research on Latino culture — based on his own biography and interviews with Latin Mexican men — and *Manifiesto (hablo por mi difference)* (Lemebel 1997, 83-90) of Chilean queer poet Pedro Lemebel, to contest and elaborate a different understanding of macho, a queer macho. Throughout this chapter autobiographical material and practice-led performance *el macho experiment* is used as a case study.

Chapter 2 analyses the concept of liminality, starting with its anthropological meaning and its relevance to performance studies and theatre. In doing so, this chapter takes into consideration the understanding of Arnold van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner (1974, 1982 & 1994) and Richard Schechner (1985, 1998 & 2013) of liminality in rites of passage and its relevance to masculinity and theatre performance. Butler's concept of recognition in gender performativity is also of importance in this chapter, specifically how a liminal body, by contesting gender binarism, destabilises the power of recognition in gender performativity (Butler 2004). Erika Fischer-Lichte's idea of a 'collapse of binaries' (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 176) is of particular interest in the application of liminality to theatre performance and its power of transformation. This chapter argues that liminality creates possibilities in theatre performance for catharsis to operate through subversion; liminality as a playground in which to destroy, re-think and re-perform gender paradigms. Liminality as the transitional stage between two sites, physical and symbolic, entails a process of transformation, and it is this transformative process in theatre performance where subversion can facilitate catharsis. Throughout this chapter, autobiographical material and the practice-led performance *el macho experiment* is used as a case study.

Chapter 3 analyses the meaning of subversion and its relation to gender and theatre performance. In doing so the chapter proposes to look at subversion of gender performances as subVersion. This chapter offers as a subVersion of macho, a queer macho, the *uterus-less-macho*. Butler's denial of an original in gender performativity is the starting point for the understanding, creation and analyses of the queer-macho. The first part of this chapter deals with the etymological and political origins of the term. The second part of this chapter studies subversion in relation to masculinity and macho, by analysing boy-to-man rites of passage. Among others, the anthropological work of Matthea Cremers in male menstruation (1989), Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1981), David Leitao (1999) and David Dodd (2003) on ancient Greek rite of passages is of importance. Finally this chapter offers a queer understanding of subversion of masculinity, the result of splitting and analyzing the 'sub' and the 'version' in subversion. This is subversion as subVersion. A subVersion of macho, aims not to highlight an inversion of a gender marker (male-female) but the saturation of contradictions in gender performances. Some of the theorists who inform this chapter are: J. Halberstam (1995, 2012), Lisa F. Käll (2016) and Stacy Holman Jones and Anne M. Harries (2019) Throughout this chapter,

autobiographical material and the practice-led performance *el macho experiment* is used as a case study.

Chapter 4 focuses on catharsis starting with the evolution of the concept from the Aristotelian notion contained in *Poetics* (335 BCE), followed by a succinct exposition of its discussion in the academic literature. This last is described under Gherardo Ugolini's classification of the definitions of catharsis in four groups (Ugolini 2016). In doing so this chapter analyses Jacobs Bernays (1857), Gerald Else (1938 and 1963), Leon Golden (1962, 1969 & 1973), as well as various other writers whose theories would lend support or opposition, such as Sigmund Freud (1960), O. B. Hardison Jr. (1968), Keesey Donald (1978–1979), Ethan Stoneman (2013), Jean-Michel Vives (2011), Walter Watson (2012) and Andrew L. Ford (1995, 2016) to name the most relevant. Secondly, this chapter focuses on Golden's understanding of catharsis as intellectual clarification in the performer. It is throughout the second part of this chapter that autobiographical material and practice-led performance *el macho experiment* is used as a case study.

Practice–led, Practice as research Methodologies

The praxis — performance — in this project is not only a medium to exhibit data, but a methodological tool for the analysis, building and demonstration of the argument of the present research project. This idea follows Dee Heddon, who not only questions the use of performance to showcase research, but also argues that performance as research should be a "credible exploration on and in its own terms, framed by its own appropriate set of research questions" (Heddon 2016, 84). Thus, if this research argument is focused on the actor's catharsis in performance, it is through and from the performance that the argument should be analysed, built and demonstrated. In doing so, this thesis demonstrates Shannon R. Riley's claim that practice as research and its "creative production can constitute intellectual inquiry" (Riley, S. R. and Hunter, L. in Little 2011, 19).

Practice-led research, practice/performance based research, practice/performance as research, are all methodological concepts, which are under constant conceptualisation and debate in academia. Their ambiguity as methodologies result not only from their "intrinsic emergent nature" (Little 2011, 20), but also demonstrates that in practice, these methodologies often overlap. In order to clarify praxis as methodology in this research,

the differentiation between practice-based and practice-led research offered by Linda Candy is useful:

> […] in practice-based research the creative work acts as a form of research, whereas practice-led research is about practice leading to research insights; however, these terms are often used much more loosely. (Candy in Smith and Dean 2009, 5)

Thus, the praxis in this project is constituted of two performances: *el macho experiment* as practice-led and *el macho final performance* as performance as research.

The practice-led *el macho experiment* is the culmination of several theatre laboratories conducted during this research project. This performance provides research insight for the articulation of the academic argument in the written dissertation. Reflection based on and during *el macho experiment* is used to build the argument, as a way of anchoring the theory in practice, and vice versa: "writing contextualizes the practical work" (Burgin 2006, 107). *El macho experiment* is not submitted to be assessed as an artwork in itself. What is of interest for this research is the outcome of *el macho experiment* as a research methodological tool. The outcomes are woven throughout the written dissertation. A link to a video of *el macho experiment* is provided as reference only in Appendix A of the written dissertation.

The performance laboratories were conceived as a concentrated period of time in a rehearsal room (5 to 10 consecutive, full working days), which aimed to gather data and test research outcomes. In these laboratories key concepts were explored through performance. These laboratories were constituted in three stages: incubation, development and performance, and documented in video recordings and workbooks through reflections, drawings and poetry.

The performance as research *el macho final performance* aims to embody and demonstrate the argument contained in the thesis. In doing so, it aims to embody queer macho as a subVersion of macho, which springs from hegemonic masculinity in the liminality of theatre performance. This performance, firstly, analyses the possibilities that liminality offers for the subversion of cultural paradigms, specifically for the concept of macho. Secondly, it argues that the ludic nature of liminality in theatre performance facilitates the

conditions for catharsis to operate. Thirdly, it claims that in theatre, the subversion of cultural paradigms happens at the crux between liminality and catharsis, and that by exploring the interplay between these, performance can subvert cultural paradigms such as macho. Fourthly, it understands subVersion as an offer — a different version of macho — a performance that springs from 'underneath' hegemonic masculinity. Following Linda Candy, *el macho final performance* is not analysed throughout this thesis, as it constitutes research in itself. Furthermore, *el macho final performance* is assessed in relation to, but independently from this written dissertation. A link to a video recording of the dress rehearsal of *el macho final performance* is provided as reference in Appendix A of the written dissertation.

This research not only analyses catharsis in the actor in my practice, but also argues that catharsis operates in liminality, through the subversion of [my own] gender performance. In doing so, this research project takes into consideration my own masculine gender performance. Autobiographical material is part of this research project not only through autobiographical performance. Autobiographical episodes are also used to analyse and contextualise the argument of this research. The autobiographical writings of this research constitute autoethnography as it is used as a methodological tool to analyse my life experiences in relation to "social and cultural institutions" (Custer 2014, 1). It offers particular episodes of my biography as a place to test and reflect upon more general concepts, such as the social construction of masculinity and, particularly, of macho. Lisa Kron summarises perfectly the role of the autobiographical element on this research project. This author claims:

> […] the goal of autobiographical work should not be to tell stories about your self but, instead, to use the details of your own life to illuminate or explore something more universal. (Kron in Heddon 2008, 5)

The same applies to autobiographical solo performances, which Heddon claims are mostly directed at disputing and challenging assumptions on marginalised subjects (Heddon 2008, 20). I further argue that autobiographical performances are *loci* of knowledge and that by staging a personal conflict they describe and expose a general issue, in this research related to gender performance of masculinity. This is how, following Heddon, the autobiographical performance is employed in this research as a

relational bridge between the personal and political, "engaging with and theorizing the discursive construction of selves and experience" (Heddon 2008, 162).

CHAPTER 1: MASCULINITY
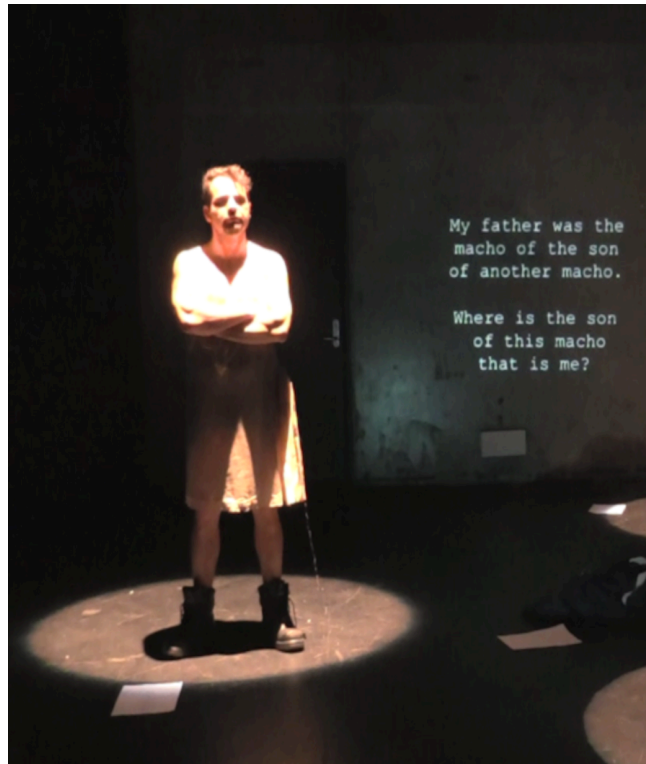
Figure 2

Dressed in a beige silky slip I transition from the first to the second spotlight in the space, where there is a pair of black army boots. I delicately lift the edge of the slip, introducing one foot at a time into the army boots. Then, legs apart, I stand firm, arms crossed on my chest. Staring at the audience, I firmly declare in Spanish: 'soy el hijo del macho que fué mi padre, mi padre fué el hijo del macho de otro macho' (I am the son of the macho that my father was, my father was the macho son of another macho)

Sequence of *el macho experiment*,
Centre for Theatre Performance, October 2016.
Monash University, Melbourne Australia.

Is my masculinity something I was born with, wear, or step into?

Can I step out?

Current academic literature agrees that the one constant in definitions of masculinity is that it is a social construction, and not solely determined by biology. Yet to understand masculinity as a social construction does not mean that the body has no relation to the construction of gender identity; it only means that it interrogates the essentialist equation: male body equals masculine identity. The body as such is of importance in any social interaction, as it is 'that' through which we interact. Charlotte Suthrell argues that in human interaction and culture the body is of importance "because it is what we present to the world" (Suthrell 2004b, 16). Authors such as Judith Butler have argued that it is in the social performance with an 'other' that the gendered body is constituted and (re)formed, to use Butler's nomenclature, through a "stylised repetition of acts" (Butler 1988, 154). Butler argues that the body, through gender performativity, "is invariably transformed into his body or her body, the body is only known through its gendered appearance" (Butler 1988, 157). Thus, the embodiment of masculinity as gender performance — masculine identity — is a relational and social accomplishment that results from conflict, tension, domination-subordination, negation and negotiation between the biological (the human body) and the social. As with any social construct, it is fundamental to acknowledge temporality and spatiality as factors that have an effect on how masculinity is understood, performed and sanctioned. Thus, the masculine — what is[n't] — is defined and performed differently depending on when and where, and in doing so intersects with other elements of subjectivity such as race and class.

This chapter aims first to provide a snapshot of the academic discussion on masculinity. Later, this chapter proposes a conceptual constellation for the understanding of the gender performance of macho. In doing so, it briefly touches on concepts such as patriarchy, machismo, and toxic and hegemonic masculinity, to finally contest and perhaps elaborate a different understanding of what macho is. The discussion takes into consideration relevant academic literature, autobiographical material and fragments from *el macho performance.*

Masculine identity is never fully settled. John Beynon wrote in his *Masculinity and Culture* that:

> Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make up; rather it is
> something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social

codes of behaviour which they learned to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways. (Beynon 2002, 2)

What is expected as masculine performance changes depending on race and ethnicity, age, class, ability, history, and social circumstances of the individual such as work, family and sexual relationships, marital status, fatherhood, retirement, etc. Thus, this thesis and particularly this chapter considers the performance of masculinity as an evolving and ongoing performance, as a performance that is on constant trial, and liminality — as outlined in Chapter 2 — as a way to deal with this struggle. Liminal bodies and liminal performances of gender challenge the rigidity of the binary male-female, foregrounding this binary as "saturated with contradictions, as discontinuous across all the bodies they are supposed to describe" (Halberstam 2012, 71). Liminal bodies and performances also open an 'in-between' space for those bodies and desires, which struggle, fail and/or resist to be recognised as male or female and, in consequence, as human. The performance of the markers of gender (male — female) is therefore a liminal and reiterative process that constantly reappears like a recurring threshold during the individual's life. Finally, in gender performativity, social practices constitute the gendered body, through the "stylisation of the body" (Butler 1988, 154). Then, I argue, a theatrical performance that performs a transformation of the body through characterisation can, if only temporarily, contest notions of gender. Using *el macho experiment* as a case study, this chapter also analyses how successful embodiments of masculinity consolidate or, if they fail, contest the constitution of gender.

Masculinity

The history of masculinity as a research field stems from the feminist movement: "masculinity studies arose from the feminist breakthrough that created women's studies and gender studies. Feminism has, to a certain extent, functioned as a guarantor of critical studies of men and masculinities" (Connell 2012, 9). As such, masculinity has been studied largely as a social construction of/for social, political and economic domination, male domination, and especially white heterosexual male domination over women and other masculinities (Latin-American, Asian, gay, for example).

Definitions of masculinity are time and content bound; what masculine is today was not so a hundred years ago; what masculine is in Tokyo, Japan, differs from what masculine

is in the south of Chile; what masculine is for an upper class Englishman differs from what masculine is for an English factory worker. The variability of the term is not only due to geographical, cultural and/or historical factors; the concept of masculinity is also unstable during an individual's life stages, shifting and changing from birth to death. What is expected, desired and/or avoidable for a child in order to perform masculinity differs from what is expected, desired and/or avoidable for a young adult or an old man, for instance. The different variables that dictate how an individual performs/embodies masculinity are: history, geographical location, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation and the individual's life stage. Masculinity is best understood as a performance of privilege and dominance as it intersects with other sociocultural differentials. The performance of masculinity then, can be studied as 'intersectional' in the feminist sense of the term, a concept which is "interwoven with other sociocultural power differentials and normativities categorised in terms of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality and so on" (Lykke 2010, 67).

The discussion of masculinity formalised as a research field from the 1980s onwards, and is by and large tied to discussions of the sociocultural impact of gender and masculinity as a locus for psychological, social, economic, and political conflict. Authors including John MacInnes and Tim Edward pointed towards a masculinity crisis, or masculinity as 'the crisis', as a phantom concept, a fantasy of how men should be, look, and act (MacInnes 1998, Edwards 2006, Beynon 2002). For MacInnes, this fantasy aims to justify patriarchy and with it male supremacy in a world which, following the principles of modernity, has embraced "that all human beings are essentially equal (regardless of their sex)" (MacInnes 1998, 11). With the feminist movement from the 1960s onwards, patriarchy has mutated, becoming more insidious. The cultural, political and economic changes have affected the functioning of sociocultural structures such as work and family. Sociologists Raewyn Connell and Christian McMahon have devoted their work to looking at masculinity from an ethnographical-sociological angle, aiming to "describe the way masculinity exists in a particular time and place" (Connell and McMahon 2015, 72). The focus of Connell's research explores how masculinity is linked to the reproductive arena as a striving for male economic and political domination. In Connell's own words, the definitions of masculinity are "deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and economic structures" (Connell 1995, 29). Connell developed the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' as the dominating form of masculinity (Connell 1995, 2000, Connell and

Messerschmidt 2005). The research of Eric Anderson in turn builds upon and criticises Connell's hegemonic masculinity. Anderson, looking at the relation between masculinity, sports and homosexuality, coined his 'inclusive masculinity theory' (Anderson 2009). This theory argues that "in cultures of diminishing homohysteria, two dominant (but not dominating) forms of masculinity will exist: One conservative [orthodox masculinity] and one inclusive [inclusive masculinity]" (Anderson 2009, 8). In Anderson's theory, 'orthodox masculinity' is the dominant but not dominating form of masculinity, 'homohysteria' is constituted not only by homophobic attitudes towards the homosexual but also by "the fear to be homosexualised" (Anderson 2009, 7) and 'inclusive masculinity' accounts for the existence of multiple masculinities "within any one culture, without necessarily having hierarchy or hegemony" (Anderson 2009, 99).

However different the nuances in the understanding of masculinity are, the point of encounter for these authors is masculinity as a social construction or as Pierre Bourdieu posits, a "relational notion" that is performed in and for other men and against femininity (Bourdieu 2001, 53). As a social construction, the concept of masculinity is never fixed, never real; it is "a fantasy about what men should be like" (MacInnes 1998) and as such is constantly on trial, constantly being put to the test. To be masculine is an ongoing process, which is tested on a regular basis during the lifelong social interactions of the individual. For example, the autobiographical performance, *el macho*, uses a childhood memory to reveal a failed masculine performance, touching on the consequences of this and other failures.

Masculine Failure, an Extraterrestrial Masculinity

My mother was the witness,
the one that winked with a smile
and a kiss at each macho activity I acquired.

I never learnt how to use my fists…
Sorry dad,
but my violence comes from another planet.

This excerpt does not provide the reasons for the impossibility of the child learning how to fight. Instead, this excerpt suggests that the impossibility of learning to fight results in a failed performance of masculinity. *El macho experiment* uses autobiographical material from my childhood in Chile in the 1980s. From 1973 to 1990 Chile was under the power of a dictator, 'el general Pinochet', a male hypermasculine and violent military figure. During this time homosexuality in Chile was a crime; it was only in 1999 that article 365 of the Chilean criminal code, which typifies sodomy as a crime, was modified (Fernández Lara 2015, 22). In a middle class Chilean family of this time with essentialist/biological views on gender, hetero-binary performance was [and still is in several ways] undisputed and encouraged. The father was the provider and the mother, even if she worked full time, ran the house. The brother must protect the sister. Male children go to boys-only Catholic schools run by male priests. Female children go to girls-only Catholic schools run by nuns. As a result, an essentialist/biological view of masculinity — and thus gender in general — is the norm in Chilean culture. In this scenario, aggression, risk-taking and violence are qualities attributed to masculine performances (Connell 1995, 69). On a regular basis during my childhood the relationship between violence-masculinity was justified, encouraged and the lack of it even punished. Consequently, in such a social environment violence becomes not only an attribute of masculinity, but the very "mode by which one asserts one's masculinity" (Haider 2016, 558).

In *el macho*, the inability to 'prove' masculinity through violence takes place in two scenarios, constituting a double failure. The first, implicit, is the failure to perform masculinity in front of the child's peers, which results in psychological violence: bullying, ostracism and frequently physical violence. The second is the failure to perform masculinity in front of the parents. Analysing this excerpt from a Freudian perspective, the text identifies two specific spectators: the mother, described as nurturer of masculine accomplishments and the object of heterosexual desires, and the father, described as the ultimate assessor of the competence of the described masculine performance: fighter and competitor for the mother's affections. Sigmund Freud posits that "perhaps we are all destined to direct our first sexual impulses towards our mothers, and our first hatred and violent wishes towards our fathers; our dreams convince us of it" (Freud 1991). For Freud, the resolution of this incestuous conflict — the Oedipal complex — is fundamental in the process of sexual development of children (Freud 1924a, 173). Freud argues that the Oedipal complex "succumbs to the fear of castration" (Freud 2002, 135)

when the male infant comes to the realisation that the mother's object of cathexis is the father and not him. Thus, the infant's "object cathexes [mother] are given up and replaced by identification [with the father]" (Freud 1924a, 176). The mother in the text could be seen as a sexualised 'witness'. Like a voyeur, she 'smiles', 'kisses' and 'winks' in approval of the child's successful masculine performances. The father in turn represents the authority, the final assessor with whom the child wants to identify. The child in the text apologises to the father and not to the mother for not knowing how to fight, perhaps fearing castration from the father, or perhaps as an illustration of what Freud calls a 'passive' orientation in the Oedipal complex. In this scenario, Freud argues, "the boy wants to take the place of the mother as the love-object of the father" (Freud 2002, 135). It could be inferred from *el macho experiment* that the child's performance of masculinity was directed to the mother, who was "the witness […] of each macho activity I acquired", but neither the mother's sexual pulsation, nor her approval, is enough to pass or fail the performance of masculinity. It is the father's [dis]approval that dictates the final criteria to validate or not validate this specific performance of masculinity.

Faced with the failure to perform what is expected [not necessarily by the father but culturally] as masculine in front of the father, the infant in *el macho experiment* assumes himself as an other, neither masculine nor feminine. Not knowing "how to use [his] my fists", failing the test, entailed not only a non-masculine [and thus feminine] gender performance, but further is referred to in the text as extraterrestrial, thus non-human. This performance fragment suggests that under the recognition of a gender performance as masculine or feminine, what is really at stake is to be — or not — considered as 'human'. In the gender binary, humanness as a quality is granted as a result of a 'correct' performance of gender, masculine or feminine: I perform masculinity, this performance is recognised as a masculine performance, therefore I become a male [or female], therefore I am a human being. Butler claims that it is through the performance of gender that the subject is constituted. In *Gender Trouble* (1990) she describes the process of 'girling', and how, before knowing the anatomical and biological sex, a newborn is an 'it'. As a consequence, an ungendered or gender fluid/ambiguous body is excluded from social identification. The performance of gender is a social construction that requires, as in any theatre performance, not only the actor, but the others [audience] to witness it, to read it and create meaning from it. Gender, and the category of the male, is a relational

accomplishment, which requires recognition by an other; as such masculinity is a performance constantly on trial. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler posits that if to be[come] human is a relational accomplishment, then the human cannot exist "outside of the decentering effects that that relationality entails" (Butler 2004, 151). Butler bases relationality on the idea of recognition/intelligibility, arguing that "certain humans [all those queer bodies, desire and performances of gender that fail and challenge the binary] are recognised as less than human" (Butler 2004, 2). Often, this occurs when gender performances are not recognisable or cannot be intelligible, based on social (hetero-binary) norms. To be recognised as 'less than human' means living an unlivable life, deprived of the legal rights, freedom of expression, opportunities and in some cases even punished and suffering violence at the hands of others. But also, as Butler claims, "if the terms by which I am recognised [as human] make life unlivable" (Butler 2004, 4), perhaps being less intelligible paradoxically opens a possibility for a livable life.

In the poetical world of *el macho experiment*, the Butlerian 'less than human' becomes an extraterrestrial. Faced with a failed masculine performance, *el macho* claims its otherness, its 'less than humanness', recognising in this failed performance of masculinity a performance from a different planet. To displace the context of the gender performance to another world shifts the evaluation and outcome of such performance. The text suggests that the social norms of gender, if any, on this other planet differ from the constrictions of the binary world in which the failed masculine performance was executed. This displacement attempts to destabilise, subvert and, perhaps, to queer the heterosexual world and attendant performances of gender. Following Eve K. Sedgwick, queering:

> can refer to the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically. (Sedgwick 1993, 8)

So the 'queering' in the cited performance excerpt entails a flip over, the 'failed' in the described performance of masculinity, and situates it in a context of a livable [otherworldly] life. In other words, what this fragment of *el macho experiment* offers is failure as an extraterrestrial space for performing non-binary gender performances, thus

enabling some subversion of gender. Failing, Halberstam posits, "is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well" (Halberstam 2011, 3). Further, this author claims failing as a narrative for anticapitalist, anticolonial and queer struggle, but also as "[…] the refusal of legibility, and an art of unbecoming" (Halberstam 2011, 88). Thus, failing forces us to imagine and aim other ways — extraterrestrial in *el macho experiment* — of loving, and being. The recounting of this biographical episode of gender failure in a theatre performance context opens the possibility for the actor to, instead of conforming to the 'less than human' category of 'sissy' or 'faggot', claim its own unintelligibility as a subject from another planet, distant and less vulnerable. In this otherworldly planet, perhaps, a violent child does not equate to masculine-child. Returning to Butler's quote cited above, "if the terms by which I am recognised make life unlivable", perhaps it is better not only to remain unrecognised, but further make the 'unrecognisable' a world to be in. Finally, the text does not suggest a world without violence. The performer refers to his violence as 'otherworldly'. In other words, there is violence, but the object-aim of it and its manifestation is different to the terrestrial, heterosexual and masculine violence. The rejection of the stereotyped relationship, violence — masculinity — is itself a violent act, a break with the stereotyped performance of what masculinity should be. Thus, this violence is directed towards the binary view of masculine performance, aiming to injure the imposed preconception of how masculinity should be performed.

