



*EL PODER DE HABITAR ESPACIOS QUE NO FUERON PENSADOS PARA MÍ*

## LA IMPOSTORA

*Stick to me, if you dare...*

A memoir by Isabela del Carmen Abad Montalvo

"La Impostora" was born as an idea the first time I went to Geneva. October the 7th, 2021. Not even one month after moving to Switzerland to begin my BA in Contemporary Dance at La Manufacture, which, for context, seemed as something absolutely impossible to do a couple of years ago, we went to the ADC to see *Diverti Menti* by Maud Blandel & the Ensemble Contrechamps. And so I found myself in one of the richest cities in the world, in a fancy theatre, surrounded by, what seemed at the time, a remarkable quantity of old white cishets, thinking to myself "what the hell am I even doing here?!". From the need to put all of my ideas, questions and feelings into something concrete, tangible, shareable. From feeling completely out of place in the position I had dreamed and worked so hard to be in. From feeling like an outsider while being inside. From feeling like an imposter. From all the joy and pain that migration has brought me.

October the 21st, 2021

*solitude.*

*having to explain my existence, my experience.*

*having to make myself relatable.*

*where is my people?*

*company doesn't mean home.*

*what is it even "fitting in"?*

*belonging confusion.*

*my boss telling me over and over "We don't do things like in Latin America, here is different"*

*as if i didn't know.*

November the 27th, 2021

Went to an Ecuadorean birthday party in Lausanne and felt as alienated as in Manufacture, everytime I remember I'm the only latinx person studying here.