A Conceptual Constellation for the Gender Performance of Macho

In a broad context, aggressiveness and violence have been attributed as traits of 'macho' and 'toxic masculinity'. These last two terms, sometimes confused as synonyms, help to demarcate nocive characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Kupers 2005, 716). It is important to anticipate that hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily equate to aggressiveness and violence. Connell developed this concept to understand and analyse gender relations of power-domination in patriarchal systems, which might, but not necessarily, fall into toxic practices of masculinity. Concepts such as patriarchy, machismo, hegemonic masculinity, macho and toxic masculinity are not interchangeable; instead they form a hierarchical conceptual constellation that can build a new frame to understand gender performance, specifically the gender performance of macho. The following diagram describes this conceptual constellation:
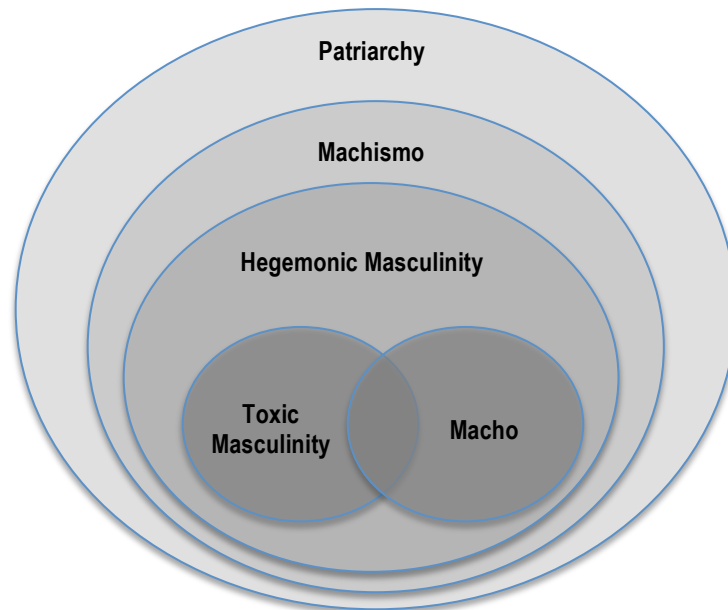
Figure 3

The five constitutive concepts of the conceptual constellation for the gender performance of macho are analysed in detail in the following section.

Much has been written on patriarchy and machismo in academia. The etymology of patriarchy derives from the Greek *patriarkhēs,* the ruling father. Without entering into detail on patriarchy, this term has been understood as a political-economical-sociocultural structure for domination. It is in this terrain — domination — in which the concept has to be understood and encompasses not only man-woman domination but also domination among men and other binary relations such as "whites dominate people of colour, developed nations dominate developing nations, and humans dominate nature" (Hunnicutt 2009, 563). Further, in patriarchal systems masculinity is defined by "what it rejects or expels" (McLeod 2007, 83): the feminine, the wife-mother-sister-daughter, the homosexual, the physically and emotionally weak. Machismo in turn can be understood as an ideology, which develops from, validates and foments patriarchy, and which aims to justify and promote male gender superiority and domination of women. Donald Mosher posits that "[i]n Spanish, machismo means the essence or soul of masculinity" (Mosher and Tomkins 1988, 65). Machismo is for Mosher the ideology for the scripting of macho personality. There is a symbiotic relationship between machismo

and macho: "Ideology [machismo] justifies action [macho behaviour]; action celebrates ideology" (Mosher 1991, 201). The 'macho soul' that Mosher refers to as the essence of masculinity rests in three beliefs that justify three behavioural dispositions: "(1) entitlement to callous sex, (2) violence as manly, and (3) danger as exciting" (Mosher and Tomkins 1988, 61). These three behavioural dispositions, which have clear negative connotations, are the pillars upon which the concept of toxic masculinity is built. Machismo, as an ideology of gender dominance, results and justifies disciplinary ways of arranging hierarchical social structures (such as family and work), which at its core contains power asymmetry. In order to understand the asymmetrical power relations in patriarchal societies, Connell coined the concept of hegemonic masculinity, borrowing the term hegemony from Antonio Gramsci's analyses of the dynamics of social class relations (Prison Notebooks, 1891–1937). In Gramsci's theory, 'cultural hegemony' refers to the dominance of a social group by the imposition of a constructed hegemonic culture (beliefs, social practices and institutions) over other social group(s). Behind the construction of hegemonic culture is sociocultural and political domination. Hegemonic masculinity is the successful way of 'being a man' in a particular place/geography, at a specific time/history (Connell 1995). The cultural values of the social system define a successful masculinity, taking into consideration elements such as history, economy, and the political system. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as:

> the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of woman. (Connell 1995, 77)

Connell refers to it as an 'exaltation' which, in its embodiment, is far from being easy to achieve or 'comfortable'; she posits that "indeed many men live in a state of some tension with, or distance from, the hegemonic masculinity of their culture or community" (Connell 2000, 11) Among men the hegemonic form of masculinity is not a common, easy-to-achieve practice, but a desired one, as it holds privilege and dominance. Thus, hegemony works to the outside: men over women, and to the inside: men over men, considering elements of race, class and sexual identity. Hegemonic masculinity can in some contexts fall into toxic masculine practices (toxic masculinity) (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 840), but toxicity is not at the core of Connell's concept.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1980) defines toxic as 'poisonous', as 'cause by poison' (1980, 1227). Therefore, toxic in a literal sense is the poison of and poisonous for masculinity, which is expressed primarily by psychological and physical violence of men over women, but also among men. Syed Haider states that the coining of the term 'toxic masculinity', can be found in the studies on father-son relationships and masculinity representations made by psychologists and sociologists in the early 1990s (Haider 2016, 557). In the West, Jeremy Posadas claims, toxic masculinity, and sexual violence are fundamentally linked (Posadas 2017, 178). But the toxicity of masculinity extends its poison also through homophobia, homohysteria and cultural domination (white men over black, Latin American and Asian men). For Kupers, toxic masculinity is "the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence" (Kupers 2005, 714). Other authors, such as psychologist John Barry, have linked behaviour described as toxic "with the failure of men to adapt to cultural shifts since the 1960s" (Barry 2017 - 2018). Barry claims that men struggle to find their place in a world in which the archaic roles as 'breadwinner' and 'stoical family protector' are no longer valued (Barry 2017 - 2018, 21).

The rigid social structure of the patriarchal, heterosexual family is morphing; some might say it is becoming more insidious. In *The Death of the Family* (1971) David Cooper severely critised the rigid, heterosexual and *bourgeois* family as a patriarchal, repressive institution in which the individual is indoctrinated and subordinated to the capitalist heterosexual order: "family as an ideological conditioning device" (Cooper 1986, 5). Cooper posits that one of the harmful elements of the family is that it teaches children how to yield to society, and not how to survive it (Cooper 1986, 31). In other words the heterosexual family fosters, legitimises and reproduces the capitalist, heterosexual order. Masculine and feminine gender training inside the family is justified and devised based on the rigid structuring of the heterosexual, patriarchal family; girls are trained to become nurturing mothers and wives, and boys to become provider-husbands and fathers. In this indoctrination, for instance, the subject is always taught what to do or not to do in order to be masculine: "Don't cry, men don't cry"; "Don't be a coward, you have to be brave and protect, you are a man." Pedro Cantero states that these prohibitions aim to correct possible deviations in the child that might affect the future performance of masculinity (Cantero 2003, 55) and of heterosexual order. He goes even further, arguing that the

child's masculine education in the family aims to suppress the feminine, "to cut with the female world" (Cantero 2003, 57) and, in doing so, education in the family foregrounds, stressing the binary male-female. Seen under Freud's psychoanalytical frame, this prohibition on the boy underpins the menace of castration, prompting the failure of the Oedipal complex and subsequently the identification with the father. In Freud's own words, the "Oedipus complex succumbs to the threat of castration" (Freud 1924b, 422).

For Barry, conflict is created for men because of adapting to the shifts in this scenario — heterosexual, patriarchal, family structure — shifts which translate to a loss of men's privileges and power and trigger toxic performances of masculinity.

Family is currently composed and understood in different hetero-binary ways. The role of the man-husband-father as the breadwinner has been in conflict since the industrial revolution. The woman-wife-mother and the children-son/daughter were forced to break out from the *nuclei* (the family) and go to the factory to work. Breadwinning was no longer exclusive 'male' territory. Bigger changes have occurred with the rise of the feminist and gay liberation movements, the latter further destabilising the previously rigid composition of the heterosexual family. Nowadays family is no longer the *dad plus mum equals children.* There are also single parents (heterosexual or homosexual), multiple parents, same-sex parents and parents without children, for example. All these shifts have affected men, Barry claims, resulting in aggressive and violent — toxic — behaviour such as domestic violence, rape and suicide. Authors such as Syed Haider (2017) have even suggested that terrorism and homophobia share an "underlying ailment": toxic masculinity (Haider 2016, 557).

For the present research project, toxic masculinity as a result of men struggling to find their place in new family structures is only a symptom of a deeper crisis. In some contexts, what is at stake is the validation of manhood and *'macho-ness'* through fatherhood. Looking back at my experience with my own masculinity as a Chilean man, the relationship between these two cultural concepts — masculinity and macho — becomes somehow symbiotic: to be a man means to be a macho and in order to be a macho you first have to be a man. There are authors such as Connell who see masculinity as "the social elaboration of the biological function of fatherhood" (Connell 1995). Then, what is left of masculinity when the biological function of fatherhood is contested? In

Chilean macho culture, like most South American countries, fathering is a requisite *sine qua non* of "macho-ness". What becomes of the male individual unable to procreate? Does he becomes a quasi-macho?, a macho-less?, an anti-macho? Or is there a place for the performance of a childless macho? *El macho experiment* articulates a similar question: "I am not a macho-father, who am I?" Instead of providing an answer to the question, which I can anticipate depends on the intersection of other sociocultural differentials, *el macho experiment* foregrounds the intimate relationship between fatherhood and masculinity in Chilean macho culture. Being a man and not having children entails a failed performance of masculinity, the most basic one for most, like my own father. This failure in *el macho* cuts deep into the subject identity, leaving the self, suspended, with a painful question: "Who am I?". This question finds a 'monstrous', tentative answer in an earlier fragment of *el macho experiment*. Like Doctor Frankenstein with his monster, the actor re-imagines his body, proposing an exchange of human organs with another [better equipped] body: "I will trade my left testicle for one ovary and a half cup uterus". The creation of this monstrous, almost hermaphrodite body composed of one testicle (the right), one ovary and half of a uterus, aims to overcome not only the biological impossibility of same-sex human conception, but suggests the possibility of self-insemination and human conception. In doing so, *el macho experiment* not only sees monstrosity and its liminality as a way to overcome a failed masculine performance, but also claims failure as a welcoming playground for all monsters.

Finally, I would argue that toxic masculinity and the concept of 'macho' are not synonymous. There are areas in which they intersect, as described in Figure 3. Both coexist under the ideological umbrella of machismo and patriarchy, but I suggest, through the following section, that these terms might contradict each other, depending on how we look at them.

Mónica de Martino opens her essay *"Connel y el concepto de masculinidades hegemónicas: notas críticas desde la obra de Pierre Bourdieu"* (2013) with a question: What does it mean to be a man? She affirms that normally two responses come to mind: not to be a woman, and/or having male anatomical attributes (De Martino Bermúdez 2013, 283). Although these two responses simplify far more complex concepts, they address an important element: the body and what the body does, and its relation to gender identity.

In Spanish language, the vast majority of the animal kingdom is categorised by sexual reproduction: *'macho'* (referring to an anatomical male specimen) or *'hembra'* (referring to an anatomical female specimen). The etymological origin can be found in the Latin word *mascūlus:* "a um. Adj. dim [mas], male, masculine; subst., a male*"* (Lewis and Short 1962a, 1117). Lewis and Short also state that if applied to a 'thing', macho becomes what is inserted into something, or "worthy of befitting a man, manly, vigorous, bold" (Lewis and Short 1962a, 1117).

Macho, as a wider social concept is relatively new, dating from the 1940s in Mexico (Cresswell 2009, 250). The concept of 'macho', as the concept of masculinity, is a social construction, which has to be understood by taking into consideration its spatial and temporal contexts. When applied to a person, macho seems to acquire a wider behavioural aspect. *The New Oxford American Dictionary* defines it as:

> showing aggressive pride in one's masculinity: the big macho tough guy. n. (pl. machos) a man who is aggressively proud of his masculinity. Machismo. (1048, New Oxford American Dictionary)

With this definition, a macho is tough, proud and aggressive. A quick search of macho images on the web tends to corroborate this view, showing young mature men shirtless, proudly and sometimes aggressively exhibiting muscular bodies. Mexican sociologist Alfredo Mirandé — based on his own biography and "in-depth personal interviews with [Latino Mexican] men" (Mirandé 1997, 5) — identified two views on macho when analysing masculinity in Latino culture: positive and negative. The negative view is the most common one contained in dictionaries, which sees macho as hypermasculine, aggressive, dominating and proud. But Mirandé argues that there is also a positive view on macho:

> Un hombre que es macho, [a man who is macho] is not hypermasculine or aggressive, and he does not disrespect or denigrate women. Machos, according to the positive view, adhere to a code of ethics that stresses humility, honour, respect of oneself and others, and courage. (Mirandé 1997, 67)

The positive view described by Mirandé corresponds to the scripting of macho that I learned from my father and my father from his. This code of honour, in which courage, honour and integrity (Mirandé 1997, 72) were cornerstones, is passed on and learned by doing, as craftsmanship, from one generation to the next. Practice-led *el macho experiment* suggests macho and its performance as craftsmanship — from father to son — when declaring: "Soy el hijo del macho que fué mi padre, mi padre fué el macho de un hijo de otro macho [I am the son of the macho that my father was, my father was the macho son of another macho]". Thus*,* in *el macho experiment*, the social indoctrination of macho has the father — or its absence — as the closest figure that the child has to identify with. This last, perhaps influenced by a Freudian psychoanalytical approach, refers to the figure of the father. The mother also has a role in this process, not only as witness, as has been analysed earlier in this chapter, but also by indoctrinating the child in her understanding of macho. This research is focused on the father-son relationship when becoming a macho.

Becoming a Chilean Macho

El macho experiment opens with the line*:* "mascūlus sounds like a muscle". On the surface this poetic liberty relies on the phonetic similarities between these words. But on a deeper level it aims to frame the understanding of macho as a sociocultural, ongoing construction, as a muscle that has to be constantly exercised, as a set of capacities or skills (craftsmanship) that are enacted in a continuous training process.

Becoming a macho in Chile is a complex social process, which entails more than prove and display strength, courage and sexual drive. Unlike the scenario described by Mosher, my own macho-masculinity was based on a fundamental code of honour, taught primarily by my parents, and reinforced by schoolteachers and peers. I am not completely disregarding Mosher's argument; rather I aim to foreground the intersectionality of macho, extending the scope when looking at this concept. I proposed through my own biographical material contained in *el macho experiment* to consider the intersection of "other sociocultural categories such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, dis/ability, nationality and so on" (Lykke 2010, 50).

The world of my childhood was a solid, middleclass, heterosexual binary frame. My father was the fourth generation of German immigrant landowners in the south of Chile.

The males on this side of the family worked the land, mainly agriculture but also forestry. The women took care of home and children. This binary structured division of labour and roles inside the family has not changed much in the last decades in Chile. Sebastián Madrid observes how this model of practices is still part of the Chilean socioeconomic reality in which "maternity and domestic work, [are] women's responsibility, while men are still seen as main breadwinners" (Aguayo & Sadle in Madrid 2017, 244).

The farmer, landowner, breadwinner has historically been the iconic Latin American macho. But the macho that was my father, and his father, were men who were far from being aggressive; instead they were shy and quiet, humble and respectful, with a high sense of honour, which they called *'la palabra de hombre'* [a man's word]. My mother on the other hand was explosive, loud and aggressive. My father's code of honour, reinforced forcefully by my mother, was the foundational element of my conception of macho, and not necessarily the aggressiveness or dominance. Macho, seen only as an overtly aggressive, sex predator and dominating dictator is a narrow interpretation of the Mexican Spanish word by English-speaking Americans in the 1920s (Cresswell 2009, 250).

In Chilean culture the concept of macho is applied differently to males and females. For a man to be called a macho is an honour, a responsibility, a place of privilege and conflict; not all males are considered machos. To be a macho is a performance which entails, as mentioned before, obeying and performing a code of honour; strength and courage are expressions of this code of honour, but not the only determinants. For women the scenario is completely opposite. To be called *'macha'* or *'mari-macha'* has negative connotations because they imply failed feminine performance, a gender performance that transgresses the rigid heterosexual gender binarism. A woman who displays overtly aggressive or assertive traits is called *'amachada', 'macha'* or *'mari-macha'* as they do not conform to the idea of feminine passivity and submissivity. These terms have also been used in a derogatory manner to describe lesbians. The focus of this research is not female masculinity, but instead is to analyse the relation between the concept of macho and [queer] masculinity through the autobiographical performance *el macho experiment*. As a result I offer a differentiation between macho and toxic masculinity. I am not arguing that a 'macho' is not a social figure for domination, or that there is not violence, danger and sexual display attached to it, neither do I intend to purge the

concept of macho of centuries of oppression. Instead, I propose to look at it in all its dimensions.

Macho in el Macho Experiment

Alyson Campbell, in the introduction to *Queer Dramaturgies* (2017), posits that "the performance event comes first: the articulation is what follows" (Campbell and Farrier 2015, 4). The position aims to describe the relationship between performance and theory contained in the essays across the book. Although attractive, the claim simplifies a richer and more complex relation between practice and theory. As a matter of fact, in some parts of this present research project the performance event — *el macho experiment* — 'seems' to come first. The argument 'seems' deployed as a consequence of the performance. But the genesis of *el macho experiment* as a performance is also triggered by the academic argument, and not just from autobiographical material. To be more accurate, this research is a horizontal, ongoing, dialogue between my biography, theatre performance and academic literature, and not a vertical hierarchy between these three. Therefore, instead of focusing on the positioning of one or another as first (theory, biography or practice) I proposed to look and discuss them in this thesis as in a liminal space, in which there is a constant overlap and cross over, a constant and chaotic dialogue, as concepts that shift, constantly triggering and being triggered by each other.

In the following excerpt, *el macho experiment* interrogates what macho is, offering no theoretical or poetical definition. Instead when asking *what is a macho?* the text describes three actions as a response, perhaps foregrounding the concept as performative: *a macho punch, a macho munch, a macho must.*

What is a macho?

A macho punch,
a macho munch,
a macho must.

A macho punch…

Violence is present in the surface of the socialisation of a macho. Earlier in this chapter, violence and the inability to fight others was analysed as a failed performance of masculinity. But violence does not aim to or result only in domination: the one who hits better or stronger, dominates the other. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) defines violence also as: "The action or an act of constraining or forcing unnatural change upon something" (1993, 3583). It is thus that art can be defined as a violent act. Sculptors apply violence onto the *prima materia,* forcing an unnatural change: the art object. French sculptor Louise Bourgeois, for instance, once declared: "I break everything I touch because I am violent" (Bourgeois in Bernadac 2006, 177). But in the arts, violence is not only applied to materials. Performance art is a discipline populated full of examples of violence on the human body, like the work of artists such as Marina Abramovic and Franko B. Further, I suggest that if violence is to 'force change upon something', then human life is a violent act. We force changes in our environment in order to live, eat, create clothes, and shelter. I argue that violence — intrinsically human — in itself is not toxic: the use of violence to create asymmetrical power relationships is what makes it toxic.

Yes, violence was in some ways celebrated during the socialisation of my own masculinity, but 'punching' is far more complex that just a neighbourhood fight to test strength and dominance. Growing up, father avoided any type of violence at home. He would always say *"juego de manos, juego de villanos"* (game of hands — as in hitting — game of villains). I was taught to punch, yes, but to protect those who have been wronged, those who are weak and upon whom domination operates. Punching was encouraged, yes, but as an act of rebellion, a strategy to defeat domination. I have described earlier the context of my childhood, where in the *dictadura,* dictatorship regime, a left fist punch in the air was a sign of rebellion and resistance against the dictator. There were many artists who opposed the military regime in Chile. Queer writer Pedro Lemebel had a distinct voice amongst them, not only for his acid critique of authoritarianism but also for his portrayal of Chilean culture from a queer perspective. Lemebel in his *Manifesto (Hablo por mi diferencia)[1]* (1986) wrote:

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[1] *MANIFESTO (HABLO POR MI DIFERENCIA)* - (I speak for my difference), was a text, which the artist performed as a poetical intervention in a political, public act in September 1986 in Santiago de Chile.

No necesito disfraz [I don't need a disguise]

aqui está mi cara [here is my face]

hablo por mi diferencia [I speak for my difference]

defiendo lo que soy [I defend what I am]. (Lemebel, 1986)

Courage, assertiveness and standing up for rights are themes, positive macho qualities that Mirandé identified in his interviews (Mirandé 1997, 72). All of these qualities are present in Lemebel's text and performance. Lemebel performed this text publicly in Santiago de Chile in 1986 under the military regime, making his performance a macho performance. In this text, the poet's unmasked face becomes his 'fist'. He punched the Chilean dictatorship regime, and all those *'machitos'* [derogative diminutive for macho] who were in power by confronting them openly with his unmasked face, in a public political act. The poet in this performance not only speaks, but further 'defends' his difference as a communist and homosexual in the Chilean, authoritarian military regime (1973–1990), and he does it not for himself, but for others like him, as he declares when closing his *Manifesto*:

Hay tantos niños que van a nacer [There are so many children that will be born]

con una alíta rota [with a broken wing]

y yo quiero que vuelen, compañero [and I want them to fly, comrade]

que su revolución [and that your revolution]

les dé un pedazo de cielo rojo [gives them a red piece of the heaven]

para que puedan volar. [So that they might fly]. (Lemebel 1986)

Finally, punching is also a metaphor for drive and vitality, 'punching' as an expression of vital force. A macho 'punch life in the face', breaking through adversity such as poverty, inequalities, natural disasters and dictatorship.

A macho munch…

Self-control was one of the most important components of my father's and my father's father macho code of honour. This self-control consisted in carefully evaluating the impact of our actions for us and others before acting. This process, which *el macho experiment* refers to as 'munching', is to metaphorically bite, masticate and then either ingest, swallow, or spit out. Confronted with a conflict, a macho evaluates the

importance and the impact of his response before acting. Mirandé describes something similar when he identifies respect as other positive themes on the positive conception of macho, respect for oneself and for the other. Lemebel, in the previously cited *Manifesto* also wrote:

> Mi hombria fué morderme las burlas
>
> [My manhood was to bite on the mockeries]
>
> comer la rabia para no matar a todo el mundo
>
> [to eat rage in order to not kill everyone]. (Lemebel, 1986)

The mockeries he refers to are not only the homophobic, the constant bullying he bore — as experienced by any other Chilean homosexual, myself included — growing up in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s, but also political bullying:

> Y se rieron de mi voz amariconada
>
> [and they laughed at my fag voice]
>
> gritando: Y va a caer, y va a caer
>
> [yelling: 'and it will fall, and it will fall']. (Lemebel 1986)

Lebemel performed his *macho-ness* not by displaying physical aggression, but by endurance, by staying strong and not letting the toxicity of those other machos break his spirit, his art, his political passion.

A macho must…

Mirandé extrapolated other positive macho theme from his interviews: "responsibility/selflessness" and a "general code of ethics" (Mirandé 1997, 73). The latter entails living up to one's principles and to some extent — as one of the interviewees declared — "die for them" (Mirandé 1997, 74). It is thus how I was indoctrinated in a code of honour in which telling the truth and protecting the weak were top priorities. Considering this, Lemebel's performance fits again with a macho performance. Following the code of honour and risking his own life, he stood and spoke up for his difference, looking to protect all those 'with a broken wing' who will come after him. The privileges attributed to gender performances of macho become a burden under the 'musts' for many heterosexual and/or homosexual men.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of *el macho experiment* in relation to relevant academic literature, this chapter not only contests the equation: macho equals toxic masculinity. It also claims macho as an intersectional gender concept. Furthermore, in this chapter I argue that when analysing macho, taking into consideration other intersectional social differentials leads to the understanding and [co]existences of different versions of macho. In order to build this argument, this chapter has analysed socially constructed concepts related to masculinity such as patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, toxic masculinity and macho. The analyses consisted of the understanding of these concepts in academic literature, the autobiographical performance *el macho experiment* and Chilean culture. The outcome of the analyses demonstrates the differentiation between toxic masculinity and macho, arguing that these concepts are not synonyms despite the fact that both coexist under machismo and patriarchy. Further this chapter argues for a concept of macho defined by courage, self-control and a code of ethics, instead of violence and toxicity. In doing so, the argument widens the scope of gender performances of macho, laying the groundwork for the creation and coexistence of other versions of macho in the liminality of theatre performance. In the next chapter I shall develop this argument by investigating the potential of the liminality of theatre performance for the creation and coexistence of other versions of macho performance.

CHAPTER 2: ON LIMINALITY

Figure 4

I rest on the back wall of the stage where the word MACHO is projected. Portishead's 'Glory box' sounds loud: "give me a reason to be a woman, I just so wanna be a woman". The audience comes in and sits. After a couple of minutes I take my clothes off, slowly, following the rhythm of the song, exposing naked the back of my body to the audience. Then I enter into the farthest spotlight, where a beige, silky slip hangs. I put it on while the music fades. I turn around, the delicate straps of the slip contrast with the robust shape on my rounded muscular shoulders and with the black hair of my beard, chest and legs. With my right hand I hide my penis between my legs and then slowly, with my both hands I pull the slip up, exposing my legs, my pelvis and my chest. My arms are up. The slip covers my face. The projection on the wall changes to the etymological definition of 'Macho'. I have become a headless and ambiguous hairy body: no penis but black pubic hair, no breasts but a flat hairy chest.

Opening sequence of *el macho experiment*,
Centre for Theatre Performance, October 2016.
Monash University, Melbourne Australia.

Which kind of monster do I become in the liminal zone of gender?

A child born with a broken wing or a Frankenstein composed by one testicle and a half cup uterus?

In the previous chapter I argued that the concept of masculinity offered a contested space in which social construction, gender performativity and biological essentialism were at war to create the fantasy of the ideal man. The concept of macho as an ideal of masculinity and its embodiment was analysed using pertinent academic literature in relation to the autobiographical solo performance: *el macho experiment*. I also laid the grounds for the argument that I develop in this chapter: that the liminality of performance can subvert social expectations of hegemonic masculinity in order to trigger a cathartic effect that frees the performer from the straight jacket of assumptions about what creates the 'successful' performance of masculinity. This research acknowledges the importance of the audience in catharsis, but the focus of this research project is on the performer. For this argument, the role of liminality is key.

The term liminality has produced a robust discussion in anthropology, history, philosophy and performance studies, with a focus on attempting to define its characteristics and effects in different contexts. Inherent in these definitions is the importance of theatre and performance as an integral part of liminality and the social transitions around it. Theatre performance has long been closely linked to ritual, to the point where the difference between theatre and ritual is at times unclear (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 175). Drawing on these debates, and fragments of the autobiographical solo performance *el macho experiment*, which are employed as examples of liminality at work, this chapter will analyse the etymological origin of liminality, its anthropological sense and its relevance to performance studies and theatre, before turning to explore how the concept of liminality has been employed to address issues of masculinity. Finally, I argue that the space between liminality and masculinity in a theatre performance allows for subversion of gender paradigms, enabling liminality to offer an opportunity for catharsis. Liminality in this context is a symbolic space, constituted by the encounter of performers and audience. Furthermore, liminality is the transitional stage between two sites, physical and/or symbolic, that entails a process of transformation, and it is this transformative process in theatre performance that facilitates catharsis. Catharsis is not the transformation, but a process in itself, entwined in the liminal process of transformation, as it will be discussed in Chapter 4 On Catharsis.

Before discussing liminality as a stage in rites of passage, which entails a process of transformation, it is important to define how transformation is understood in this

research. The Latin word *transformātĭo* means "a change of shape" (Lewis and Short 1962b, 1890), a coming together of *trāns* "across, over, beyond" and *forma* "contour, figure, shape, appearance" (Lewis and Short 1962b, 1887). Etymologically, therefore, transformation presupposes a formed — socially or physically — entity, which undergoes a process of crossing, going over or beyond its own form, resulting in something new. In this way, one can argue that to transform entails a subversion of a previous shape, appearance or *status quo*.

Etymological Origin of Liminality

The ritual process, and liminality as one of the important transformational functions within it, has one of the oldest lineages within anthropology, having been theorised by some of the leading scholars of the twentieth century. Ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep coined the term liminality in *The Rite of Passage* (1960). The anthropologist Victor Turner (1974, 1982) in turn, focused on this term to further develop it, as will be studied later in this chapter.

The etymological origin of liminality is the Latin word *līmen*:

> Limen, īnis, n. […] *a threshold; the head-piece or foot-piece of a doorway, the lintel or the sill*   (limen superum et inferum) […] 1. *A door entrance* […] 2. Still more gen. a *house, dwelling, abode* […] 3. Poet., *the barrier* in a race course. […] II. Trop., both entrance and exit. A. *A beginning, commencement* […] B. *An end, termination.* (Lewis and Short 1962a, 1066)

The etymology of liminality describes the term as 'something' that marks a point or barrier between two other points, something such as a doorframe, a portal or a border that divides two countries. It also points towards both, entrance and exit, 'beginning' or an 'end'. At its heart, the core of the etymological origin of liminality is the coexistence of a binary: entrance/exit, beginning/end. Both possibilities are condensed, coexisting and opposing each other, it is a paradox; a concept affirmed on the negation of another.

Applied to gender performance, liminality blurs the workings of gender. Liminality entails stepping outside the binary: masculine equals male and feminine equals female. When the binary categories of masculine and feminine in gender performance overlap,

coexist or are blurred, the result could be interpreted as a 'monstrous' subversion of not only the masculine or the feminine category, but of the binary masculine-feminine categorisation. Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris describe the liminal and monstrous zone of gender as constituted "somewhere outside of heteronormative relationships and institutions" (Holman Jones and Harris 2019, 91). These authors further demarcate the concept of monstrous in gender performance as that which "remains hidden, misunderstood, unseen and unseemly" (Holman Jones and Harris 2019, 92) and which, because of this, results in unintelligibility. Butler argues that unintelligibility in gender performance opens the possibility to escape "from the clutch of those norms by which recognition is conferred" (Butler 2004, 3), especially when recognition results in an unlivable life for the individual. Further, I argue that liminality in theatre performance opens the possibility to experience the existence of this binary differently and, perhaps, momentarily break free from it.

Theatre performance is a liminal place because at its core binaries coexist and simultaneously collapse: reality/fantasy, character/actor, actor/audience, exhibitionist/voyeur, inside [room] theatre/outside theatre. The binaries in theatre production merge and melt in an often "unintelligible" transition. Erika Fischer-Lichte posited that, among other factors, this 'collapse of binaries' in theatre perfomance is what facilitates liminality and — in consequence — transformation, affecting the individuals that experience it (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 176). In Fischer-Lichte's words, liminality facilitates tranformation through the collapsing of binaries because "their destabilisation and collapse shatters both our perceptual and behavioural framework" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 177). The collapse of these binaries through the liminality of theatre opens the possibility to temporarily rewrite, reperform and/or recreate reality in order to provoke catharsis. The opening image of *el macho experiment* with which I started this chapter demonstrates this. In the actor's tableau, the body of the performer hides the genitals between the thighs, becoming, if only momentarily, liminal, ambiguous; perhaps a 'monstrous' hybrid. This hybridity constitutes liminality as a conflictive in-between place in which the rigid cultural gender binary — feminine and masculine — overlap and merge in one body, opening the possibility of rethinking and perhaps reperforming the gendered body. It is a body with no place, displaced from the binary. This displacement, breakthrough or chaos, creates a new space — and a new body — in which reflection, critique and change can germinate:

Muscled, hairy, broad shoulders, a naked body on a silky delicate slip, an iconic feminine undergarment. When I pull the slip up, covering my face with it, my body from my chest down is exposed naked. The posture that my body has adopted, locking my knees together in order to conceal my penis, makes my hips look rounder and wider. There are no genitals exposed, but an incipient trail of black pubic hair, somehow reminiscent of a feminine pelvis. Is it a male or a female body? It is none, is both…"

Reflective writing.
PhD workbook 6, 2017.

The interesting proposition that this liminal image offers is to question what is a human body without sexual anatomical differentiation.

For Butler, the process of constitution of the individual is performative and relational, there is no subject prior to the performance of gender, and that performance is accomplished in relation to an other or others (Butler 1988, 2007, 1993, 2005). To operate, this relation requires both interpellation (Butler 1997, 1993, 2005) and recognition (Butler 2004, 2005, 1993). In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler writes that interpellation is a pre-requisite for the subjects becoming. Butler posits: "the 'I' only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated" (Butler 1993, 225). In *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) Butler critiques and develops Louise Althusser's concept of interpellation, which is his answer to how subjection to power operates. For Althusser, the individual is subjugated and becomes complicit with power through ideology. To demonstrate this, in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1972) he describes a 'social scene' in which an individual turns around after hearing a police officer 'hail' him/her in public: "Hey, you there!" Althusser argues, "by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject" (Althusser 1971, 174). This gesture, turning the head when hailed, entails the individual's acceptance of the ideology that confers on the officer the power to call out. In following Althusser, interpellation for Butler is the process by which power hails, addresses and finally categorises the subject (Brady and Schirato 2011, 139). Again, for Butler subjection and (as a consequence) interpellation, is a paradox, as it is simultaneously "the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject" (Butler 1997, 2).

Butler refers to recognition as a process of transformation of the individual. She writes, "it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us become constituted as

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socially viable beings" (Butler 2004, 2). Using a pregnancy sonogram scenario Butler explains how recognition operates. She describes how, after the doctor has recognised the anatomical sexual differentiation of a fetus, the infant, through being recognised, shifts "from an 'it' to a 'she' or a 'he' " (Butler 1993, xvii). The infant is recognised as a girl or boy and as a consequence becomes human. What is at stake here, in Butler's terms, is the constitution of the subject; an individual becomes a gendered subject and hence human, through interpellation and recognition, these last ruled by heteronormativity.

The liminal image from *el macho experiment*, previously described, exposes a body, which by rejecting gender binarism, places in conflict both gender interpellation and recognition. Authors such as Butler suggest that the body without gender ceases to exist or perform socially as a human being, becoming 'less than human' (Butler 2004, 2). Others claim that such unrecognisability constitutes the subject as 'monstrous' (Holman Jones and Harris 2019, 92). In Chapter 1 of this thesis I have suggested that a body that resists being called, named or interpellated into heteronormativity becomes 'extraterrestrial'. Butler claims that through interpellation the individual is 'hailed' to enact social norms. In *el macho experiment*'s opening liminal image, it could be argued that the actor, by stepping outside the category of human, steps outside of the reach of binary interpellation. The liminal image from *el macho experiment* places in conflict not only how we interpellate a body with blurred or concealed anatomical sexual differentiation, but further aims to force the spectator to gaze on an unintelligible body, and perhaps momentarily question the relation of gender and body. Unintelligible bodies are liminal sites of conflict for heteronormativity, which rely on the existence and reproduction of the patriarchal male/female social structure. A body that cannot be defined as male or female is a body that challenges the binary order of heteronormativity, raising questions about, for instance, social institutions as family and its relation to procreation. After all, recognition is "a site of power by which the human is differentially produced" (Butler 2004, 2). The liminal image from *el macho experiment* aims to destabilise this power by purposely performing the body in unintelligible ways, resisting the differentiation and thus resisting the site of power that comes from recognition.

From the actor's point of view, pulling the slip up, covering the head, with the arms up as if 'hailed' by the police, concealing the penis between the thighs, is an act of rejection

of heteronormativity. It is a body performing a momentary castration as a form of protest. It is a body attempting to host both coexistence and negation of binary sexual differentiation. It is also an act of mockery, a bad imitation of a female body and/or misrepresentation of a male body. It is a body stepping outside sexual differentiation, stepping outside humanness itself. More importantly, this liminal opening tableau is an act of subversion of a dissident body blurring heteronormativity.

Liminality in theatre performance can be explored not only through the collapse of gender binaries. For instance, Polish visual artist and theatre director Tadeusz Kantor, when asked 'why death?' in his theatre, replied that it was because he was interested in life. His theatre, he explained, explored life through death in the same way in which darkness cannot be understood without the existence of light, and vice versa. I argue that Kantor's theatre explored and staged the overlapping and collapsing liminal space of binaries: death and life, life and art, childhood and adulthood. He claims:

> THE SPACE OF LIFE,' AND EVERYTHING THAT IS CON-
> TAINED IN THIS PHRASE,
> EXIST PARALLEL TO
> THIS OTHER SPACE,
> THE SPACE OF ART.
> THE TWO OF THEM CONVERGE, OVERLAP,
> AND COALESCE,
> SHARING THEIR FATE AND DESTINY. (Kantor 1993, 263)

His production, *The Dead Class* (1980), is full of binaries collapsing through theatrical, visual examples of liminality: old actors playing school kids (old-young), live actors sitting still by identical mannequin or wax figures (alive-inanimate), his own presence as a director, directing during the performance (fiction-reality), a cradle used as a coffin: "[a] symbol of death is a symbol of life" (Kantor 1993, 124). Performance, which stages the overlapping of binaries, or 'collapsing dichotomies' as Fischer-Lichte denominates it, constitutes a new reality (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 174). This new reality, which undermines and subverts the previous reality, offers a possibility of exploring a world free of the constrictions of the binary. In *el macho experiment* for instance, a world in which the performance of gender expected from a masculine-male-macho body can be blurred and contested. In Kantor's theatre: a world in which the living and the dead coexist, a world in which death is not an end, but perhaps a loop in which there is a possibility of re-living the past, learning from it, and even changing it.

In ancient Greece the concept of liminality was not exclusively linked to the idea of limits, but more importantly to the crossing of these limits. Arpad Szakolczai explained crossing of these limits by claiming that liminality in ancient Greek culture was "the experience of being on the limit" (Szakolczai 2009, 150). French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, for instance, argues that in the *ephebeia* (rite of passage in ancient Greece), liminality operated by the temporary crossing of the opposites masculine/feminine (Vidal-Naquet 1986, 116) through cross-dressing, which will be further discussed in Chapter 3 On Subversion.

In the example given from *el macho experiment*, the body of the performer could be seen as a 'place' to be inhabited by the binary masculine-feminine, but also as a place in which the boundaries between these concepts are crossed. Theatre, as the physical space where the performance occurs, contains inherent liminality. It is a container and a threshold in and across which the binary reality-fiction collapse, coexisting, opposing and dialoguing with each other. Real bodies perform real actions under the setting of fictional narratives. It is a real human being performing a fictional persona-character or situation. The building that houses theatre is a space in between, in which a rupture or momentary suspension of the daily routine is possible in a physical and social pocket of time. The relevance of liminality in theatre for this research will be further analysed at the end of this chapter.

The following section traces the evolution of liminality from the anthropological point of view to its application to theatre performance.

From van Gennep to Turner to Schechner

Van Gennep picked up on the linguistic elements of the etymological origin of liminality, arguing that territorial passages provide a framework to explain the structure of numerous rites of passage in traditional cultures. He argues that territorial passages, to cross from one territory to the other, implies falling into a 'physically and magico-religiously' state, during a delimited time frame, in which the individual is between two worlds (van Gennep 1960, 18). As in territorial passages, rites of passage are ceremonial rites that signal transition: a sexual, social, geographical, political or religious change in the individual or in the collective sphere. Van Gennep's analysis of traditional rituals, and

specifically transitional rites, identified a three-part structure of rites of passage: separation or pre-liminal, transition or liminal, and aggregation or post-liminal (van Gennep 1960, 11). The separation or pre-liminal phase corresponds to the stage in which the individual undergoes a process of separation from the normal order of daily life routine: the individual is 'cut aside' geographically and/or socially from the community. In the transition or liminal phase, the individual is in transit from the former physical-sociopolitical-religious stage to the next. In most traditional rites of passage, this is, for example, how the child transitions from childhood to adulthood. Finally, the post-liminal or re-aggregation phase is the 'coming back' to the normal order but changed physically and/or socially. The aggregation stage is the aftermath of the liminal; the child that left in the pre-liminal returns as an adult, this last signifying accomplishment of the rite of passage.

In traditional rites of passage, the transition that these rites signify is not necessarily based on an anatomical maturation, although there can be anatomical changes that mark it, such as first menstruation, swelling of the breasts, or the appearance of pubic hair and facial hair. These changes can also be produced intentionally through both male and female circumcision, tattoos, cutting of the hair, piercings and other mutilations. The transition marked by the rite of passage is symbolic. Van Gennep posits that it is a "social" transition, and so he aims to demonstrate that rites of passage mark the social change in the status of the individual and not the physiological/anatomical change. He argues that "physiological puberty and 'social puberty' are essentially different and only rarely converge" (van Gennep 1960, 65). Finally, it is important to mention that for van Gennep, the three phases in his structuralisation of rites of passage are not always equally 'stressed'; some stages in different rites might claim ceremonial prominence over others. The notion of ceremonial prominence has resulted in a misunderstanding of van Gennep's theory of transitional rites "as rites of separation, liminality, or incorporation" (Tzanelli 2011, 506).

Rites of passage mark a transition in the social life of the individual, in relation to the individual sociocultural context. Their function is to bring social order in moments of crisis such as puberty, marriage, death and/or war. A rite of passage changes the individual who undergoes the rite, as it does the dynamics of the wider community. Rite of passage is, in its core, a rite of transformation: the boy/girl becomes a man/woman,

the single individual becomes a married individual, etc. It is the liminal stage that facilitates the transformation as it removes temporarily the order of things, bringing on something new at both individual and communal levels. Szakolczai posited that a transformation presupposes something "already been 'formed' […] some kind of human 'material' that has become ready for 'typing' or 'stamping' " (Szakolczai 2009, 157). Thus, the liminal is a space in which something, formed with a clear shape or status, undergoes a process of restructuring, reshaping or modification. The space itself facilitates or allows — even forces — the transformation. In this way, I argue that liminality is as much destructive of previous shape or form as it is creative.

In *The Ritual Process* (1969) British anthropologist Victor Turner further developed van Gennep's rite of passage theory, centring his attention on the qualities of this liminal phase. Richard Schechner argued that it is the creative possibilities of the liminal phase that interest Turner the most, the possibility within it "to make new situations, identities, and social realities" (Schechner 2013b, 66). Turner proposed that ritual, "through its liminal processes, holds the generating source of culture and structure" (Turner 1983, 223). In doing so, he reinforces the idea that the liminal phase is not only a breaking point, a destruction of structure, but also a point that leads to something new; it breaks to rebuild; it destroys to create.

For Turner, liminality is the "breakthrough of chaos into the cosmos" (Turner 1982, 46), opening the possibility for sociocultural transition and change. In Turner's rites of passage for instance, the child must undergo a metaphorical process of removal of her/his individuality, in order to ascend socially and become a man or woman. In the liminal stage of the rite of passage the child is no longer a child, but neither is s/he an adult. Liminality, in this context, is not the transformation in itself, but a stage, a space that facilitates the transition and change. This is the relevance of the study of liminality in this present research: liminality creates possibilities in theatre performance for change through subversion; liminality is a playground in which to destroy, re-think and rebuild. In a rite of passage the previous social status of an individual(s) is destroyed or abandoned. The liminal stage during these rituals therefore is not only the key for the transformation process, but also the key moment for definition and stabilisation/destabilisation of society. Thus all processes of transformation, including catharsis, require a liminal stage to operate.

Szakolczai claimed that at the centre of Turner's study is the hypothesis that three stages of rite of passage, and specifically liminality, are pivotal to understand the 'structure of human experience'. Szakolczai clarifies 'experience' as something that "might happen to one that alters the very core of one's being" (Szakolczai 2009, 147). Turner himself argues that a transition is a process of 'becoming', and this 'becoming' under the frame of a rite of passage entails a transformation (Turner 1964, 46). Thus, Turner argues that liminality is frequently associated with concepts such as:

> death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to wilderness, and to eclipse of sun or moon. […] Liminal entities are neither here nor there; there are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (Turner 1974, 81)

The liminal is ambiguous because what is involved is a fluid process of becoming, a temporal pocket of time and space, containing transformative processes in its core. Turner's metaphor of liminality as the "breakthrough of chaos into cosmos, of disorder into order" (Turner 1982, 46) is instructive here. Liminality creates the conditions through which boundaries are blurred and broken, but without these boundaries liminality cannot exist or operate, as discussed earlier in this chapter when dealing with the etymological origin of the term. In the liminal phase the individual disappears — in some cultures symbolically dies — for the social order, to be reborn, transformed into something, someone new. A similar situation occurs in theatre where the actor disappears into the role. The individual persona of the spectator disappears into the collective "audience", which ascribes "meaning and usefulness to any cultural product" (Bennett 1990, 167).

Liminality is a "slip" in the cultural structure that causes a removal of privileges and obligations in the community (Turner 1974, 81). Through the liminal the individuals are born to the sacro-magical order from which they get invested with special attributes. It is in this sacro-magical order where changes to the social order occur. This emphasis on the group and individual relationship is important. Turner posits that in traditional cultures the liminal stage of rite of passage can facilitate the formation of *communitas*; a comradeship of the 'lowest rank', of equals. In *communitas*, the social rank and anatomical

differences are destroyed or wiped out to establish a new order or state for those individuals. The chaos, or rupture of the social structure brought about by the liminal, facilitates the formation of *communitas*. *Communitas* emerges when the social structure disappears or is suspended (Turner 1974, 113). Turner speaks of liminality as a "no-man's land" (Turner 1990, 11). I argue that liminality in traditional rites of passage is not only a 'no-man's land' but also a *communitas* created for 'all men' with no difference, an 'all men's land', no matter the wealth, anatomy or social status. *Communitas* is not only a 'biologically', 'affective' response to cultural restraints, but also the result of particular "human faculties, which includes rationality, volition, and memory, and which develops with experience of life in society" (Turner 1974, 115). Following Turner, it could be argued that *communitas* is an implicit contract (rational and volitional) and so a conscious decision, like an audience in which the individuals consent to forming themselves into a group, an audience, to watch a theatre play. This contract is as social as it is a consequence of tradition, memories that are re-enacted and develop in the social interaction, creating a sense of belonging. For Turner *communitas* is not a consequence of an animal sense of 'herd', the animal instinct of being part of the pack, but rather is the result of "man in their wholeness wholly attending" (Turner 1974, 16).

It is important to mention that for Turner "liminality is not the only cultural manifestation of *communitas*" (Turner 1974, 95). *Communitas* occurs also in other situations, which results in different kind of *communitas*; 'existential or spontaneous', 'normative *communitas*' and 'ideological *communitas*' (Turner 1974, 120). The one that relates to theatre performance is the existential or spontaneous *communitas*, which Turner refers to as "what hippies today would call 'a happening' " (Turner 1974, 120). Spontaneous *communitas* is " 'a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities,' a deep rather than intense style of personal interaction" (Turner 1982, 47). It is a sense of comradeship, of togetherness, a levelling not enforced by the structural order, but "is nature in dialogue with structure" (Turner 1974, 128). Turner argues that:

> Communitas at its inception is evidently between or among individuals. It is what all of us believe we share and its outpost emerge from dialogue, using both words and non-verbal means of communication. (Turner 1982, 58)

Liminality and *communitas* form an anti-structure, which is the opposite binary of the social structure but not the reversal. The anti-structure entails a "liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition [and] creativity" (Turner 1982, 44). It is through this anti-structure that in traditional cultures social change happens. Through the 'chaos' that it is the liminal, Turner sees the possibility for change in the social order and considers this the fundamental function of rituals.

In *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982), Turner claims that in industrialised societies, which have created a clear division between work and leisure, leisure has taken the 'play' quality of the liminality in traditional rituals. Turner coined the term *liminoid* as an application of the liminal, and its capacity to transform from traditional rituals to theatre performance (Turner 1982, 32). For Turner, the liminoid is the counterpart of liminal in post industrial revolution societies. "[L]iminoid *resembles* without being identical with liminal" (Turner 1982, 32). Although liminal operates in the realm of the sacred in traditional societies, the liminoid operates in the sphere of leisure in modern society. Leisure is for Turner the "betwixt-and-between, a neither-this-nor that domain between two spells of work or between occupational, familial and civic activity" (Turner 1982, 40). The splitting of liminal into two different concepts, liminal and liminoid, bridges the problem of how to interpret Turner's concepts in modern societies. The principal difference between these concepts is that in liminal experiences the participation is a must, a form of efficacy, as it produces and marks the transition. The child must go through the rite of passage in order to become an adult; the individual must go through the ritual of marriage in order to become a married individual. If the ritual is not in place and completed, the passage or transformation does not occur, causing social consequences for the individual such as marginalisation, loss of privileges, loss of rights, punishment, etc. In liminoid experiences the individuals are willing, but not compelled, to participate in the ritual-event; the liminoid is volitional and is more inclined to entertain. Turner does, however, point out that the liminal as much as liminoid are playful spaces in which social transformation can occur:

> Just as when tribesmen make masks, disguise themselves as monsters, heap up disparate ritual symbols, invert or parody profane reality in myths and folk-tales, so do the genres of industrial leisure, the theatre, poetry, novel, ballet, film, sport, rock music, classical music, art, pop art, etc. (Turner 1982, 40)

In theatre performance, inversion and parody are transformational processes, which when applied to gender paradigms, entail subversion. I argue that this is especially so if applied to the concept of 'macho', a social construction of an ideal of masculinity as analysed in Chapter 1. It has been established in the previous chapter that gender idealisations such as macho or hegemonic masculinity do not 'sit well' with men; rather these concepts are a source of anxiety and conflict for men, as they entail a set of expectations about how and how not to perform masculinity. Therefore the transformative, liminal nature of theatre performance is a perfect scenario for a cathartic subversion of a socially constructed concept like 'macho'. Catharsis in the actor operates in the liminality of theatre performance, not only as it facilitates a space for other embodiments of macho, but also as a space which can hold, even if momentarily, opposing dualities, for instance real/fiction or masculine/feminine.

To this point the chapter has traced the etymological origin and treatment of liminality from van Gennep to Turner. The purpose has been to study the term in the anthropological understanding, introducing its application to performance. Richard Schechner is pertinent in this study as he crosses both anthropology and performance, working closely with Victor Turner in The Performance Group (TPG).

For Richard Schechner, ritual, theatre, play, games, dance and sport are not only all performances, but also the relation between them is 'horizontal' and not hierarchical (Schechner 1994, 6). Schechner claims the relation (ritual–theatre) is not ontological. What is important for Schechner is that theatre forms the backbone of performances that are ritualised (Schechner 2013a, 87). Thus, the relation between ritual and theatre is a two-way street in "which theatre develops from ritual and conversely, ritual develops from theatre" (Schechner 1994, 112). This assertion is based on the idea that there is not a black and white polarity between theatre and ritual, but instead a 'continuum' formed between two poles: 'the efficacy-entertainment braid' (Schechner 1994, 120).

Rituals and theatre often do look alike. For Schechner, these activities share the same qualities: first, 'time' has been tailored to fit the performance; second, the commercial value of 'objects' in performances are altered; third, performances are differentiated from productive work as 'non-productive'; fourth, performances have special 'rules', because

they differ from everyday activities; and last, performances are contained in delimited spaces, in most cases in specially built 'performance spaces' to contain the performance (Schechner 1994, 6, 9, 10 &11). This is reminiscent of the characteristics that Roger Caillois described for games: free, separated, uncertain, materially unproductive, governed by rules, and 'make believe' (Caillois 2001, 9-10).

The key in the relation between ritual and theatre is the 'function' and 'context', which marks the difference between theatre and ritual in Schechner's understanding (Schechner 1994, 120). It is not only Schechner who points out the complexity in the relation between ritual and theatre. Catherine Bell also posits: "theatre and drama have been studied as forms of ritual in which performances serve as an effective medium for the reinterpretation of traditional images and concepts" (Bell 1997, 75). Bell further states that theatre performance has been important in the study of ritual because it stresses the "dramatic process, the significance of the physical and bodily expressiveness found in ritual and its evocative attention to secular and new forms of ritual or ritual-like activity" (Bell 1997, 76). Again, both theatre and ritual are part of a structure or framing. Caillois refers to this structure or framing as *ludus* — Latin for play — which entails the subordination of play to rules (Caillois 2001, x). Ritual and theatre have similar effects; both are structured based on certain rules within defined temporal and physical boundaries, which allow them to be differentiated from everyday activities (Salamone 2010b, 321). Thus, the analysis of ritual process is useful when understanding theatre performance and performance in general.

It is not the purpose of this thesis, however, to argue for a new perspective on the relationship between ritual and theatre or vice versa, but to study liminality in theatre performance and its possibilities to trigger catharsis via the subversion of the concept of macho.

Schechner takes Turner's liminality and argues that ritual and theatre coexist in the continuum created between the polarity of an 'efficacy/entertainment braid'. Efficacy in a performance aims to produce a result, "to effect transformations" (Schechner 1994, 120), a change from an 'actuality 1' to an 'actuality 2'. These changes in traditional rituals can be both "in the status of some people participating […] and in economic matters" (Schechner 1994, 143). In entertainment, the aim of the performance is fun, "to give

pleasure, to show off, to be beautiful, or to pass the time" (Schechner 2013b, 80). Schechner summarised efficacy and entertainment as follows:

> When efficacy dominates, performances are universalistic, allegorical, ritualised, tied to a stable established order; […] When entertainment dominates, performances are class-orientated, individualised, show business, constantly adjusting to the tastes of fickle audiences. (Schechner 1994, 123)

Although the differentiation between these two poles is conceptually clear, in practice rituals and theatre performances share aspects of both. Schechner clarifies that "no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment" (Schechner 1994, 120). For Schechner the transformative power of performance is not exclusively found in traditional and sacred rituals, it is also a part of theatre and other performances. In turn, what Schechner describes as "fun and beauty" in entertainment is not exclusively found in theatre performances but is also present in sacred and traditional ritual. Theatre can and does transform, as ritual in itself entertains and aims to be 'beautiful' or to 'show off'. It is the transformative process, brought about by liminality, which is of primary importance for this present research project and, moreover, how the transformation that comes through liminality in a theatre event facilitates catharsis. Further, this thesis argues that catharsis is not the transformation itself, but a breakthrough, which is possible in the ludic, transformative space created through liminality in a theatrical event. Following Schechner, I argue that the transformation that takes place in theatre is only temporary (Schechner 1994, 119); it lasts while the liminoid is in place.

Schechner speaks of transformation in traditional rites as 'transformance', a process from which a group passes from one actuality to another actuality. The status or role of the group(s) involved in these rituals change though the 'transit' that is the transformance. Schechner explains transformance using the pig-kill ritual in Kurumugl, Papua New Guinea as an example. Through transformance in this ritual the hosting group changes from being debtors to creditors and the invader group from being creditors to debtors. Hence, transformance entails the transition in the status or condition of an individual(s) or group(s) from an 'actuality 1' to an 'actuality 2'. For Schechner the shift "is liminal, a fluid mid-point between two fixed structures" (Schechner 1994, 118), he further posits that it is "during this liminal time/space [that] communitas is possible — that levelling of

all differences in an ecstasy that so often characterises performing" (Schechner 1994, 119). In the liminal stage of traditional rituals the transformation is permanent. In the liminoid the change is temporary or, as Schechner puts it, transformation as 'transportations', as "one enters into the experience, is 'moved' or 'touched' […], and then dropped off about where she or he entered" (Schechner 2013b, 72). Similar transformation takes place in the encounter between performer and audience in theatre.

Liminality in Theatre

This chapter's final section discusses how liminality facilitates transformation processes in theatre performances. Further, it lays the groundwork to analyse how this transformation, brought forth by liminality, can subvert reality, triggering catharsis. This last argument, core to this research, is analysed in Chapter 4: On Catharsis.

Theatre performance, as an aesthetic experience, entails a willing pact between the audience and the performer in which there is an acceptance of the representation, as momentarily real. Fischer-Lichte suggests that theatre performance, as an aesthetic experience, constitutes liminality (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 174). For Slobodan Markovic, an aesthetic experience is constituted by a relation between an object (situation) and an individual, in which the everyday meaning of the object or situation disappears and transcends (Markovic 2012). Thus, entering into liminality in theatre as an aesthetic experience entails entering into a realm of transformation, in which the everyday meaning of objects, situations and subjects disappears or is transcended. For this research, the transformation that occurs in the liminality of theatre performance facilitates a transformation process, which affects the perception of space, time and subjectivity during the performance: "the artists represent an artistically transformed reality through materials and gestures" (Lehmann 2006, 137).

Transformation in this research project is understood, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, as a process that presupposes a formed (socially or physically) entity that undergoes a process of crossing, going over or beyond its own form, resulting in something new. For authors such as Schechner, transformations facilitated by liminality in theatre performance are transitory, they last only while the performance lasts. Fischer-Lichte, through analysis of different art performances, argues that these transformations affect the subjects who experience it (performers and audience) by a "destabilisation of

the self, the world, and norms" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 179). This author builds her argument by analysing performances from artists such as Marina Abramovic. In Abramovic's performance: *Lips of Thomas*[2], Fischer-Lichte claims that the destabilisation of the self can be seen as a transformation of the performer — subject — into an art object: her bleeding naked body on a cross of ice, which the audience at the end of the performance actively interact with, by taking the performer's body off the ice cross: transformation of audience into performers (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 17). Applied to *el macho experiment,* I argue that the actor's body is transformed from a gendered human body to a body that temporarily operates as a 'site' for the experimentation on subversion of gender binarism.

In the following section I analyse how liminality facilitates transformation in theatre performance. This is done by analysing the transformations that occur in the liminality of theatre performance in relation to space, time and subjectivity. Finally, although I briefly analyse the effect of liminality in audiences' transformation processes, the focus of this research is on the actor.

In relation to space, performances are *per se* liminal states of in-betweenness, physical pockets of time governed by particular rules. Liminality in theatre is determined by the materiality of the place — space — that contains the audience-performer(s) encounter, which can be, but is not exclusively, a theatre building. It is important to clarify that the building in itself is not liminal; the space has become liminal because of the 'willingness' of the audience and actors to signal it as such, a specific converging of place and time in which actors and audience meet (Hays in Bennett 1990, 137).

Theatres are spaces in between, in which a rupture or momentary suspension of the daily routine is possible in a physical and social pocket of time. If liminality is a break of chaos into order, then the limits between chaos and order must be clearly established. It has been mentioned before that intrinsic to the concept of liminality is the concept of limits. In traditional rites of passage, for instance, the infants who take part are taken away — normally from the mother's side — to a 'liminal' space, apart and in some cases hidden

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[2] *Lips of Thomas* was performed first in October 1975 at Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck, Austria. This performance consisted on a sequence of actions performed by the performer and finally by the audience. Abramovic, naked, carved a five points star on her skin with a razor blade, eats honey, drinks wine, flagellates herself with a whip and finally lays down on a cross of ice. After 30 minutes laying there the audience, not resisting the performer ordeal, intervene by removing the performer's body from the cross, covering her with coats.

from other community members. An example of this is the ancient Greek male rite of passage *ephebeia,* in which, for French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, the topographical location is fundamental: "as young soldiers, they occupy the frontier zone of the city, which is expressed physically in the ring of fortlets" (Vidal-Naquet 1986). The delimitation of the physical space is fundamental for liminality, as it marks the territory in which the previous order no longer applies, and marks the space in which chaos and, as a consequence, transformation can take place. In theatre performances, performers and audience (once removed from the daily routine and entering into a theatre space) have their perception of self and the world momentarily transformed. The liminality of theatre performance is bound to a specific, designated space in which the performance takes place. Thus, theatre emerges as a threshold in and across which the binary reality-fiction collapse, coexisting, opposing and dialoguing with each other. Real bodies perform real actions under the setting of fictional narratives. The spatial transformation in theatre is at times symbolic. There is no need for a whole castle to stage Oedipus; a door, or a set of stairs 'can do the trick', and transform a 'black box' into the outside of a Theban's palace.

Spatial liminality in *el macho experiment* can be analysed from two perspectives. First, as a space in which reality — the real physical presence of the actor, and his biography, performing real action — coexist with fictional narratives-scenarios: the actor speaking with his dead father for instance.

> "Papá me escuchaste?"
>
> ...
>
> ese soy yo papá,
>
> the uterus less macho
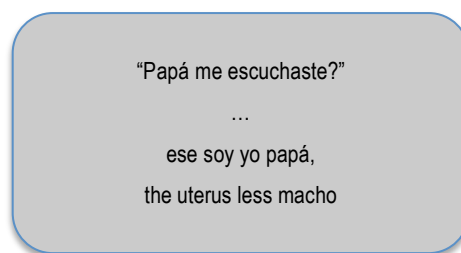
In the previous excerpt from *el macho experiment*, the actor during the performance dialogues with and confronts his dead father as if he, from death, could answer. Liminality in theatre is also symbolic as it is a place in which the dichotomy of reality/fiction collapses (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 177). The space in *el macho experiment* is transformed, through the liminality of performance, disrupting death momentarily — and reality, as a consequence — allowing the actor to interact with his dead father as if

the father was alive. In doing so, the space is symbolically transformed into an in-between realm, a communication booth between the living and the dead.

Secondly, the ambiguity on the use of the space in *el macho experiment* is also liminal. The space for this performance was originally conceived and treated as an opportunity to place academic literature 'on the floor'. The space in which the performance took place was almost empty: only a slip suspended, a pair of boots, three spot lights and projected text (see figure 5). The three spotlights, for instance, were originally rigged as places in which to explore the feminine (up stage, slip in spotlight); masculine (middle stage, army boots in spotlight); and the in-between (down stage, empty spotlight). Whether or not the use of these spotlights as zones of exploration for academic gender categories were successful is irrelevant. What is of relevance for this research is how theatre performance facilitates the creation of spaces and the resulting liminality is not bound but opens up multiple possibilities to disrupt, and perhaps subvert, the logic of reality. For instance, these three spotlights on the performance were simultaneously three places: to recount memories, to speak with the dead, and to explain-question academic concepts.

Figure 5

Although one of the most evident transformations facilitated by the liminality of theatre performance take place in and affect a space, liminality also affects time. Liminality in theatre performance entails a process of suspension, a detour in time, in which those who attend are temporarily taken out of the daily routine, entering into a realm in which

the experience of time is altered as the performance takes place. Fischer-Lichte claims that although performance has a transformative power, these transformations, which are triggered by liminality, "are predominantly temporary" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 179). Further, I argue that liminality, as applied to time in theatre performance, is a paradox. Liminality in theatre performance entails a disruption — and perhaps transformation — of the logic of time, but this disruption or transformation is bound to the temporality of performance. It lasts while the performance lasts.

The perception of time in theatre performance does not necessarily represent the perception of the time outside the performance. For instance, time in performance often loses the logic of continuity; there are flashbacks, jumps in times such that a story can be told backwards, etc. For instance, *el macho experiment* does not follow chronological time; it instead jumps from present time (actor addressing directly the audience) to the past (the recounting and embodiment of memories, as when the actor practices boxing).

The liminality of theatre performance also facilitates transformation in the subjectivity of the actor and the performer. Fischer-Lichte argues, "aesthetic experience enabled by performances can primarily be described as a liminal experience, capable of transforming the experiencing subject" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 174), of performer into object and audience into performer.

As previously explained, Schechner speaks of transformation as 'transformance' in traditional rites, a process by which a group of individuals passes from one actuality to another actuality. Hence, transformance entails the transit that changes the status or condition of an individual(s) or group(s) from an 'actuality 1' to an 'actuality 2'. Turner argues that in the liminal stage of traditional rituals the transformation is permanent. In the liminoid of theatre the change is temporary. Transformations in the liminoid of theatre performances are 'transportations' for Schechner. On these transportations, he continues, "one enters into the experience, 'moved' or 'touched' […], and then dropped off about where she or he entered" (Schechner 2013b, 72). This applies to actors and audiences who experience a theatre production.

Probably one of the most famous quotes in theatre is Jerzy Grotowski's: "Theatre is an encounter" (Grotowski 2002, 56), which was his answer when asked: "What is the task of

the theatre in respect to literature?" (Grotowski 2002, 56). The liminality of this encounter transforms and/or transports both actor and audience from one actuality to another. The individual who performs becomes the performer and as such is expected to action, to narrate, to communicate and/or exhibit, depending on the nature of the theatrical production, something in front of and to others. In turn, these others are transformed from their individual selves into an "audience" and as such are expected to read, feel, and/or respond, depending on the nature of the theatrical production, to the performance. This transformation might seem obvious and superficial, but it is important as it transforms behaviour and embodiment, for instance, when inside the room that hosts a theatre production: the audience lower their voices and restrain their movements so as to not disrupt the performance. The liminality of theatre performance facilitates transformation processes for the audience and the actor. Transformation in the audience will be only briefly mentioned in this section, as the focus of this research is the actor.

Transforming audiences through theatre performances has been a challenging and recurrent mission for influential theatre artists. For example, the Epic Theatre of Bertolt Brecht demanded from theatre to provoke a social change aligned with the sociohistorical changes of his time. In this context, Brecht saw the actor as 'dialectic material' from which the audiences learned about human behaviour (Brecht 1963, 41). In doing so, Brecht aimed to change how the audience engaged with sociopolitical issues during the performance, aiming to transform how the spectator relates and understand his/her own context.

The actor in turn, also suffers a process of transformation in the liminality of theatre performance. Jean Benedetti, when reflecting on his job as an actor asserted: "I am an actor, my job is to appear to be someone else" (Benedetti 1998, 24). Thus, in theatre performances the performer transforms his/her self while the performance lasts. After Constantin Stanislavski developed his system for acting, the process of appearing to be someone else was commonly known as 'building a character'. Through character creation, the performer becomes Hamlet or Medea, adopting ways of moving, talking and behaving that differ from how he/she moves, talks or behaves in his/her daily life. This process entails script analysis, human observation, and examination of historical and socio-anthropological contexts. Performers often speak of their performing character as different and sometimes even conflictive with their own persona. Jane Montgomery Griffiths, for instance, after watching a recording of her sexually and violently loaded

performance on *Story of O* (The Rabble group, 2013, Melbourne, Australia) expressed her difficulty in 'associating' herself, as a woman and as a mother, with her work character as Sir Stephen (Griffiths 2015, 173).

For Schechner, acting training is not about giving the actor tools to create a persona, a character, different from the persona that actor is himself, but rather "permits the performer to act in between identities; in this sense performing is a paradigm of liminality" (Schechner 1985, 123). Schechner further explains in-between identities but positing that the actor in performance "is not himself, but he is not not himself at the same time" (Schechner 1985, 127). Schechner treats the difficulty claimed by Griffiths as liberating. Thus, it could be argued that, in performance, Griffiths is not Sir Stephen, but she is not *not* Sir Stephen.

In the autobiographical performance *el macho experiment* the actor's transformation is slightly different, there is no characterisation as such: not fancy accents, not particular ways of moving as a result of a character study and observation. Instead the actor stays in a state of liminality in which his performance is based on his biography, without creating a character. When reflecting on my performance in *el macho experiment* I wrote:

> *I am and I'm not myself, I feel as if standing on a doorframe, on a threshold that divided Jaime the private human, and Jaime creator of a character. I don't aim to embody any character, there is no character in this performance other than me: the actor. Is Jaime 'the actor' different from Jaime 'the private persona'? During the performance my physiological awareness is heightened. I can feel my heart pumping blood to my body. I can feel how the intercostal diaphragmatic breathing contracts and expands my torso. My hands are trembling. I feel an intensified tension in my muscles, a heightened awareness of the delivery of voice and movements. Who am I when I perform myself on stage? Am I myself or a re-creation of myself?*

> Reflective writing.
> PhD workbook 6, 2017.

Identity and the self are at conflict in autobiographical performances. If we think of identity as a social construction that we create and is created upon us, and which is performed for others, then identity exists always in the realm of representation and performance. For Stuart Hall, when performing autobiographical material, "Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one's own self" (Stuart Hall in Heddon 2008, 27). Therefore, even when

playing oneself in an autobiographical performance, this 'playing' entails a creation, a new self; in *el macho experiment*, it is Jaime the actor. In autobiographical performances identity is blurred not only for the performer, who as Deirdre Heddon posits becomes the author-performer and the subject-object (Heddon 2008), but also for the audience, who does not completely know where the boundary between reality and fiction is. It is in this context, where the liminality of *el macho experiment* works at its best to facilitate catharsis, it situates the performer in the creative chaos between the real (autobiographical material) and the fictional (choreography of the autobiographical in the space).

Finally, no matter how powerful, symbolic or realistic the transformations are in theatre, these are destined to succumb with the performance. When a traditional end off, fourth wall theatre performance ends and the applause is done, the audience lights come up, breaking the transitory, fictional, and transformed reality. Then the audience, who willingly entered into the liminal theatre space, understands this cue as the end of the event, take their phones out to check messages or the time, to make sure they are 'on time', and back to their everyday lives. A similar process happens for the actors, who relax the level of concentration that enabled the performance, wash away the make up, take off the costume, and finally go outside to smoke or talk about where to go for drinks afterwards, etc.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the concept of liminality in order to build the argument that the liminality of theatre performances entails a destructive/creative process, which results in the collapse and simultaneous coexistence of binaries. This analysis has been conducted using *el macho experiment* as a case study, situating masculinity at the intersection between liminality and theatre performance. In doing so the chapter advanced the argument of the thesis that the temporary transformations in the liminality of theatre performance are the perfect playground for subversion of binary gender paradigms, and so for catharsis to operate. In the next chapter I shall develop this to argue that the liminality of theatre performance facilitates, in *el macho experiment*, the creation of the *uterus-less* macho. The *uterus-less* macho is a macho's version in which the binary male-female markers collapse and coexist.

CHAPTER 3: ON SUBVERSION

Figure 6

"Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity" (Connell 1995, 68).
Does this mean that my body is a battlefield?
A boxing ring?

Excerpt from *el macho experiment*,
Centre for Theatre Performance, October 2016.
Monash University, Melbourne Australia.

If my body is a battlefield where my masculinity and my feminity are in a constant fight trying to overthrow each other, are my flesh and bones a living, ongoing, subversive site?

The previous chapter centred its analyses and discussion on liminality, tracing the meaning of the concept from its etymological origin, its application to anthropology, specifically to rites of passage, to understand how it operates in theatre performance. More importantly, the chapter on liminality laid the ground for the study of another key concept of this research project: subversion. In doing so, it advanced the argument that the concept of liminality can be understood as a space that facilitates catharsis through the subversion of macho in a theatrical context.

This chapter analyses the meaning of the concept of subversion, aiming to offer a new insight for its application to this research project. Here, subversion is applied to gender concepts of masculinity and macho, concepts discussed in Chapter 1. Consequently, this chapter analyses the application of subversion to theatre performance, and specifically to the practice-led *el macho experiment*.

This new insight results from queering the concept of subversion by splitting and analysing the 'sub' and the 'version' in subversion. In doing so, it aims to queer a concept already claimed by queer theorists. For instance, in drag performances cross-dressing, mannerisms and the use of makeup could be understood as a subversive practice, as it momentarily 'overturns' (the literal sense of subversion) the individual performance of gender. This description of drag is not, however, uncontested. Butler instead argues that drag performances are not subversive *per se*. A subject performing and imitating its opposite gender through clothing, make up and mannerisms, is not necessarily subversive. The imitative characteristic of drag performance, she explains, is quintessential to heterosexual gender binarism (Butler 1993, 125). Drag for Butler becomes subversive only:

> […] to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality. (Butler 1993, 125)

In this excerpt from *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler argues that subversion operates in drag performance by reflecting the 'imitative' structure by which hegemonic gender is produced and not simply by the inverted imitation of the binary markers of gender, male or female. In other words, Butler argues that drag performances dispute heterosexuality's

claim on naturalness and originality not by the inversion of the gender marker but by the magnified exposure of the imitative structure of gender performance. Drag reflects the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is produced and, consequently, launches an explicit critique, disputing heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality. This chapter aims to argue that subversion, in a literal sense, becomes normative not only as it confirms heterosexual normativity, but also as it categorises as 'not normal' all that is not heterosexual. If to subvert is to overturn or tip something upside down, for instance heterosexual binary gender markers, 'that' which is overturned is confirmed as the standard, permissible and desirable. In turn, the subversive, for instance a non-binary gender performance as homosexuality, is confirmed as the inverted side and therefore lesser than heterosexual gender performance. In *Three Essays on Sexuality,* Freud qualified homosexuality as an inversion — perversion in his later works — of the [heterosexual] sexual object-choice. Later, in a letter he wrote in 1935 to a patient's mother, although he affirms that homosexuality is not a pathology, he does refer to it as an "arrest of [hetero]sexual development" (Freud in Jones 1964, 533). Following Freud, this leads to a perception that the inverted subject as a 'lesser' than, or underdeveloped heterosexual subject. In this context subversion implies a hierarchy, placing, for instance, the heterosexual performance of macho on the top, as fully developed, and the subversive queer performance of macho, beneath, as underdeveloped.

In this chapter, instead of subversion I offer the concept of subVersion — with capital V — in gender performance. SubVersion entails the offering of a different version of another version, with no original. For instance, offering queer-macho as a subVersion of hetero-macho, aims to disrupt the hierarchical relation between these gender performances and not to offer an inverted version of hetero-macho. Thus, queer-macho is not inversion, lesser than or underdeveloped or both, of heterosexual-macho, but a different version of masculinity. To make clear the difference between subVersion and the literal sense of subversion, this research used the term with a capital 'V' in subVersion as will be explained further on this chapter.

In *el macho experiment,* subVersion operates as the creation and embodiment of my own different understanding of macho, different from the hegemonic understanding of it. In doing so, *el macho experiment* not only questions the rigidity of gender binaries, but further foregrounds its instability, looking at binary gender markers, as Halberstam argues, "as

saturated with contradictions, as discontinuous across all the bodies they are supposed to describe" (Halberstam 2012, 71). It is from these contradictions or discontinuity in gender markers, that different versions [performances] of macho can spring. In pursuing subversion as subVersion, I aim to centre the discussion in the saturation of contradictions and discontinuities that gender markers and their performances have. Therefore, for this research queer-macho, hetero-macho and female-macho, among other performances of macho, are all subVersions of a constantly changing social construct: macho. SubVersion in gender performance is not, therefore, a stable figure that aims to attack, criticise and replace normativity with something else; instead subVersion is the coexistence of those contradictions and discontinuity.

Understanding subversion

The etymological origin of this term is the Latin *subverīo* "an overturn, overthrow, ruin, destruction" (Lewis and Short 1975, 1786). The same Latin dictionary defines the individual who enacts subversion as a *subversor* "and overturner, overthrower, subverter" (Lewis and Short 1975, 1786). Subversion, as with the concept of transformation, is a process applied to an already shaped thing, concept or order. In Chapter 2 I argued that transformation could, and in most cases does, entail a subversion of the previous shape, appearance or *status quo*. But the etymology of subversion has a negative connotation that transformation does not necessarily share. Subversion, in the literal sense, entails an act of ruin, destruction, or contradiction of a thing, concept or order. Each act of subversion aims to transform, but not all transformation presupposes an act of subversion; transformation does not aim to ruin, destroy or contradict. Further, this research proposed that in a subVersion of gender performance there is no destruction, but the recognition that all gender performances are nothing but different versions of a social construction.

For Turner, as I argued in the previous chapter, liminality is the "breakthrough of chaos into the cosmos" (Turner 1982, 46). A liminal stage is brought through the [momentary] destruction of the previous order. That is how subversion can be found at the core of liminality. In the liminal, the previous order is overturned, overthrown, ruined, destroyed momentarily in order to facilitate a social change. For instance, in traditional rites of passage, the liminal stage overthrows, and subverts, in the common use of the term, the

male-female binary by treating or representing the child who endures the ritual as "being neither male nor female" (Turner 1964, 49).

Although there is always in subversion a 'threatening' aura, the understanding of how and what subversion threatens has evolved through history in languages with Latin and Greek origins. For example, David Phillips (2013) argues that in ancient Athenian law, subversion was one of the four major offences against the state: "subversion of the constitution and the government […] including tyranny, actual, attempted, or conspired" (Phillips 2013, 467). Here subversion is understood as a threat to the government of the state. In the fifteenth century, the Legislation and Ordinances of the Tudor and Stuart Kingdoms describe practices of the Catholic Church as subversive (Spjut 1979, 254) and in doing so widens the effects of subversion, applying it not only to the state, but also to the realm.

Subversion has been widely discussed in relation to law, politics and freedom of expression. In this context, judges, jurists and legislators have considered subversion as a threat "to the security of the state" (Spjut 1979, 255). But a definition of what types of acts entail subversion, and as a consequence threaten the security of the state, is not clear. In democratic systems, for instance, it is a challenge to outline the difference between legitimate or protected expression and subversion. In totalitarian regimes, "all opposition is inherently subversive" (Revel in Rosenau 2007, 16). Charles Townshend posits that the ambiguity of this term does nothing but convey the "vulnerability of modern systems to all kinds of covert assaults" (Townshend in Rosenau 2007, 4). Thus, subversion is, at its core, a challenge to the ruling system.

The Chilean Law 12.927 *Seguridad Interior del Estado[3]*, in article 4a of its Second Title: *Delitos contra la Seguridad Interior del Estado[4]* describes as a crime any action against the established state, or actions conducive to civil war and especially actions that aim to incite or induce the subversion of the public order. The concept of public order has, however, been described as obscure in Chilean and international jurisprudence. In Chile it is the Supreme Court that, based on each case, establishes what constitutes "public order" (Aguirrezábal, Pérez Ragone, and Romero Seguel 2011, 456). Public order is,

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[3] Internal Security of the State.
[4] Crimes against the security of the State.

then, a rather wide concept, open to interpretations, which helps explain how Chile in the 1980s became a playground for subversive acts, ranging from failed terrorist attempts to assassinate the dictator on September 7, 1986, non-violent demonstrations of opposition to the military regime: *caserolazo*[5]*,* in which as a child I participated with my mother, to theatre productions and other artistic manifestations. Theatre performance in Chile was pivotal during this time, in exposing human rights' violations (Grass, Kalawski, and Nicholls 2015, 131). An iconic example of this was *99 La Morgue,* by Chilean playwright and theatre director Ramón Griffero. This theatre production was first exhibited in 1986 while Pinochet was still in full power, and exposed the practices of forensic doctors during and under the Chilean military regime who, forced by the regime, declared as 'natural death' those tortured and killed by members of the military regime. In doing so, this production was, as Alfonso de Toro argues, a "balanced meeting of purely artistic-theatrical [elements] and the transmission of a political message"[6] (de Toro 1999, 131). I argue that the message of this theatre production performed in that particular time, makes this production a subversive, political and artistic act, as it offers a different version, a version with a difference, a subVersion of the official recount of facts offered by the central power. In doing so, this production triggered a disruption in the political narrative that the military regimen was releasing to the public, by exposing their atrocities. I want to suggest that this production is not subversive because it aimed to ruin the political order, but instead is subVersive as it exposed and perhaps magnified the multiplicity of points of view in history. Thus, I argue that *99 La Morgue* foregrounded history as an unstable social construct. There is not one history but several, for instance the history told by the tyrant [military regime], the history told by the oppressed [dissidents of military regimen] and the history viewed by an outsider [international community]. *99 La Morgue* constitutes subVersion, as it offers a different version, a version with a difference, a subVersion of the official recount of facts offered by the central power.

It is not strange to find a political concept such as subversion at the core of feminist and queer theory projects. Here, subversion is aimed not directly at the government or state necessarily, but to hegemonic cultural forces, "such as patriarchy, individualism, and scientific rationalism" (Allison 2018). These cultural forces aim to police, among other

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5 *Caserolazo* comes from the Spanish word *caserola:* pan, cooking pot. Caserolzo is a popular form of protest, which consisted on a large group of people beating metal cooking pots.
6 This article was originally written in Spanish, I have translated the quote specifically for this thesis.

things, sex, desire and gender. Feminist Gayle Rubin, for instance, posited in the 1980s that:

> Like gender, sexuality is political. It is organised into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities [heterosexual, man, young, white] while punishing and suppressing others [non-heterosexual, woman, old, non-white]. (Rubin 1984, 309)

It is based on this context that Rubin calls for the creation of a radical theory of sex that, stressing the cultural and historical nature of sexuality, exposes and condemns the oppressive and punitive sexual persecution and erotic injustice (Rubin 1984, 275). This call operates as a political act of subversion, as it aims not only to expose injustice in gender relations, but also to undermine gender essentialism.

In turn, queer theory is "by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant" (Halperin 1995, 62). Queer theory problematises not only the heterosexual binary, but also the normalisation of 'gay' and 'lesbian' identity and desire (Lord and Meyer 2013, 351). In doing so, queer theory subVerts by aiming to politically overthrow binarism and essentialism; it subVerts by producing and offering other versions, versions with a difference, of living for dissident bodies and desires.

Subversion is also a concept strongly linked with the arts, especially when it is aimed at questioning and undermining an established order. Comedy and satire are great examples of subversion found throughout performance history, especially when using devices as parody to criticise political-cultural-economical systems. For instance, Barry Sanders in his *Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History* (1995), claims that medieval carnivals were subversive comedy, which threatened to flip upside down the medieval world by "sending boys to the throne as bishops, and by handing women the sceptre as rulers of the realm" (Sanders in Stone 1997, xvi). A more contemporary example of subversion in comedy, which is linked to gender performance, is Richard Niles's analyses of Charles Busch's drag performance. Niles argues that "queer identity, camp, and drag are political and/or subversive toward social norms of gender and sexuality" (Niles 2004, 50). Niles understands subversion in drag performance, perhaps following Butler's idea mentioned

before, as the ability to foreground gender roles, and therefore question essentialist views on gender (Niles 2004, 38).

Before entering into the discussion of subversion in practice-led *el macho experiment*, I propose to analyse the concept in relation to masculinity, specifically in rites of passage.

Subverting masculinity in the liminality of rite of passage

Considering the etymological origin of subversion, described at the beginning of this chapter as "an overturn, overthrow, ruin, destruction", to subvert masculinity implies to 'flip over' or 'turn upside down' masculinity. Thus, within the heterosexual binary frame, the subversion of male gender performance operates, typically, by flipping over or turning upside down male identity to its opposite binary, the female identity. However, there are cases in which subverting masculinity, by flipping it over to its opposite binary femininity, aims not to overthrow or ruin masculinity but quite the opposite, to affirm male gender identity, the latter being the case in several rites of passage. In this light, the following section focuses on the analysis of the relationship between liminality, subversion and masculinity.

In rite of passage, the concept of subversion can be found in the intersection between liminality and masculinity, in boy-to-man rites of passage. In these rites of passage, the subversion of gender markers — female and male — in relation to masculinity aims to affirm male identity. I suggest that the affirmation of the male identity here operates in two ways. First, affirmation of male identity through subversion of masculinity, and second, affirmation of male identity through subversion of femininity.

The affirmation of male identity through subversion of masculinity in traditional rite of passage is the first scenario. The binary categories of female-male have long been described as opposite sexes; being male is the opposite to being female and vice versa. To suggest, therefore, that subversion in boy-to-man rites of passage operates as affirmation through negation of masculinity, entails understanding that, through performing its opposite, masculinity and thus the male identity is constituted. In traditional rites of passage, the performance of the opposite binary in a boy's rites of passage comprise female imitative performances, which range from cross-dressing, to male menstruation.

French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet in "The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World" (1998) claims that the adolescent, in the ancient Greek *ephebeia,* undergoes a temporary identity role reversal/subversion as part of the transition from boy to man. Vidal-Naquet calls this role reversal the inversion theory, which entails a sexually ambiguous stage "that ranged from transvestite, to celibate, to hypersexual womaniser" (Dodd 2003, 72). The inversion of this theory implies a subversion of the performance of masculinity in the liminality of rite of passage. This has lead scholars to understand "the element of transvestism […] as an inversion with respect to gender" (Leitao 1999, 253). Charlotte Suthrell in her *Unzipping gender: sex, cross-dressing and culture* (2004) considers how clothes become parts or extensions of our own bodies. Further she posits that clothes become crucial in our interaction with the world as clothing is an indicator of not only gender, but also of other social variables such as social class, age group and ethnicity, for example (Suthrell 2004a, 14). In summary, she suggests that the body, and by consequence how we clothe it, is of importance as it is "what we present to the world" (Suthrell 2004a, 16). In rites of passage, to subvert the boy's masculine performance by dressing him in girl's clothes aims, through its reversal, to affirm the boy's masculinity. In the liminal zone of rite of passage, the boy embodies the feminine as a way to clearly demarcate a cut with the feminine world. The ritual path from boy to female to man (masculine) becomes a clear process of purifying the masculine from any trait of the feminine (Salamone 2010a, 148). Matthea Cremers, in turn, claims that female imitative gender performances conducted by males, such as female menstruation, not only affirms the male identity through ridding "themselves of contamination by females" (Cremers 1989, 85) but also indicate an attempt to appropriate female [magical] powers, which emanate from female reproductive organs. Boy's rites of passage signalled a clear rupture with the female world in the social life of the child, and more importantly marks the boy's entrance to the social sphere of the male world with its privileges and obligations.

In Chapter 2 I discussed how, in *el macho experiment,* my naked, muscled and hairy body, dressed with a silky delicate woman's slip, opened the liminal possibility for collapsing, at least visually, the male-female binary. More importantly I claimed this action of cross-dressing as an act of subversion of an adult dissident body, attempting to blur heteronormativity.

I propose now to look at cross-dressing in *el macho experiment* from a different perspective, as affirmation of a male's identity through subversion of masculinity, this is through performing its opposite. In Chapter 1 I discussed the importance of fatherhood and its relation to male identity in my cultural background, to the extent that I suggest that the validation of manhood and *'macho-ness'* depends on the ability to procreate and function as a father. In this regard, Connell's framing of masculinity as "the social elaboration of the biological function of fatherhood" (Connell 1995) resonates strongly with my Chilean background. In considering that biologically it is impossible for same sex couples to conceive a child, I propose to look at the cross-dressing in *el macho experiment*, perhaps, as a transitional mechanism — male to female — in a theatrical attempt to appropriate female reproductive functions.

In *el macho experiment*, the action of [cross]dressing the male body with a female garment not only aimed to imitate a female gender performance but also to change the function of the silky slip; it became like a magician's top hat from which some things disappear and other things appear. After dressing the naked male body with a female garment, the slip is lifted facing the audience, exposing a male body that, instead of having a penis (by now concealed between the legs), suggested, through the exposing of traces of black pubic hair, possession of a vulva. This suggestion becomes a clear desire later in *el macho experiment*:

My father was the macho
son of another macho.
Where is the son of this macho who is me?
…
WHERE IS HE?!

I will trade my left testicle
for one ovary and a half cup uterus.

What is of interest in *el macho experiment* is that cross-dressing and the desire of acquired female reproductive organs aim, paradoxically, not to cross over or subvert the binary by momentarily becoming a woman. Instead it aimed to offer a different version of a macho that is both male and female, a queer-macho, a macho that is in conflict with the biological function of fatherhood. As a Chilean homosexual male, the desire and perhaps

envy of the uterus and ovaries responds to the need to fulfil the social elaboration of masculinity through fatherhood. The latter, as with the example of violence in Chapter 1, results in a failure: the failure to procreate, the impossibility of biologically becoming a father through intercourse in a male gay relationship, and as a consequence the impossibility of becoming a man on those terms. As will be explained later, this failure leads in the performance to the elaboration of a subVersion of macho that responded to an earlier question in the text: *"I am not a macho-father, who am I?"* the performance answer is: *"the uterus-less macho."*

The affirmation of male identity in rites of passages not only operates through subversion of masculinity, it also operates through the subversion of femininity, which has been studied in relation to seclusion and ordeals. Examples of these are the studies on tribal African and ancient Greek rites of passage (Leitao 1993, Turner 1974, Vidal-Naquet 1986). In *ephebeia*, for instance, the naked *ephebes* (adolescents) are sent to live on the periphery of the *polis*, where they have to survive in the wilderness, hunting. In these rites of passage, by secluding physically and socially the male infants from the rest of the community, the normal social order of the community is subverted. Normally, boys in traditional African rites of passage are taken away from their mother's side to dwell in a delimited, sacro-magical, liminal space. It could be argued that this segregation aims to separate the infant from the feminine world and, by consequence, subvert any traces of feminity in them. Here the affirmation of the male identity operates by the negation of the opposite binary. This is not exclusive to traditional rites of passage, but it is also a mechanism to construct masculinity in contemporary society. As Cantero argues, the affirmation of the child male identity operates through the negation of the female world (Cantero 2003, 57). During my childhood, the construction of my masculinity was crowded with negations of what was associated with the female world, for instance my father's repetitive demand, 'don't cry, crying is for girls'. In a patriarchal, macho-culture, as it was in the Chile in which I grew up, tears, and especially the externalisation of pain, was typified as a female gender performance and as a consequence an undesirable male performance. Following Cantero, it could be argued that the negation of crying for men is not necessarily a negation to express pain, but rather, a negation of the female world. Relating the example from my childhood to traditional rites of passage, the negation to cry was perhaps my father's attempt to cleanse from me, his firstborn male child, any feminine traces, indoctrinating me into a macho [heterosexual] performance.

69

The subversion of femininity in the male individual, by suppressing and/or cutting with what is considered culturally a feminine gender performance, is a recurrent practice in traditional rites of passage. There are practices such as African circumcision and forced nose bleeding, Aboriginal Australian male menstruation (Cremers 1989), Pacific Island traditional tattoo ceremony (Anders 2004), or the Congolese *Kamô* ritual, which entails cutting of small incisions in the body, ankles, wrists, chest or temples (Gondola 2016, 99). These ordeals represent a subversion of the body through mutilation, and thus reinforce masculinity by cleansing the male subject through the pain from feminine attributes. The body here can be seen as a 'subversive site' (Honwana and De Boeck in Gondola 2016, 107), in which through the strength of bearing the ordeal, the boy confirms his masculinity by subverting traces of the weakness, that is, feminity, in him.

In addition to the described role of the body as a subversive site — of masculinity or feminity — in the affirmation of male identity in traditional rite of passage, I further argue that the body is an ongoing subversive site inhabited by the binary markers of female-male. In contemporary societies the lack of clear rites of passage entails for the individual an ongoing process of definition and redefinition of gender performances. This last is a social process of indoctrination, which is based on how the culture understands the relation between the binaries and its relation with other non-binary gender identities. That is how, as Connell claims, speaking of men as a group or a sector implies a "distinction from and relation with another group, 'women' " (Connell 2000, 16). Therefore, defining masculinity, or femininity, implies delimitating a group; it is a fractionalisation that includes some and excludes others. A part of the obvious historical aims/consequences of this distinction — control, inequality, violence, and crime to name a few — what is at conflict in gender performance is the body, what the body does, how the body is presented, as suggested in the following excerpt of *el macho experiment*:

> *"Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity"*
>
> Does this mean that my body is a battlefield?
>
> a boxing ring?
>
> in which my inner Adam
>
> fights and loves and fights, my inner Eve?
>
> Or is it the other way around?

Despite the biblical and poetical licence, what is behind this excerpt is the claim that gender performances are unstable, since what is expected when performing gender varies culturally, for example between ethnicities or social class. Moreover, what is expected when performing gender also varies during the lifetime of the single individual, as it has been argued in Chapter 1. I argue that the individual 'inner fight-love' between the binaries, which this excerpt is describing, also contributes to creating and recreating the gendered body, a body always in tension, defending, testing, conforming and rebelling against the social constructions of gender. It is a body in a constant process of 'stylisation' to use Butler's words (Butler 1988, 154). The term 'inner' in this paragraph is used to describe the body as an inhabiting space by the binary, as a material mass delimited from and in relation to other bodies/masses. Lisa F. Käll posits that "to be a body is thus to have boundaries, to be singularised and exclusive of other bodies" (Käll 2016, 1). The 'inner' entails a fight-love that not only occurs within the boundaries of the body, but also is a fight-love that recreates the gendered body as a continuous subversive site. Finally, this excerpt states an inner boxing match between *"my inner Adam"* [masculine identity] and *"my inner Eve"* [feminine identity], and in doing so not only advances the argument that there is no essential masculine of feminine identity, but also suggests that both female and male gender identity are both constitutive parts of the gendered self.

Queering Subversion

Holman Jones and Harris claim in the introduction to *Queer Autoethnography* (2019) that queering is an offer, which constitutes "theoretical disruption[s] of taken-for-granted knowledge[s]" (Holman Jones and Harris 2019, 4). In this section I aim to queer the workings of subversion, offering an insight of this concept as subVersion with capital V,

which will be crucial for the understanding of catharsis as intellectual clarification in the following chapter. I propose to start by disrupting and splitting the word subversion, looking at it as a word composed by the prefix *sub*, and the noun *version.*

Dictionaries define 'sub' as a prefix with Latin origin, which when attached to a word, a noun, is used as "under," "below," "beneath," "slightly," "imperfectly," "nearly," "secondary," "subordinate". In heteronormative, patriarchal culture and practices, gender performances that do not conform to the heterosexual binary have been defined as secondary, lesser or peripheral. In this scenario the queer has inhabited all the possible *sub*s of heteronormativity, from sin to illness to crime (Fernández Lara 2015). Queer has been depicted as an abnormality by heteronormativity, as a monster who creeps in the liminal zones of gender (Halberstam 1995, 27), as an outsider of "heteronormative relationships and institutions" (Holman Jones and Harris 2019, 91). Instead of looking at a queer-macho as outside the binary, I propose queer-macho as a definer, not lesser, of the hetero-macho, and vice versa, perhaps mirroring Connell's allusion to the interdependence between binaries cited at the beginning of this chapter: "masculinity does not exist except in contrast with feminity" (Connell 1995, 68). Thus, queering subversion into subVersion aims not only to foreground the 'sub' [macho] from the periphery or underneath the centre as a term in play with hetero-macho, but also aims to bring to the sphere of the 'sub' the hetero-macho [and all gender performances for that matter] levelling both gender performances, hetero-macho and queer-macho, as copies of a copy with no original, as performances intrinsically saturated with contradictions.

A version, in turn, is defined by dictionaries as "a particular form of something differing in certain respects from an earlier form or other forms of the same type of thing". For Butler, gender performativity is the process through which the subject is constituted, and which "happens through a certain kind of repetition and recitation" (Butler 1994, 33). Butler argues that in gender performativity, this repetition is not only ever identical to the previous, but most importantly it is a repetition of a performance with no original. Thus, she posits, "hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealisations" (Butler 1993, 125). Taking into consideration Butler's gender performativity, it could be argued that all gender performances are different performances' versions [subVersions], aiming to reproduce and validate an ideal. These versions in turn are socially arranged hierarchically, with a hegemonic version sitting

predominantly at the top. Hegemonic macho for instance is the performance of macho that is closest to the cultural ideal of a macho. The idea of proximity, 'closeness', requires at least another point[s] of reference. It is how an object 'A' [hetero-macho] is closer to the point 'X' [cultural ideal of macho], than the object 'B' [queer-macho for instance]. Without the reference point 'B' [queer-macho], point 'A' [hetero-macho] cannot be the 'closest' [hegemonic] to point 'X' [cultural ideal of macho]. Thus hetero-macho not only requires queer-macho and or lesbian-macho, to name some macho subVersions, to establish its closeness to the ideal, but also the constitution of gender ideals is validated and reproduced by the interplay between these gender versions.
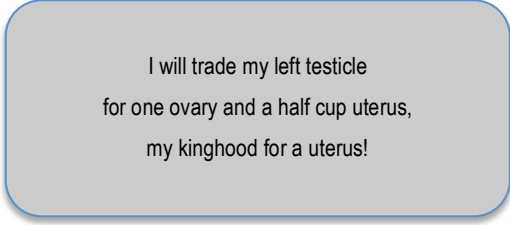
SubVersion of macho: the uterus-less macho

Womb envy is a psychoanalytical concept, understood as male envy of female's biological functions of pregnancy, parturition and breastfeeding (Griffin 2017). Psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Karen Horney introduced the concept of womb envy in the twentieth century as a way to explain male dominance in human civilisation. Emma Bayne explains that Horney claimed men's creative work as a way to overcompensate "their limited role in procreation" as a result of this envy (Bayne 2011, 158). The concept of womb envy has been marginalised, or silenced to use Bayne's words, from psychoanalytical and psychological debates. Bayne cites Emma Jacobson (1950) and Ruth Lax (1997) to uncover the reasons behind why most male psychologists and psychoanalysts disregard womb envy theory. Jacobson suggest that male analysts' rejection of womb envy might find its roots in their unconscious [unfulfilled] desire to give birth. Lax suggests that the rejection to womb envy is a consequence of "an unconscious attempt to conceal the topic and focus on information stressing the value of the penis in order to cater to male narcissism" (Bayne 2011, 154). Regardless of the reasons why womb envy has been marginalised from psychological circles, it is a concept, as Bayne largely explores in her essay,[7] present not only in psychology and psychoanalysis, but also in anthropology, myth and religion. Examples of this are the anthropological work of Margaret Mead's comparative study of seven Pacific cultures (Mead 1950), the analyses of Greek myths, such as Zeus carrying Dionysus's fetus on his thigh until full term (Warnes and Hill 1974, 25) and the biblical account of the creation of mankind in which Eve is created (given birth to) from Adam's rib.

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[7] *Womb envy: The cause of misogyny and even male achievement?* (2011)

Before analysing womb [uterus] envy in *el macho experiment*, I want to clarify that the appearance of this concept in the performance research was not a consequence of its direct study in academic literature. Instead, the poetical image of uterus [womb] envy appeared as an outcome in one of the theatre laboratories — practice-led — conducted through this research project. It was not until much later that I encountered the concept in the academic literature. As a consequence, this is a clear example of practice-led: *el macho experiment* leading to research insight (Candy in Smith and Dean 2009, 5), operating as a tool to anchor theory with practice. Confronted with the absence of an offspring and its effect in the constitution of a macho subjectivity in my biography, the text proposes a deal, a sort of trade:

> I will trade my left testicle
> for one ovary and a half cup uterus,
> my kinghood for a uterus!

Womb envy, clearly expressed in this excerpt, operates as a mechanism to compensate the biological impossibility to conceive offspring in homosexual copulation. In an essay contained in *Nuevas Masculinidades* (2000), Rodrigo Andrés posited that "from Antiquity there has been an association between male homosexuality with femininity" (Andrés 2000, 124). This association does not entail a straightforward equation of male homosexuality equals femininity; for Andrés, this association has excluded homosexuality from both female and male markers, leaving the homosexual subject floating in a liminal gender category. It is perhaps a result of this homosexual liminality, exclusion from the sematic field of masculinity (Andrés 2000, 124) — embedded in my subconscious — which leads me not only to attempt this trade, but further to claim this liminal — hermaphrodite — performance of gender as a viable or, in Butler's words, livable gender performance. I have discussed in Chapter 1 Butler's ideas about the constitution of a subject through recognition and how "if the terms by which I am recognised make life unlivable" (Butler 2004, 4) being less intelligible opens the possibility for a livable life. The earlier quoted excerpt from *el macho experiment,* centred on the male's gonads, is liminal as it does not express a desire for a total sexual exchange, but instead proposes a

middle ground, an in-between hermaphrodite trade: *my left testicle for one ovary and a half cup uterus*. Liminality in relation to gender has been discussed in Chapter 2 when describing the collapsing of gender markers in the actor's body. The interesting twist in this passage is that the hermaphrodite liminal image is offered not as an escape from the binary, but paradoxically to endorse it. The hermaphrodite offer in *el macho experiment* is an attempt to compensate for the biological impossibility to conceive offspring and, as a consequence, a failed masculine performance. Earlier I established the relation between fatherhood and procreation with masculinity and macho-ness in my cultural and biographical context. This performance excerpt leaves anatomical differentiation outside the equation when qualifying a binary marker as macho and, in consequence, opens the possibility for a body composed by one testicle, one ovary and a half cup uterus to performatively be[come] a macho, a different version of a macho.

The importance of male genitalia as a symbol of masculinity has been largely explored in academia. Particularly prolific is the study of penis envy (Freud) and later phallus in psychoanalysis from Freud onwards. In my own cultural and biographical context, the testicles have a preponderant importance, as the producers and carriers of semen with the paternal chromosomal DNA. For instance my father, when first confronted with my homosexuality shouted at me: "el dolor que me causas, es peor que perder mis bolas!" [the pain you are causing me, it is worse than losing my balls], alluding to my homosexuality as a rupture on his patriarchal, linear masculinity and, as a consequence, a failure of his own masculinity. This trade is not an act of defeat, but attempts to use the queer failure to biologically procreate, as a way to claim my masculinity, my queer performance of masculinity. In the *el macho experiment,* this claim operates by offering a different, but not lesser, version of a macho, a subVersion of macho: the *uterus-less macho*, a gender performance in which macho-ness is not determined by the ability to procreate.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and argued the poetical figure of the *uterus-less* macho, offered by *el macho experiment*, as a queer version [subVersion] of macho. This is a version that is not lesser than hetero-macho, it is a version in which the male-female binary markers collapse and coexist. The building of this argument entailed an analysis of the concept of subversion, its etymological and political roots and how it is related to my Chilean culture. In its application to masculinity, this chapter has also analysed subversion —

masculinity and femininity — in the affirmation of male identity in traditional rites of passage. This chapter further advances the argument of the thesis by demonstrating how subversion operates in theatre performance as the trigger for catharsis. In the next chapter I shall apply Golden's intellectual clarification to the actor, arguing that catharsis in the actor operates as an inductive process in which from something specific, something general is understood.

CHAPTER 4: ON CATHARSIS
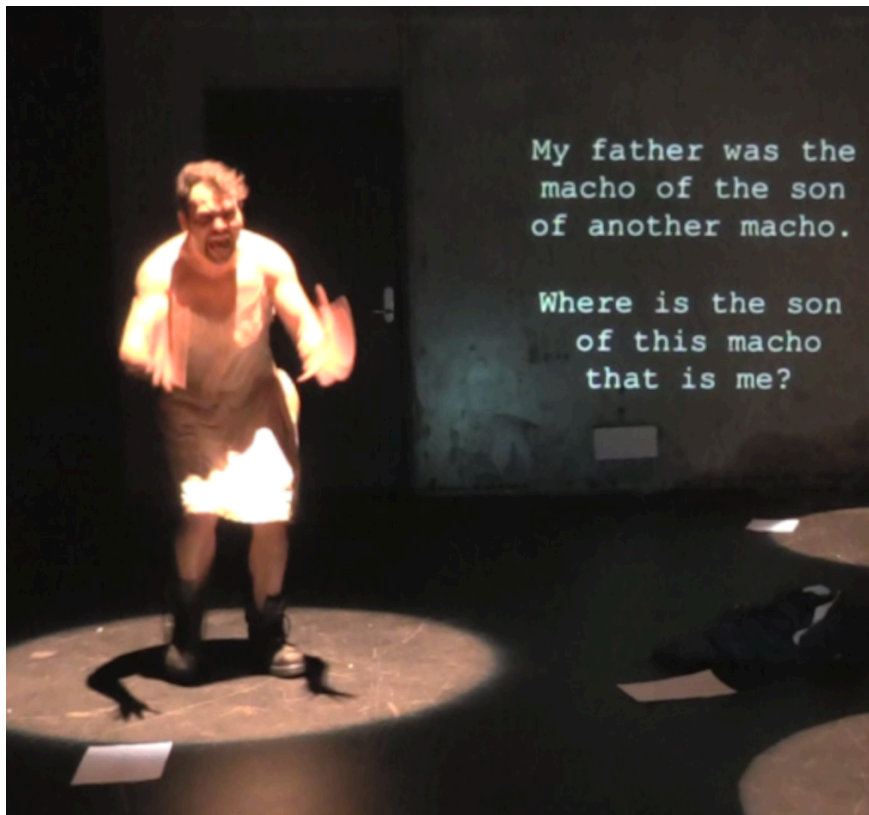
Figure 7

"That it is me, the uterus-less macho"

<div align="right">

Excerpt of *el macho experiment*,
Centre for Theatre Performance, October 2016.
Monash University, Melbourne Australia.

</div>

A well-structured tragedy should be a cathartic process of clarification, in which the audience pleasurably learns something universal, from the specific events in the plot.

What am I as an actor, in this cathartic process?

A tool, an agent or both?

Throughout this thesis I have argued that in the liminality of theatre performance, a queer subVersion of macho — the uterus-less macho — enables catharsis to operate in the actor. The concepts of macho and liminality have been analysed in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. In Chapter 3 I analysed and offered an insight into the concept of subversion, which resulted from splitting and analysing the 'sub' and the 'version' in subversion. In doing so, I advanced an understanding of the term as subVersion with capital 'V', to emphasise that, for this research, to subVert entails not only to offer a different version [queer-macho], of another version [heterosexual-macho], which does not have an original, but also a version in which binaries collapse and coexist. As in the preceding chapters, Chapter 3 employed the practice-led autobiographical performance *el macho experiment* as the case study not only to advance the argument of this thesis, but also to anchor theory with practice and vice versa.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on catharsis, the final key concept of argument of this thesis. Specifically, this chapter deals with the application of Leon Golden's understanding of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis as intellectual clarification to the actor in an autobiographical solo performance, using the practice-led *el macho experiment* as a case study. The analysis in this chapter is somewhat different to that in the preceding chapters. The present chapter entails the application of a theoretical frame — intellectual clarification — to a performance: *el macho experiment*. Golden elaborated this theoretical frame to understand the mechanics of catharsis in ancient Greek tragedy, and not in relation to a cultural gender paradigm. That is why this chapter starts with a theoretical explanation of the understandings of catharsis from *Poetics* and not in relation to the concept of macho. Although perhaps divorced from the gender and autobiographical discussion, it is important to clarify the origin in the formation of this theoretical frame to then proceed to its application in *el macho experiment*.

Currently, catharsis is usually used to describe the effect theatre has — and art in general has — as a result of the audience-performer interaction, or conversely, the effect of theatre as a creative process on the makers. This effect is generally understood as an emotional purgation, as a release of emotions. For instance, during informal conversations after attending a theatre show, I have often heard theatre goers describing, perhaps lightly, the experience as cathartic, meaning a certain emotional release experienced during the show, in relation to what was presented on stage.

The understanding of catharsis as the purgation of emotions in the audience might be a consequence of how the 'catharsis clause' in *Chapter VI* of *Poetics* has been translated and understood by some authors. In those translations, the clause translates the Greek word κάθαρσις [catharsis] as purgation[8] (Purgation Theory will be analysed later in this chapter). Hardison claims that those translations "relate catharsis to the psychology of the spectator rather than to what happens in the tragedy itself" (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 116). However, despite discussions on the definition of catharsis in the academic literature, there is a dichotomy between practice and theory. Most of the academic discussion is limited to theoretical interpretations of the Aristotelian text, rarely applied in the sense of the performance.

In this chapter I argue that the different attempts to decipher the Aristotelian notion of catharsis contained in *Poetics* fail to adequately describe the range of effects a theatre production has on the actor. Furthermore, the question of whether Aristotle meant purgation, purification or clarification in *Poetics* is not central to this research project, but only the starting point. This research is concerned with the application of catharsis to the actor's contemporary practice in an autobiographical solo performance, and not to the actor performing in a Greek classical tragedy. Finally, drawing on the experiential practice-led performance *el macho experiment* in relation to relevant academic literature, this thesis develops an understanding of catharsis that goes beyond Aristotle, the understanding of the academic literature and usage in the practice.

This chapter has a structure of three sections. The first section deals with the understanding of Aristotle's problematic clause on catharsis contained in *Chapter VI* of *Poetics,* (335 BCE). The second section entails an exposition of its discussion in the academic literature, described under Gherardo Ugolini's classification of the definitions of catharsis in four groups (Ugolini 2016). The third part of this chapter focuses on the application of catharsis as 'intellectual clarification', developed by Leon Golden (1962, 1969 and 1973), to the actor in the practice-led *el macho experiment*. In doing so, this

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[8] Examples of authors who have translated and in consequence understood the cathartic clause as purgation are: Jacob Bernays (1857), Samuel Henry Butcher (1898), Edward Musgrave Blaiklock (1944) and George Whalley (1996) to name some.

section aims to revisit and offer an insight on catharsis applied to the actor, which is coherent with contemporary practice.

Understanding the problematic clause on catharsis in *Poetics*

Although the word catharsis is currently used in artistic and psychological circles, the original Greek term κάθαρσις (catharsis) was not exclusively a dramatic or psychological term. As a matter of fact it is a concept that had multiple nuances in its Greek origins. In ancient Greek κάθαρσις was a term used to describe different processes: purgation, pruning, purification, cleansing and clarification. All these nuances of the term existed at the time Aristotle wrote *Poetics*. When translating a term as such, if the context in which the term was used in the original text is not clear or incomplete, the understanding of the concept becomes problematic. This is the scenario when translating and understanding catharsis in Aristotle's *Chapter VI* of *Poetics*. This is also the reason why this clause of *Poetics* has generated such vast debate not only in Classical Studies, but also in other disciplines such as theatre studies.

The lack of definition of catharsis in *Poetics* has been identified as a dilemma in this important Aristotelian treatise. Aristotle's *Poetics* is not only one of the earliest critical works on dramatic theory but also the most important and influential surviving written text from antiquity. In the opening clause of *Poetics*, Aristotle states his intention when writing his treatise, which focuses on discussing, describing and analysing the "art of poetry" and on what is necessary "to construct plots if the poetic composition is to be successful" (Aristotle 1968, 3). Despite the fact that in *Poetics* Aristotle applied his analysis to different genres such as tragedy, comedy, satire comedy, epic poetry and dithyrambic poetry, James Phelan points out that this treatise focuses predominantly on "identifying and analysing the principles of construction underlying effective tragic drama" (Phelan 2007, 207). The definition of tragedy in *Chapter VI* is of importance to this research project, as it is in this regard that Aristotle mentions catharsis.

> Tragedy is, then, an imitation of a noble and complete action, having the proper magnitude; it employs language that has been artistically enhance by each of the kinds of linguistic adornment, applied separately in the various parts of the play; it is presented in dramatic, not narrative form, and achieves, through the

representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such pitiable and fearful incidents. (Aristotle 1968, 12)

Hardison claims in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics* that the definition of tragedy is clear and congruent with the Aristotelian treatise. He also mentions that only obscurity can be found in the catharsis clause (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 113). The issue with this clause is that it does not offer a straightforward definition of catharsis *per se* — what catharsis entails, how it operates or who is affected by it or, to be more specific, on how Aristotle understood it. Instead, catharsis is linked to the function of tragedy or, in Hardison words, "what tragedy is supposed to do" (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 113). Furthermore, there is no section in *Poetics* or in any other known Aristotelian text that defines catharsis. This is why different authors have attempted to accurately translate, clarify and interpret the intention of Aristotle when including the term κάθαρσις (catharsis) in the definition of tragedy contained in *Poetics*. The sources that inform these translations, interpretations and definitions are the etymological usage of κάθαρσις at Aristotle's time, and two Aristotelian treatises, *Poetics* and *The Politics*.

The etymological origin of catharsis is the ancient Greek noun κάθαρσις, which has been defined by the Greek-English Lexicon as a:

> cleansing from guilt or defilement, purification, Hdt. I. 35, Pl.[…]; cleansing of the universe by fire, Zeno and Chrysipp.; cleansing of food by or before cooking, Diocl. […] clarification, Epicur.[…] Medic., clearing off of morbid humours, etc., evacuation, whether natural or by the use of medicines (cf. Gal.17(2).358), Hp.Aph […] pruning of trees, Thphr. (Liddell and Scott 1996, 851)

At the time Aristotle wrote *Poetics*, these were the known meanings of catharsis. The intended meaning of the word catharsis, as used by Aristotle in *Poetics* is ambiguous to say the least. Malcolm Heath, in the introduction of his translation of *Poetics* maintains that, in relation to catharsis, "there have been, and still are fundamental disagreements about the meaning" (Heath in Aristotle 1996a, viii). Further he claims that some of the obscurity of catharsis in the *Poetics* may be a consequence of the loss of a presumed second book. Heath argues there is within the surviving volume, "internal and external

evidence which suggest" (Heath in Aristotle 1996a, xxxvii) Aristotle's intention to deal with comedy and probably to elaborate an explanation on catharsis in a further work. Golden seems to support this idea in the last footnote of his translation of *Poetics*. He points out that the fourteenth century manuscript known as *Codex Riccardianus 46* finishes *Poetics* with an incomplete clause: "Now as to iambic poetry and comedy…" (Aristotle 1968, 52). Despite these presumptions, the fact is that throughout *Poetics*, catharsis recurs without an exact, singularised definition.

The term κάθαρσις in ancient Greek, is a polysemous word with different shades of meaning that are affected by the contexts in which the word is used, as Andre Ford explains:

> Lexical studies distinguish four main meanings of katharsis at the time Aristotle wrote. Its root sense was essentially "cleaning", but it was early used in religious vocabularies for ritual "cleansing" of physical objects, and for the "purification" of souls through music and incantations. The Hippocratics also gave katharsis a special sense as a technical term for the expulsion of noxious bodily elements through 'purging'. Finally, Plato seems to have extended the word to intellectual "clarification" in a few passages, though he did not use it in connection with poetry or music. (Ford 1995, 111)

Thus, depending on the meaning ascribed to catharsis in *Poetics*, the term could entail a process of purging, purifying, cleansing, or clarifying. To follow any of these interpretations will impact the definition of tragedy in itself.

Gherardo Ugolini adds that in *Poetics*, Aristotle uses catharsis also as "the meaning of ritual purification with reference to the myth of Orestes and his 'rescue by purification' " (Ugolini 2016, 5). Aristotle explains how a story becomes a plot by connecting causally the events. *Poetics* reads, "the episode must be appropriate, as, for example, the madness of Orestes through which he was captured and his deliverance through purification [catharsis]" (Aristotle 1968, 30). In that section, as in the clause about tragedy, Aristotle does not define catharsis. Aristotle instead uses the term when describing a sequence of events that by causal connection becomes a plot, a well-written plot. Although the context of this section might implicate a ritualistic understanding (purification) of

catharsis by Aristotle, this understanding is in relation to the plot and not as a term applied to theorising drama.

Not only the etymology of catharsis is a challenge, on a general level many are the challenges when studying *Poetics*. Among others, for instance, there is no translation in English or any other language that could be taken as definitive. Hardison indicates also that there is no clarity on what this text represents: Aristotle's lecture notes, a rough essay's draft or a finished work (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 56). What seems to be clear for Hardison is the intention of Aristotle when writing *Poetics*, claiming that Aristotle wrote *Poetics* as a "technical treatise", focused on "the nature of tragedy" (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 116). Therefore the interpretation of any clause in this text should be made in relation to the whole text. This is how Hardison claims that Aristotle gives an important clue to understanding catharsis in the clause that precedes the definition of tragedy (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 114). In this clause, Aristotle states his intention to formulate a definition of tragedy that emerges "from what we have already said" (Aristotle 1968, 11). Therefore, Hardison and Golden claim that this clause should be understood in relation to *Poetics* as a whole, and specifically to *Chapters I* to *V*. In *Chapter IV* Aristotle establishes that the function of imitative art is pleasure, which he associates with learning. The definition of tragedy does not explicitly include pleasure, but pleasure is included as one of the four basic elements of imitative art. Tragedy is one of these imitative arts, *an imitation of a noble and complete action*. Hardison posits that if the definition of tragedy contained in *Chapter VI* does include three of the four basic elements of imitative art (means, object and manner) "we would expect him [Aristotle] to incorporate the fourth also. He evidently does this in the catharsis clause" (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 115). This conjecture is part of the arguments that Golden uses to understand catharsis as intellectual clarification, as will be discussed in detail later on this chapter.

Finally, Aristotle described the plot, the arrangements of incidents in the text, as the most important constitutive part of tragedy. Furthermore, when describing the six principles of tragedy in *Chapter VI:* plot, character, thought, diction, melody and spectacle, he considers ὄψις [spectacle] as the "least essential part of the art of poetry" (Aristotle 1968, 14). W. Bedell Stanford asserts that for Aristotle, ὄψις denoted in tragedy the spectacular element, "the immediate visual effect of a stage production" (Stanford 1936, 110). This involves not only what today we know as *mise en scène,* but perhaps also the actors on

stage. Aristotle himself asserted that tragedy could be felt "even without a dramatic performance and actors" (Aristotle 1968, 14). The opening clause of *Poetics,* in turn, states Aristotle's intention when writing this treatise to discuss what is necessary "to construct plots if the poetic composition is to be successful" (Aristotle 1968, 3). I argue that in *Poetics* these cited excerpts not only emphasise the importance of tragedy's written text, but also seem to understate tragedy's staging and performance. Thus, I suggest that when Aristotle wrote about tragedy in *Poetics,* he could have been mostly concerned with how to write a 'successful' tragedy, and not so much with how to stage, perform or even experience, as an audience, a tragedy. This might explain why Aristotle places no mention of a cathartic process in the actor and furthermore why *Poetics* fails to adequately describe the effects a theatre production has in the actor, as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The lack of a definition of catharsis in *Poetics* has led the academic discussion to seek other Aristotelian treatises for answers, for instance *The Politics,* (fourth century BCE). In this treatise Aristotle analyses the politics of his time, granting special attention on how the *polis* should be ideally governed. Carnes Lord indicates that *polis* in *The Politics,* should be understood as "an independent state organised around an urban centre and governed typically by formal laws and republican political institutions" (Lord in Aristotle 1984, 1). In doing so, Lord urges the reader of *The Politics* not to translate *polis* as a contemporary state. *The Politics,* Lord argues, focuses on *polis* as "an essentially republican political order" (Lord in Aristotle 1984, 1). The *Book VIII* of this Aristotelian treatise is concerned with how the citizens' children should be educated in the *polis*. Further it states that the education of the young is a crucial responsibility of the legislator (Aristotle 1984, 229). It is in *Chapter 7*, *Book VIII* of *The Politics* that Aristotle mentions catharsis when discussing the type of music to be taught in the *polis*. Aristotle in this chapter assigns three purposes to melodies: ethical, practical or enthusiastic, identifying ethical melodies as suitable for the education of the young, whereas practical and enthusiastic melodies are regarded as unfit for education. Aristotle argued that enthusiastic melodies are unfit for education because they can trigger κάθαρσις [catharsis].

As with *Poetic,* it is important to mention that there is not a definitive English translation of the ancient Greek word κάθαρσις in *The Politics*. For instance, Carnes Lord has translated it as purification and Benjamin Jowett as purgation. The reasons and consequences of this translation dispute in *The Politics* are not important for the present

research. What concerns this research is that translations of catharsis in *The Politics* as purgation have been used as an argument to explain and define catharsis in *Poetics* since the nineteenth century. Thus, in this section I use the Jowett translation of *The Politics* only to illustrate the reading of the catharsis as purgation in *Poetics. The Politics, Book VIII, Chapter 7*, second paragraph reads:

> We accept the division of melodies proposed by certain philosophers into melodies of character, melodies of action, and passionate or inspiring melodies, each having, as they say, a mode corresponding to it. But we maintain further that music should be studied, not for the sake of one, but for many benefits, that is to say, with a view to education, or purgation (the word 'purgation' we use at present without explanation, but when hereafter we speak of poetry we will treat the subject with more precision); music may also serve for intellectual enjoyment, for relaxation and for recreation after exertion. It is clear, therefore, that all the modes must be employed by us, but not all of them in the same manner. In education the modes most expressive of character are to be preferred, but in listening to the performances of others we may admit the modes of action and passion also. For feelings such as pity and fear, or again, enthusiasm, exist very strongly in some souls, and have more or less influence over all. Some persons fall into a religious frenzy, and we see them restored as a result of the sacred melodies, when they have used the melodies that excite the soul to mystic frenzy, as though they had found healing and purgation. Those who are influenced by pity or fear, and every emotional nature, must have like experience, and others in so far as each is susceptible to such emotions, and all are in a manner purged and their souls lightened and delighted. (Aristotle 1996b, 204)

In the Jowett translation of *Book VIII*, Aristotle not only argues that "passionate or inspiring melodies" are unfit for the education of the young, but further seems to associate catharsis with a medical treatment or healing of emotions — pity and fear namely. Aristotle's association of κάθαρσις [catharsis] with healing through purgation in this excerpt coincides also with one of the definitions of κάθαρσις contained in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell and Scott 1996, 851). In sum, Aristotle claims in *The Politics* that catharsis is triggered through the "religious frenzy" that "passionate or inspiring melodies" provoke on "some people", which leads, in the auditor, to a relief of

emotions through pleasure. Aristotle in *Chapter 6* of *Book VIII* of *The Politics* explains why the *aulos*[9] should not be used in a classroom, as it provokes "a passionate rather than ethical experience in its auditors and so should be used on those occasions that call for catharsis rather than learning" (Aristotle in Ford 2016, 26). Thus, Andrew Ford suggests that these "enthusiastic melodies", which Jowett translated as "passionate or inspiring", would have operated in ancient Greece as does rock and roll nowadays provoking a "passionate" experience in the listeners (Ford 2016, 27).

It is important to mention that despite the seemingly therapeutic effect granted to catharsis in *Book VIII* of *The Politics*, the term is not singularly defined nor explicitly understood by Aristotle as purgation. This is why the translation of catharsis in *The Politics* is problematic and open to interpretation. Additionally, I argue that Aristotle insinuates a different nuance of catharsis in *Poetics*. At the beginning of the paragraph cited before from *Book VIII, Chapter 7* of *The Politics*, Aristotle parenthetically states that catharsis is "use[d] at present without explanation, but when hereafter we speak of poetry, we will treat the subject with more precision" (Aristotle 1996b, 205). It leads us to conclude that if there is a need for clarification in *Poetics*, the application of catharsis as purgation from *The Politics* is not a straightforward one. Furthermore there is no other Aristotelian text that states that the notion of catharsis is interchangeable in these two treatises. Writers in the academic literature have strongly rejected the reading of *Poetics* in the light of *Book VIII* of *The Politics*. The principal criticism to the application of *The Politics* to *Poetics* when understanding the clause on catharsis is the different nature and purpose of these two treatises: "one is a political utterance, the other an aesthetic utterance" (Mckeon in Golden 1973, 474).

Aristotle's exact, intended meaning of catharsis is not only ambiguous, but also presumably missing pieces of the puzzle, such as a presumed sequel of *Poetics* as mentioned before. Ford notes also that *Book VIII* of *The Politics* breaks off and is incomplete, leaving "room for champions of different forms of katharsis to imagine mitigating of confirmatory arguments" (Ford 1995, 120). Thus, I conclude that it is an impossible task to define what Aristotle meant when utilising this ambiguous concept. The ambiguity of catharsis in *Poetics* and *The Politics* has triggered a prolific debate in academic circles, referred as the Aristotelian legacy in this research. More importantly, I

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[9] Wind instrument played in ancient Greece.

argue in this thesis, and particularly in this chapter, that it opens the possibility for revisiting catharsis, examining, for instance, how it might work in the actor in contemporary practice.

The legacy

The following section briefly describes the debate on Aristotle's understanding of catharsis in academic literature. In order to achieve such a task, I employ Gherardo Ugolini's synthesis and classification of the understandings of catharsis into four groups:

1. Catharsis as "ennoblement of passions, as *purificatio*" (Ugolini 2016, 11).
2. Catharsis as a "removal of passions or *purgatio*" (Ugolini 2016, 12).
3. Catharsis "as intellectual *purificatio*" (Ugolini 2016).
4. Catharsis "as *clarificatio*, that is, intellectual clarification" (Ugolini 2016, 16).

Purification Theory

Ugolini describes this understanding of catharsis as a process in which "the spectators learn to use passions in an appropriate and balanced way, that is, in the right situation and for the right person" (Ugolini 2016, 11). In academic literature this approach translates κάθαρσις as purification, understanding catharsis as a spiritual purification with moral aims in *Poetics*. Further, this theory provides a religious understanding of catharsis, as a process of cleansing of the spirit, as a preparation to enter to a state of exaltation. It is probably Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Poetics*, written in the twelfth century and translated by Hermann the German in 1256 AD that could be set as the starting point for the purification theory. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* posits that the interpretation that Averroes attributed to tragedy — aimed to encourage virtue — fitted *Poetics* with the "existing notions about the rhetorical methods and moral aims of poetry" in the Middle Ages (Ugolini 2016, 15). This is why Andrew Ford describes purgation theory as the 'higher interpretation', higher in the spiritual sense, as opposed to a lower interpretation relating to a more bodily experience (Norton 2008, 54). The understanding of catharsis as purification in *Poetics* was widely accepted during the Renaissance until the appearance, in the nineteenth century, of Jacob Bernays' understanding of catharsis as purgation (Ford 1995, 111).

Despite the fact that purification theory (religious or moralist or both) is not the most popular in contemporary practice, it is important to note that the relation between tragedy, catharsis and a religious ritual is not arbitrary at all. This is evident if we consider the link between the birth of Greek tragedy with ancient Greek religious rites, either to dithyrambic song to Dionysius or to the "mimetic ritual performed at the tombs of heroes" (Ridgeway 1912, 134). In contemporary theatre studies, Philip Auslander (1984) has analysed how catharsis operates in what he called 'communal' and 'therapeutic' theatre. In the category of communal theatre, he places Jacques Copeau and Peter Brook. Auslander claims that productions created by these artists brought the audience into harmony by celebrating their common identity as human beings (Auslander 1984, 18). In the second category, 'therapeutic theatre', he places Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski, whose productions were aimed at a spiritual renewal through unveiling repressed psychic material (Auslander 1984, 22). I argue that in both groups there are aspects of the purification theory. In the first there is the idea of harmony, as a result of a communal purification. In the second group, indications of purification theory can be found in the mechanism by which spiritual renewal happens in the audience. Finally, and supporting my point, Elin Diamond writes that "despite the efforts of scholars to purify the term of its primitiveness, residues of ritual purification and medical purgation have returned to twentieth century performance, dilating its connotations outside the precincts of the theatre to areas of social behaviour and health" (Diamond 1995, 153). Thus, I argue that to disregard the ritualistic-purification understanding of catharsis in theatre negates the very essence that theatre and catharsis have as an event. Furthermore, I argue that in practice the 'ritualistic' characteristics that theatre has cannot be ignored, as previously described in Chapter 2 On Liminality.

Purgation theory
This second category discusses the Aristotelian notion of catharsis as purgation. Ugolini describes how this category understands catharsis "as a process that free us from the passions triggered by the tragedy, with an ensuing sense of relief and ease" (Ugolini 2016, 12). The origin of this theory can be attributed to Jacob Bernays, who argued that catharsis in *Poetics* should have been understood as purgation and not as purification, which led to a medical-physiological understanding of catharsis. The arguments Bernays used to support this understanding can be summarised in two main points. First, he declares that there were only two definitions of the term catharsis in Aristotle's time:

purgation and purification; the former, in a pathological medical sense, and the latter in a moral spiritual sense. Second, Bernays argues, the key to understanding the Aristotelian notion of catharsis as purgation in *Poetics* can be found in the excerpt cited and explained before from *The Politics, Book VIII*.

In "On Catharsis: From Fundamentals of Aristotle's Lost Essay on the 'Effect of Tragedy'" (1857), Bernays not only breaks with the moralist interpretation of the term, widely accepted from the time of the Renaissance, but also mocked it as "a moral house of correction that must keep in readiness the remedial method conductive for every irregular turning of pity and fear" (Bernays 1857, 321). But Bernays was not the first author advocating catharsis as a type of purgation. Before him, Minturno in 1559, Tywhitt in 1806, and H. Weils in 1846, also translated and understood κάθαρσις as purgation, but it was Bernays who elaborated a more comprehensive argument (Golden 1973, 473). Bernays' argument starts by disputing the understanding of catharsis put forward by G. E. Lessing, J. W. von Goethe and E. Müller. Lessing maintained that catharsis worked as a cleansing process, which operated as a "transformation of passions into virtues" (Lessing in Bernays 1857, 320). In Bernays' thesis this understanding risked confusing tragedy as a moral event, which conflicts with Aristotle's treatment of theatre offered in *The Politics*. Bernays maintained that in *The Politics* Aristotle 'rather ruthlessly goes to the trouble of safeguarding its character as a place of pleasure for diverse classes of public' (Bernays 1857, 321). Bernays then opposed Goethe's idea of catharsis occurring in the tragic character, arguing instead that catharsis clearly occurs in the audience, based again on Aristotle's *Book VIII* of *The Politics*.

Later scholars critique Bernays' interpretation, not because of his misunderstanding of the nature of catharsis, but because of his limited exposure to the classical Greek tradition. For instance, Golden argues that Bernays does not explore the adjective *katharos* and the adverb *katharôs*, which could have led him to observe an intellectual nuance in the noun *katharsis* (Golden 1973, 474). Leon Golden's intellectual clarification will be explained later in this section.

Golden points out that Bernays gives no justification as to why the term will have the same meaning in two different treatises with two different contexts, one related to a political utterance, the other an aesthetic utterance. Both treatises have different aims.

Poetics discusses the art in its essential nature; *The Politics* considers arts as an educational tool to govern the city. Golden refutes Bernays' idea of amalgamating the meaning of catharsis in the two Aristotelian treatises, by offering clear examples of terms treated differently by Aristotle, and sometimes in opposition in the two treatises.

The first example relates to the experience of pleasure. According to Golden, in *The Politics* Aristotle maintains that if the viewer felt pleasure in the representation of the form of an object, then viewing the object in itself would also be pleasurable, thus the viewer feels pleasure equally by viewing the object and the representation of the object. In *Poetics*, Aristotle maintains that the spectator could feel pleasure in the representation of distressful things like 'the forms of the most despised animal, and of corpses' without feeling pleasure in viewing the real corpses or despised animal; thus, the viewer feels pleasure only in the representation of distressful things, not in the real 'distressful things' (Aristotle 1968, 7). The second example Golden offers, relates to the concept and understanding of audience. In *The Politics* Aristotle mentions two kinds of audiences: the "vulgar" and the "educated" (Golden 1973, 477). Aristotle establishes this differentiation based on what music should be produced or taught or both and to whom in his ideal city. Contrary to this, Golden maintains that in *Poetics*, Aristotle establishes the existence of "a single type of artistic experience which results in an intellectual clarification which all men find pleasant" (Aristotle 1996b, 205).

Leaving Golden's critique aside, it is important to mention that Bernays' understanding of catharsis as purgation sponsored the application of the concept to spheres outside of the arts including psychology and psychoanalysis. Daniela Schönle (2016) notes that by:

> Turning away from poetic treatises of the eighteenth century, Bernays had liberated catharsis from its entirely moralistic interpretation, viewing it as a medical procedure instead […] he described it as a physical process that can lead to the discharge of the affects by way of their direct excitation. (Schönle 2016, 230)

Bernays' essay influenced Theodor Gomperz, Austrian philosopher and philologist, member of the Vienna circle (1924–1932). Gomperz translated Bernays 'catharsis' (purgation) as discharge, interpreting the process "as a liberation from harmful

affections" (Schönle 2016, 230). Gomperz in turn influenced Freud and Breuer in the development of their psychoanalytical 'cathartic method' for the cure of hysteria. This method encouraged the expression of repressed emotions such as grief and anger from a traumatic situation (Guinagh 1987, 2). The expression of this emotion in the Freudian method was called 'abreaction'. In other words, catharsis operates as a method to trigger the subject to react emotionally, to have an abreaction, after a trauma (Vives 2011, 1014) In "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" (1960), Freud questions the Aristotelian idea that the function of drama is to excite pity and fear in order to provoke catharsis of emotions. Instead, he proposed that the unleashing or releasing of suppressed desires provokes catharsis in the audience. Freud claims that the unveiling or liberation of the repressed desires provokes pleasure in the spectator, pleasure that comes from the fulfilment of this repressed desire through identifying with the situation, hero, plot or emotion. In this context, Freud argues that the purpose of drama [and catharsis] is not necessarily to purge emotions through fear and pity, but to purge emotions by "opening sources of pleasure and enjoyment from within the sphere of life" (Freud 1960, 146). For Freud, drama enables catharsis in the spectator, through the fulfilment of unconscious, repressed desires.

In the understanding of catharsis contained in "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage", the actor is reduced to a mere tool, a medium for the spectator to fulfil his repressed desires through identification. Freud posits, "it is another [the actor] than himself [spectator] who acts and suffers upon the stage" (Freud 1960, 145). It is on this 'another' — the actor — that this thesis centres the attention, and not as a mere tool, but as an agent upon which catharsis operates.

This chapter argues that when practitioners speak of catharsis in their practice (as purgation), often it is as an attempt to explain the emotional and physical release of tension, often resulting from performing in front of another — the audience. I suggest that the process that practitioners describe as cathartic results from the disintegration of 'performance anxiety' and not from staging a particular text, embodying a particular character exploring particular themes. Golden recognised an emotional purgation of emotions [in the audience] at the end of the tragedy, but he attributes this relief — purgation — as a result or the removal of "the stimulus of the work of art" (Golden 1962, 59). He further argued that purgation of emotions had 'nothing to do' with the

tragic catharsis; instead he asserted that catharsis "results not from the form of any particular art but from the essential character of art itself" (Golden 1962, 59). Janette Simmonds describes accurately the manifestation of performance anxiety as "muscle tremor, rapid breathing, chest tightness, dry mouth, and temporary cognitive impairment" (Simmonds and Southcott 2012, 318). In my own practice I have experienced this performance anxiety. Performing in *el macho experiment,* performance anxiety plus the series of physical and emotional processes particular to any performance, drove me to exhaustion. The result of this exhaustion was the release — purgation — of bodily substances such as sweat, tears, and relaxation of muscles. I argue that this bodily discharge — purgation — is embedded with an emotional discharge, often confused with catharsis in a dramatic sense. Further, I suggest that this purgation relates primarily to performance anxiety. The reasons why or how performance anxiety operates are irrelevant for this research. What is relevant is to establish that this anxiety is linked to the experience of being exposed to an audience, to be apart from the 'herd' (Hayes in Simmonds and Southcott 2012, 319) without necessarily taking into consideration the content of the production. In turn, Glen O. Gabbard suggests that performance anxiety rests upon narcissist concerns around:

> self-esteem regulation, around self-validation from the response of the audience as a mirroring or idealising object, around envy, around fears that one's greed will damage others and one's self, around separation as a narcissistic extension of mother, and around shame connected with exhibitionism. (Gabbard 1983, 425)

Therefore, I suggest that there will be always an emotional and physical release — purgation — after a performance, purgation associated with performance anxiety and not to catharsis in a theatrical sense.

Intellectual purification

Ugolini defines this third approach of interpreting the Aristotelian notion of catharsis as "structural" or "dramatic" (Ugolini 2016, 16). Catharsis operates, in this approach, "as purification of the tragic events by showing that the hero is innocent and his actions are not repugnant […] therefore, catharsis would not indicate an effect of the tragedy on

the spectators, but the resolution of the dramatic tension within the story performed" (Ugolini 2016, 16). It is Gerald Else (1963) who articulated this view, arguing that catharsis operates as a process carried out by the events in the dramatic plot of the tragedy. His whole argument has its foundation in *Poetics*, with no relation to *The Politics*. In his essay, *Aristotle on Catharsis*, (1963) he posited, "I believe that there is adequate material later in the *Poetics* to define his [Aristotle] meaning here [catharsis clause, Chapter VI]" (Else 1963, 259). By "later in the *Poetics*", Else was referring to *Chapters XIII* and *XIV*, which are the foundation for his argument.

Else's definition of catharsis can be summarised in three points. First, Else argues that purification is of the pathos, of the 'fatal or painful act, which is the basic stuff of tragedy' (Else 1963, 263). Second, purification, that is catharsis, is brought about by the events in the narrative or plot, or in Else's words by "the course of a sequence of pathetic and fearful incidents" (Else 1963, 263). Last, the trigger or agent of catharsis, what initiates the purification process, is the imitation, "that is the plot" (Else 1963, 263). In Else's view, the purification of the plot happens in front of the audience that experiences the tragedy. Else argues that the reader or the audience "does not perform the purification, any more than the judges at the delphinion or in Plato's state did so" (Else 1963, 266). Instead, he argues that it is in the structure of the plot that catharsis happens. In this scheme of things, the consequence is that catharsis in tragedy is a process and not the aim. He explained this by saying that the process of imitation (the events on the narrative) is what brings the catharsis, this reading makes catharsis a process, not an end result, and a process operated by the poet through his "structure of events" (Else 1963, 261).

Donald Keesey pointed out that the core of Else's understanding of catharsis is the claim the Aristotle does not refer to catharsis as a process that operated in the audience. Instead "catharsis is seen to apply to the painful or fatal acts (path$\bar{e}$mat$\bar{o}$n)" (Keesey 1978-1979, 198). Keesey's assertion is evident not only in the definition that Else himself gives of tragedy:

> tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action […] carrying to completion, through a course of events involving pity and fear, the purification of those painful or fatal acts which have that quality. (Else 1963, 252)

It is also evident in Else's reflection on the concept of catharsis in *Aristotle on the Beauty of Tragedy*, 'the crux of the matter is that the poetic catharsis is primarily an artistic rather than psychological process' (Else 1938, 199). Else's understanding of catharsis is coherent with the aim of his proposal "that the poetics ought to be interpreted out of itself" (Else 1963, 271). Keesey suggested that the problem in ignoring *The Politics* drives Else's arguments to points of incongruences. The most evident for Keesey is that "Else puts the catharsis not in the audience but in the play, while he puts the recognition not in the play but in the audience" (Keesey 1978-1979, 198). I go further, suggesting that the incongruences found by Keesey resulted, perhaps, from the lack of specificity of what Else understood by 'artistic process' in *Poetics*. What does this process entail? Where does this process start and end? Is it just the writing? Does it also entail the performing? There are no answers to these questions in Else's work. Further, I could argue that if Else, as Keesey suggests, acknowledges an 'audience recognition' instead of catharsis happening in the plot, the plot is a point of a relational encounter in which the poet, the actor and the audience meet.

Intellectual clarification

In the fourth category identified by Ugolini, "the spectator comes to understand the general and existential meaning of the plot, moving from specific (the cases of pity and fear on the stage) to the universal (the general meaning of the cases performed on the stage)" (Ugolini 2016, 15). In this understanding the tragic pleasure is cognitive. Although this understanding is attributed to S. H. Butcher (1895) and Leon Golden, it is the latter who coined the notion of intellectual clarification. For Golden, catharsis operates as a process of clarification in which, through the particular incidents in the plot, the audience comes to understand something universal about human existence (Golden 1962, 58). Golden's theory has points of encounter with Else. Like Else, Golden believes it is incorrect to read *Poetics* in the light of *The Politics*. The first deals with poetry and tragedy, the second with how to govern the ideal *polis*. Golden supports the view of Richard Mckeon: these are two different treatises with two different contexts (Golden 1973, 747) Thus, it seems inaccurate to apply the meaning of a word used in a political and educational context to a text in which the word is applied to art in its essential nature. In addition, for Golden (and also for Else) catharsis is applied to the incidents in the plot and not directly to the audience's emotions. But, as Keesey argues, the difference

between these two authors is that, in Golden's translation of *Poetics*, tragedy is "an imitation of an action achieving, through the representation of pitiful and fearful situations, the clarification of such incidents" (Aristotle 1968, 11) and not the purification of the incident in the plot as in Else.

Golden, through his intellectual clarification theory, not only rejects Bernays' reading of *Poetics* based on *The Politic*, he goes further and criticises Bernays' ignorance of a third understanding of the term, 'intellectual clarification', and of the wider etymological scope of the concept. Golden argues the "Bernays is unaware of the use of catharsis by Epicurus and Philodemus to signify 'intellectual clarification' " (Golden 1973, 474). It is in the light of this third understanding of catharsis that Golden builds his concept. Golden explains in *Catharsis* (1962) how intellectual clarification operates in the audience, applying his analyses to *Oedipus Tyrannous*. In this tragedy, the specific events in Oedipus' plot, starting with the attempt of escaping his fate, lead him "to commit the very acts he has sought to escape" (Golden, 1962, 58). Confronted with this specific chain of events, the audience "learn and infer" (Aristotle 1968, 7) something universal about human condition: "the fundamental limitation of the human intellect in dealing with the unfathomable mystery that surrounds divine purpose" (Golden 1962, 58). Tragedy, Golden explains, is a medium through which the spectator ascends to an understanding of "the universal nature" of the particular event (Golden 1962, 57), and this understanding, which is pleasurable, entails catharsis. The following are the constitutive steps for his argument (Golden 1962, 53 - 55):

1) *Chapter I* establishes that poetry [epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry], are all forms of imitations. (Aristotle 1968, 3)

2) *Chapter IV* establishes that the essential pleasure in imitations comes from learning. (Aristotle 1968, 7)

3) *Chapter IX* confirms *Chapter IV* by stating that "[p]oetry, therefore, is the more philosophical and more significant than history, for poetry is more concern with the universal, and history more with the individual". (Aristotle 1968, 17)

4) *Chapter XIV* establishes that throughout the imitation of pity and fear the specific pleasure of tragedy is derived. (Aristotle 1968, 23)

Taking into consideration these four points, and the use of the term κάθαρσις by authors that might have influenced Aristotle (e.g., Epicurus, Philodemus and Plato) Golden resolves that the aim of tragedy is a pleasurable learning experience, related to pity and fear in human existence. What led Golden to this understanding was the Aristotelian idea of tragic pleasure contained in *Poetics*:

> For there are some things that distress us when we see them in reality, but the most accurate representations of these same things we view with pleasure as, for example, the forms of the most despised animals and of corpses. The cause of this is that the act of learning is not only most pleasant to philosophers but, in a similar way, to other men as well, only they have an abbreviated share in this pleasure. Thus men find pleasure in viewing representations because it turns out that they learn and infer what each thing is for example, that this particular object is that kind of object. (Aristotle 1968, 7)

Golden makes two observations about this paragraph. First, he highlights Aristotle "as a philosopher of art" when he writes in *Poetics* (Golden 1973, 477) and as such will look for the intellectual clarification of human existence. Conversely, in *The Politics*, when Aristotle speaks of catharsis as a type of purgation he writes not as a philosopher of art, but rather as someone looking at the good governance of the city. The second observation is that, when appreciating an artwork in *Poetics*, Aristotle does not distinguish two kinds of audiences as in *The Politics*, but combines them into one audience. Golden argues that in *Poetics*, Aristotle "insist on a single type of artistic experience which results in an intellectual clarification which all men find pleasant" (Golden 1973, 477). This 'intellectual pleasure' mentioned by Aristotle in *Poetics*, forms Golden's definition of catharsis as 'intellectual clarification'.

The following section analyses how catharsis operates in the actor, through subVersion, using as a case study *el macho experiment*. In doing so it aims to provide an empirical solution to the lack of treatment of the actors' catharsis in Leon Golden's intellectual clarification.

Intellectual Clarification in the Actor

In this research, I concur with Golden's understanding of catharsis in the audience: from specific and particular incidents in the plot, something general about the human condition is clarified. I also identify its limitations when applied to this research. First, Golden's theory conceptualises catharsis within the Aristotelian rules applied to Greek tragedy. *El macho experiment* does not possess the characteristics of a Greek tragedy. Second and most importantly, Golden's intellectual clarification, as an interpretation of Aristotle's clause on catharsis pays no attention to catharsis in the actor, which is not only the focus of this section, but of the present research project.

It is important to note that despite Golden's understanding of catharsis being rooted in an analysis of the linear narrative of classic tragedy, it can nonetheless be applied to *el macho experiment*. In order to apply Golden's understanding of catharsis to the actor, I propose to look at *el macho experiment* as an equivalent of an Aristotelian plot, which has a beginning, middle and end. Although *el macho experiment* might not carry a linear story, a story does not constitute an Aristotelian plot. Hardison affirms what constitute a plot for Aristotle is "the way that the poet arranges the incidents that make up the story" (Hardison in Aristotle 1968, 123). I also argue that, despite not following a logical sequence of events, the plot in *el macho experiment* has not only an arrangement of incidents but also has a structure with a beginning, middle and end. The incidents, such as the reenactment and recount of biographical episodes, can be treated as Aristotelian imitations of a "human action" (Aristotle 1968, 14). More importantly, *el macho experiment* can be considered as an Aristotelian plot as it is an exploration of human life, specifically of masculine gender performance and fatherhood. In a workbook entry, I wrote that this performance should be seen as an incision into an old and recurrent wound, the death of my father. The following excerpt expresses this last:

> Today I cry for the death of my father,
> for the purple circles on his back,
> for the purple wounds on his arms and feet.
>
> Today I cry because I can't remember his voice,
> I can only remember his whistle.

This excerpt is not only an expression of how painful the death of those that we love can be. Further, the specific events — incident — of my own biography, the death of my father and the inability to remember his voice, speak about something general about the human condition, how ephemeral human life is. In other words, this excerpt addresses human happiness and misery, through autobiographical material. In doing so, *el macho experiment* could be seen as an exploration of the human happiness and misery that comes from death. In Aristotle's own words, "both happiness and misery consist in a kind of action" (Aristotle 1968, 12). I argue that here is where *el macho experiment* coheres with Golden's understanding of catharsis in *Poetics*, as it explicitly attempts to clarify from the specific (autobiography) something universal about human kind (gender performance).

Hardison asserts that in Golden's interpretation of the cathartic clause, the audience who witness a well structured tragedy "will have learned something, the incidents will be clarified in the sense that their relation in terms of universals will have become manifest" (Aristotle 1968, 58). Thus, for Golden, catharsis works on the audience as a rational process of induction. Through intellectual clarification the audience comes to understand a universal human truth from the clear exposition of the specific events in the plot. What remains theoretically and empirically unanalysed is how catharsis operates in the actor.

I argue in this thesis that in *el macho experiment*, intellectual clarification [catharsis] operates in the actor through the subversion of gender paradigms. Thus, through offering of a different version of a macho, the process described as subVersion in Chapter 2, a human conflict is clarified. Finally, catharsis as intellectual clarification in the actor cannot be singularised as operating in a specific moment in the performance or creative process. Rather, catharsis is the culmination of the whole process. In *el macho experiment,* this process entailed the creation of the text, rehearsals and performance. It was as a result of this whole process that a general human conflict was clarified: the vital and ongoing human need to be accepted and recognised, behind gender performances. For instance, the following excerpt, analysed in Chapter 1:
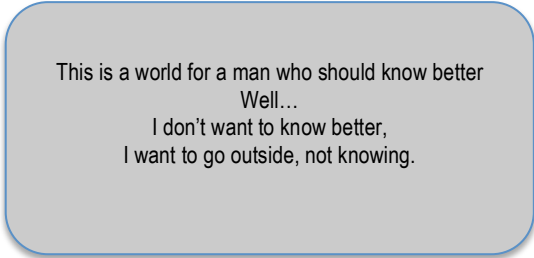
> I never learnt how to use my fists…
> Sorry dad
> But my violence comes from another planet.

When analysing this excerpt as an example of a failed performance of masculinity, I claimed failure as a space — extraterrestrial — for performing non-binary gender performances. Having considered Butler's idea of recognition in the constitution of gender, I argued that by describing my violence as extraterrestrial, I was describing my own gender performance as belonging to another planet, suggesting perhaps a planet not human and, as a consequence, not ruled by gender binaries. Thus, my failed [unrecognised] masculine performance enabled me to escape from the constrictions of gender binarism.

In this chapter, I also argued that this excerpt contains a paradox. The attempt to escape recognition as less than human in the gender binary world is done by searching for recognition in another space, another planet. Thus an escape from a world in which fighting is required to be recognised as masculine, entailed the existence of another planet in which the absence of violence can be recognised as masculine. The conflict of being recognisable as a constitutive element of gender performance persists; the only change is the criteria for the recognition. As I have stated earlier, this is what my specific biographical incident has clarified: the vital and ongoing human need to be recognised and accepted in gender performances. In other words, to understand gender performativity as a relational trap. This trap works from the outside and the inside of the subject. I am oppressed by imposed hegemonic versions of masculinity [outside]. I also volitionally subordinate myself to it by my ongoing human need to be recognised and accepted [inside].

The clarification of the inevitability of this trap resulted in a certain freeing process in the actor [myself] from the constraints of normative gender performativity. I recognised not only myself as part of the mechanism of this trap but also I identified the function I play in this mechanism, and a possible escape. I cannot change the trap in itself; that is, I cannot change the need for my gender performance to be recognised or the consequences of not being recognised. I cannot change the bullying I suffered in the past for not fighting as a man, for not dancing as a man, for not playing soccer as a man; I cannot change the parameters my father used to recognise and judge my masculine gender performance. What I can do is to understand that I do not need to fight, dance or play sports in certain ways to perform as a man or macho, because the concept of what it

entails to be a man or macho is artificial, an illusion. There is nothing essential about it. Therefore my [sub]version of masculine gender performance, myself as a *uterus-less* macho, is not lesser than nor an imperfect hetero-macho. It is just a different version, a subVersion of macho. This is why *el macho experiment* closes with the following assertion:

> This is a world for a man who should know better
> Well…
> I don't want to know better,
> I want to go outside, not knowing.

Finally, it is the argument of this thesis that in *el macho experiment*, catharsis — intellectual clarification — operates through subVersion in the liminality of theatre performance. Turner described liminality as "the breakthrough of chaos into cosmos, of disorder into order" (Turner 1982, 46). It is the chaos that the liminality of theatre performance brings forth, which allows the interplay, collapse and coexistence of binaries. The liminal stage in the traditional rites of passage is a stage in which binaries coexist: outside/inside, sacred/profane, male/female, reality/magic. In boy-to-man rites of passage, analysed in Chapter 2, the liminal stage is conceived as a transformational phase; throughout the liminal stage the boy undergoes a process (cultural) of transformation into a man (adult). In *el macho experiment* the momentary transformation of reality brought forth by theatre performance, facilitated a playful transformation of gender performance: the *uterus-less* macho. This transformation, which arose from the breakthrough of chaos (coexistence of binary markers) into the heterosexual cosmos of gender performance, is what triggered the clarification and, as a consequence, a liberation from the trap that gender performativity entails.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began by arguing that the different attempts to decipher the Aristotelian notion of catharsis contained in *Poetics,* fails to adequately describe the range of effects a theatre production has on the actor. Thus the aim was to offer an understanding of how catharsis comes to operate in the actor. In order to do so, the chapter analysed the Aristotelian understanding of catharsis in *Poetics Chapter VI* and the subsequent discussion in the academia. Finally the chapter applied Golden's understanding of

Aristotelian catharsis as intellectual clarification to the actor, using as a case study *el macho experiment*. In doing so, this chapter has argued that catharsis operates in the actor as intellectual clarification, which entails an inductive process of a general understanding from something specific. It has been argued that the liminality of theatre performance is what facilitates this process, as it is a space in which binary concepts collapse and coexist.

CONCLUSION

Figure 8

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating."

Kofi Annan
2001 Nobel Peace Prize

The present written dissertation analysed four recurring keywords: masculinity, liminality, subversion and catharsis. In order to build the argument of this thesis, the analysis was applied to the autobiographical, practice-led *el macho experiment*, which deals with the concept of macho. The argument is that the ludic nature of liminality in theatre performance facilitates the conditions for catharsis to operate. Furthermore, the thesis claims that in theatre performance, the subversion of cultural paradigms happens at the crux between liminality and catharsis, and that by exploring the interplay between these, performance can subvert a cultural paradigm such as macho. The sources that informed this written dissertation are: relevant academic literature, autobiographical material and the analysis of the practice-led performance *el macho experiment.*

Masculinity, liminality, subversion and catharsis have been discussed singularly and in depth in diverse academic circles. However, as in *Oedipus Rex,* the core of this research is a crossroads, the point at which these four concepts intersect. Further, it is the intersection of these concepts that enables me to apply Aristotle's catharsis to contemporary autobiographical performance to the actor. In this thesis, each one of these concepts is analysed in relation to this crossroads.

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I started by positing a broad question: Why do I do theatre? In relation to the actor, the starting point for this research was the idea of theatre as a healing event. This is why Chapter 1 was devoted to the analysis of masculinity, particularly the conflict that entails the performance of masculinity. This conflict was analysed through autobiographical material. In doing so, Chapter 1 not only set the political and biographical context for the written component of this research, but also set the political and biographical context for the performance. In particular, this chapter offered an intersectional insight on the concept of macho, differentiating it from toxic masculinity. This conceptualization took into consideration relevant academic literature and autobiographical material. Moreover, this conceptualisation and analysis was enabled by the liminality of theatre performance, linking masculinity to liminality. In this relationship liminality facilitates subversion of gender paradigms and in consequence catharsis.

Chapter 2 focused on liminality. The concept was applied to masculinity using van Gennep and Turner's understanding of traditional rites of passage. Through the analyses of the interplay between liminality, masculinity and biographical material contained in *el*

macho experiment, it was argued that liminality entails not only a destructive/creative process, but more importantly entails a process in which gender binary concepts can collapse and coexist. Therefore, the chapter argued that the liminality of theatre performance could subvert social constructions and expectations of hegemonic masculinity and perhaps, transitorily, free the performer from assumptions about successful performances of masculinity.

In Chapter 3 the analysis of the concept of subversion in relation to masculinity, liminality and catharsis, offered subVersion. The insertion of a capital 'V' in subversion aimed not only to bring to the sphere of the 'sub' all [versions of] gender performances, but also to foreground gender performances as copies with no original, as performances intrinsically saturated with contradictions. Finally, the poetical figure *uterus-less macho,* from *el macho experiment,* was offered in this chapter to analyse how a subVersion of macho operates.

Chapters 1 to 3 led to Chapter 4: On Catharsis. The analysis in the final chapter was somewhat different to that contained in the previous chapters. Catharsis is applied to the subVersion of masculinity in the liminality of *el macho experiment* at the end of the chapter and not throughout. The difference is in the starting point of the study of catharsis in this research, which reviews Aristotelian understanding of catharsis from *Poetics*, and the subsequent debate in academia. In this chapter I subscribe to Golden's understanding of catharsis as intellectual clarification for my application of it to the actor in *el macho experiment.* In intellectual clarification, the specific events in the plot trigger in the actor an understanding of something general about the human condition.

In sum, in the present research I applied an understanding of Aristotelian catharsis to the actor, as a way to answer a personal and on-going question: "Why do I do theatre?" Golden's concept of intellectual clarification is the key to this answer. Before undertaking this research I assumed theatre performance to be a catalyst of a healing process. However, throughout the practice-led research *el macho experiment,* I experienced a liberating process from the constrictions of gender normativity. Being able to analyse and understand the gender performance of macho as a social construction and, furthermore, to embody this knowledge in the liminality of theatre performance, granted me the power to subVert it, and free myself from it. I argue that it is the liminality of theatre performance, with its destructive/creative chaos, that enables the creation and

embodiment of freeing subVersions of gender. Turner referred to liminality as a locus for social change, asserting that in liminality "through destruction and reconstruction, that is transformation, may an authentic reordering come about" (Turner 1982, 84). I argue that the embodiment of a subVersion as the *uterus-less* macho is a — temporary — reordering of gender, a reordering that highlights an understanding of the saturation of contradictions in gender performativity, a reordering that triggered a cathartic understanding of the social construction of humanness — gender — and freedom. In Chapter 2 humanness was discussed as a quality — not an essence — granted as a result of a 'correct' performance of gender, masculine or feminine.

The contribution of this research project lies not only in filling an academic gap — the understanding of catharsis in the actor — by the offering of a subVersion of macho in the liminality of theatre performance. It further suggests a broader application of Aristotelian catharsis outside the classic tragedy to autobiographical solo performances. In doing so, this research analysed Aristotle, contextualising the analyses in and from contemporary practice. As a result of this analysis, I want to suggest that catharsis in the actor entails a process of purification, cleansing, purgation and clarification. What is relevant from this research project is that the understanding that aligned catharsis with *Poetics* and the subVersion of macho in *el macho experiment* is catharsis as intellectual clarification. On a methodological level, this research invites similar research from an audience perspective on catharsis in the audience. Golden's analysis of catharsis as intellectual clarification was not an empiric application of Aristotle's understanding, but a theoretical one. Here lies an important contribution of this research: as a research model in which the practice — autobiographical solo performance — is used as a method to research something about the practice — catharsis in the actor.

In what relates to gender performance, this research project offers first the liminality of theatre performance as a space that enables the creation of subVersions of gender. In doing so, it foregrounds the liminality of theatre performance as a destructive/creative place to explore the artificial [social] of human gender performance. The analyses of the subVersion of macho offer multiple possible scenarios for analyses in gender performance. I argue that there are as many subVersions of gender as there are intersections between sex, culture, age, social class, heritage, sexual orientation, etc. In doing so, this research also highlights the importance of intersectionality in the analyses of gender performances and in the importance of autobiographical solo performance as a

locus for knowledge and analyses on gender. *El macho experiment*, as an autobiographical solo performance, entailed a political act of speaking about my own singular story, to voice my claim, to claim my desire, to finally unravel a conflict placed in a binary struggle: gay-heterosexual, father-son. I argue also that the analysis is also liberating and cathartic as a consequence. In turn, autoethnography as a qualitative research methodology has placed the autobiographical as a methodological tool in academia. Autoethnographer Carol Ellis defines autoethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Ellis 2004, 19). Thus, the implications of this present work are not only related to the use of autobiographical material to understand broader issues related to gender, but also that the understanding of broader issues contextualised in autobiography can free the individual from social constrictions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Performances Links

El macho experiment:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6RYst0i_iM

El macho final performance:

https://youtu.be/xNCTd2dm_9s

Appendix B: El macho experiment script

El macho experiment

Masculus sounds to me like a muscle!
please allow me the playfulness,
there is an M, a U, an S, a C, and even an L

Masculus, Muscle.

Is. My. Masculinity. A. Muscle?

The gay clone from the 70's
with their fetishist hyper masculinity
knew how to muscle their masculinity.

Do I?

Is that what you meant Doctor Butler?
After all, one of your essays said that your task was:
"to examine in what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts,
and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts" (Butler 1988,
521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988,
521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988,
521) (Butler 1988, 521) (Butler 1988, 521)[10]
A discourse works like a muscle …
right?… a muscle.

Now if my masculinity works like a muscle…
What happens if I don't work on it?
Do I become un-muscle, un-masculine?
If my masculinity works like a muscle
How does my femininity work?
"Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity"
Does this mean that my body is a battlefield?
A boxing ring?
In which my inner Adam
fights and loves and fights
my inner Eve?
Or is it the other way around?

The web told me that masculus was reduced already in Latin to masclus.
Please Mr Google scholar

---

[10] (Butler 1988, 521)

Don't reduce an already reduced trade!

MacInnes wrote that:
"…it is a bad time to be a man"[11]
and I believe him.
The representation of the male is in crisis,
masculinity is the crisis,
"it is a bad time to be a man…"[12]
MacInnes' words keep on echoing in my head
like the sad song that is
thinking of what is my place in this scenario,
thinking of dad at the head of the table
hair on his chest, like the macho he always was,
fading…

Soy el hijo del macho que fué mi padre,
mi padre fué el macho
de un hijo de otro macho.

My mother was the witness,
the one that winked
with a smile and a kiss at each macho activity
I acquired.

I never learnt how to use my fists…

Sorry dad,
My violence comes from another planet.
My violence has a different rhythm and time.

My father was the macho
son of another macho.
Where is the son of this macho
who is me?
…
WHERE IS HE?!

I will trade my left testicle
for one ovary and a half cup uterus

Soy el hijo del macho que fué
mi padre.

---

[11] (MacInnes in Edwards 2006)

[12] (MacInnes in Edwards 2006)

I am not a macho-father.

Who am I?

What is a macho?

A macho punch.
A macho munch.
A macho must.

This is a world
for a man who should know better,
so said the new lad culture,
a less brutalised,
but brutal nonetheless version of the macho.

This is a world
for a man who should know better,
for man who should uterus better,
for uterus who would know better,
for man who should know uterus.

Papá me escuchaste?, ese soy yo papá,
the uterus-less macho.

Today I am the hunter,
today I am the baker,
today I am the little boy chasing dragonflies in a football field.

Today I look upon the face of god, orgasmic at its emptiness.

Today I decided to use my cosmic, imaginary and universal uterus
as a megaphone to talk to all my unborn children,
to all of them!

Today I let my gonads bleed the dead butterflies that are my sperm,
making patterns on the floor everywhere I go.

Today I cry for my father,
for his dead body in the hospital room,
for the purple circles on his back
for the purple wounds on his arms, and feet.

Today I cry because i can't remember his voice…

I can only hear his whistle.

This is a world
for a man who should know better…
well…
I don't want to know better,
I want to go outside,
not knowing.

Appendix C: El macho final performance script

El macho final performance

In the space there are: two blinds hanging, two hanging light bulbs and on the back wall (top part of the walls) two areas for projections. In the first, a live feed from a camera placed in the centre of the back wall, in the other, projections of words and drawings, which relate to parts of the text. Also, in front of one blind, there is a silky slip hanging.

At the beginning of the performance a short video is projected (4.5 min.). The video follows the action of my hands unburying a little box. Inside the box there are little white wings, which are placed on a little male doll. The video finishes when the winged doll is burned. The video is a close up on these objects, we never see the body of face of the person performing these actions, only the hands. When the video finishes, the actor enters the stage and lays, facedown on the floor with the arms extended as if on a cross. A pre-recorded file of my voice reading a text is played.

The morning that dad died, the sky was full of white and grey clouds. I don't remember much of those 7 agonizing days, my fathers via crusis. I only remember his face, scared, his body tired, kilos and kilos thinner than how I remembered him before I left. The skin on his face was almost sinking into his skull, his eyes popped out, like an insect… to look at my father's face was a struggle, it was painful, death was dancing on his eyelids in front of me, and I didn't want to see it… I didn't want my father to see me confronted by his own death, I didn't want to break… I couldn't… I still remember feeling his gaze, piercing, scrabbling my skin… trying to reach the man in me. He asked me several times to look at him: Jaimito, hijo mírame, he said sweet and firm, he wanted me to look at him. He was leaving, and he knew it, maybe for that reason he asked me to look at him so many times, he wanted to meet the man that was about to follow him, or should have followed the masculine occupation at home… to protect the widow-mother, to take care of the orphan-daughter, to face family heritage, to check the doors and windows were locked at nights, to bring the wood for the fire, to sit at the head of the table… I didn't want to look at him, I didn't want to be the man, that man, I wanted to keep my previous role and be the child, the rebellious son, the always moving youngster… but when the father-man dies… it the son-child also dies and a new man-father must rise… instead I became the man-child-orphan, looking at death with all its paraphernalia parading in front of me… I cried… alone at nights I cried… I also got drunk laughing full of anger and fear…

The pre-recorded audio file finishes, the actor stands up and delivers.

Soy el hijo del macho que fué
mi padre,
mi padre fué el macho
de un hijo de otro macho.

My mother was the witness,
the one that winked
with a smile and a kiss at each macho activity I acquired.

I never learnt how to use my fists…

-Papá, lo siento-
But my violence comes from another planet,
my violence has a different rhythm and time.

My father was the macho
son of another macho.
where is the son of this macho
who is me?

WHERE IS HE?!!!!

I would trade my left testicle
for one ovary, just one ovary and a half cup uterus.

Soy el hijo del macho que fué mi padre.

I am not a macho-father
who am I?

The actor walks to stand behind one of the blinds, opens the blind, his silhouette appears, the actor puts on a top hat. Behind the blind the actor delivers the text.

A tragedy is a tragedy,
A tragedy has three unities, united in blood,
Unity of time.
Unity of space.
Unity of action.

Time…
It is the time for the representation,
that simulacra without original in which myth is activated.

Space…
a palace's doors,
the scenic space,
the place chosen for the burial's metaphor.

Action…
terrifying and pious,

delicious,
like… to place a body in the earth
and leave it there
covered,
calm and still
to then look at it from the distance,
knowing that the flesh would be eaten by worms and decay.

The actors leaves the blinds and appears on stage, still wearing the top hat.

Oedipus loved his mother,
How can you not to fall in love with the first of all loves?

It was the breast,
the loving milk,
that first touch.
Pupils piercing, connecting,
dilating, soothing.

In the classic of all catharsis
the eyes, HIS eyes bleed,
and still do through mine,
but the heart doesn't stop, it runs
it keeps on pulsating desire,
instinct.

The father died,
a man was born.

Music comes in, loud, maybe an electric repetitive guitar tone. The actor goes and stands in front of the silky slip, takes off the top hat, wings and shorts, exposing his naked back to the audience. Then he puts on the slip and turns around to face the audience. He places his penis between his thighs, hiding it, and then pulls the dress up exposing his upper body (his head cover with the dress). Then pulls the dress down… and smiling and playful delivers

Masculus sounds to me like a muscle!
please let me be playful,
there is an M, a U, an S, a C, and even an L

Masculus, Muscle.

Is. My. Masculinity. A. Muscle?

The gay clone from the 70's

with their fetishist hyper masculinity
Knew how to muscle things.

Do I?

Is that what you meant Doctor Butler?
After all, one of your essays said that your task was…

The actor forgets the lines. The actor takes some paper that lies on the floor and reads it:

"to examine in what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts,
and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such
acts."[13]
A discourse works like a muscle.

The actor throws the papers into the air, laughing.

Now if my masculinity works like a muscle…
What happens if I don't work on it?
Do I become un-muscle, un-masculine?
If my masculinity works like a muscle
How does my femininity work?
"Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity"
Does this mean that my body is a battlefield?
a boxing ring?
in which my inner Adam
fights and loves and fights
my inner Eve?
or is it the other way around?

The web told me that masculus was reduced already in Latin to masclus
please Mr Google scholar,
don't reduce an already reduced trade-
McInnes wrote that:
"…it is a bad time to be a man"[14]
and I believe him.
The representation of the male is in crisis
Masculinity is the crisis
"it is a bad time to be a man…"[15]
MacInnes' words keep on echoing in my head

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[13] (Butler 1988, 521)
[14] (MacInnes in Edwards 2006)
[15] (MacInnes in Edwards 2006)

like the sad song that is
thinking of… well. what is my place in this scenario then,
like it is thinking on my father at the head of the table
hair on his chest, like the macho he always was,
fading…

The father dies
The man emerges

Oedipus did not know…
neither did I.

The actor walks to and open the other blind, his silhouette appears. He delivers from there, sometimes opening with his fingers the blinds so we can see his face.

At the end of his first tragedy
He ended up shouting for "one to open wide the gate
and lead him forth, and to all Thebes display
his father's murderer, his mother's… nay,
such words I will not speak. And his intent
is set, to cast himself in banishment
out to the wild, not walk 'mid human breed
bearing the curse he bears." [16]
He murdered the father on a crossing road.

The actor leaves the blinds and appears.

I murdered mine several times,
all times,
over and over,
rehearsing his death with my bare hands

Who has never done it?
Who has never dreamt it?

After each one of his deaths… my crimes,
I mourned him,
with salty tears I wrote his name on the soil,
the same name that my mother carved on my forehead
after my first scream…

My name is Jaime,
Jaime like my father.

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[16] Excerpt from Oedipus Rex.

I was him…
I was my father before I was myself.

The actor walks to the back wall, kneels in from of the camera [live feed], which is focused on a close up of his face. From a little with box full of soil, the actor unburies a small piece of paper from which he reads a text that he delivers.

The morning my father died, I didn't recognise it as such. He had to go to the hospital to have a blood transfusion. He had so many transfusions. I wonder if there was any of his own blood left. Back at the hospital more needles. How he hated needles! The needles went this time on his ankles, his arms and hands were of no use for transfusions; they were purple, full of wounds and bruises. His hands before thick and always warm were now a piece of thin skin hardly attached to his bones. I, almost orphan, looked at him, unable to react. I was a visitor, only a witness of my own life, I looked at this scene, my father's death, from a distance, lost somehow in my own body. The morning my father died we took him to the hospital for a blood transfusion, but only death waited for him… The morning that my father died I was a reckless child, I was a crumbling man, I was a…

The actor stands and leaves the camera and tears apart the paper. He now delivers facing the audience.

Today I am a hunter,
I am a baker,
I am a little boy chasing dragonflies in a football field.

Today I look upon the face of god, disgusted at its emptiness.

Today I decided to use my cosmic, imaginary and universal uterus
as a megaphone to talk to all my unborn children,
all of them!!!

Today I let my gonads bleed all the dead butterflies that are my sperm,
Leaving traces of death everywhere I go.

Today I cry for my father's death
for his dead body in the hospital room,
for the purple circles on his back
for the purple wounds on his arms, and feet.

Today I cry because i can't remember his voice…
I can only remember his whistle.

Facing the back wall the actor whistle three times imitating his father. Then he laughs and turns around.

El Edipo soy you!
I am the Oedipus

El amor al padre nos mató a los dos,
su sangre, sangue, blood,
que corroida me entró en las venas
activandome la vida de la vida,
sangrando la sangue de su ojo… mi ojo,
todos los ojos.

I am the Oedipus and the mother,
the sex brought blood to my eyes,
from a face without eyes…

The shadow of the mother hanging,
still on climax, the climax,
the shadow of the son inside of her,
still ON her,
the shadow of my escape,
and of my father's blood fading
still dying…
The shadow, this shadows, all shadows
are expanding and
WILL expand for generations

Oedipus is Adan and myself dress for the tragedy…
Where is my apple father? I want to bite.

Adam ate the apple,
Oedipus ate the mother.
I eat my guilt.

The actor kneels close to the audience and delivers.

The last night my father spent at home my sister took care of him. She told me that she danced a strange dance with my father's death that night. She saw a shadow in a corner, she moved her gaze, but the shadow appeared again during that night, making her, forcing her to be aware of father's eminent death. My father and my sister played that night a macabre game "el trencito" the train… Father wanted to pretend to be seated in a train with my sister. He sat on the edge of his bed and placed a chair in front of him, where my sister sat…My father then rested his hand on the backrest of my sister's chair, and all the while they would talk about things… the truth was that laying down the pain was unbearable for him… he complained little, very little… all night long my sister and my father spent in the train… him dancing with his pain, my sister dancing with his death's shadow.

The actor stands up and walks to the other side of the room and delivers. The actor is still close to the audience.

The morning my father died, we had to take him from downstairs, where his room was at home. He couldn't walk. The strong man that my father was could not walk down 9 steps. I tried to help him, he stop me — "deja que me ayude Pablito" — he wanted my brother in law to help him. He didn't trust my strength or care. He believed me clumsy, as when I was a boy. I guess in those final days, before his death, he didn't meet the man he expected in me, he saw a clumsy, trembling boy, only the boy, a boy that likes poetry, a boy obsessed with theatre, the boy hypnotised by rain, a boy that likes other boys, a boy that was almost a man, almost a macho…. Almost…

I did not pronounce a word. Absent, as I was in my own body, I watched how this stranger handled the fragile body of my father, how his body surrendered to this stranger…

The father dies,
the man emerges.

El Edipo mató a su padre…
Oedipus murdered his father
I cannot stop my attempts to resurrect mine.

A pre-recorded voice is played, while the actor walks behind one of the blinds and puts a tails jacket and trousers.

When you bury, you dig,
dig in, dig out, dig deep,
dig silent…

And then…
you find the cavern,
the hole,
the specific portion of emptiness you required…

And then you place,
you place in, place deep, place silent…

And then…
comes the layers,
the earth in, the flowers out,
the flesh deep, the love silent…

And then…

you leave,
you walk, walk away,
and you heal in, you heal out, heal deep,
heal silent.

When you bury… you bury

The pre-recorded text finishes, the actor walks to face the audience.

This is a world…
FOR A MAN WHO SHOULD KNOW BETTER,
so said the new lad culture,
a less brutalised,
but brutal nonetheless version of a macho.

Macho,
What is a macho?

A macho punch
A macho munch
A macho must

This is a world for a man who should know better

This is a world for man who should uterus better
This is a world for uterus who should know better
This is a world for man who should know uterus

-Papá, me escuchaste?… ese soy yo papá! El macho sin utero. Sí, sí, ese soy you! Papá yo
soy tu hijo, tu hijo!

That is me,
The UTERUSLESS MACHO!

This is a world… for a man who should know better.

Well…

I don't want to know better

I want to go outside,
not knowing.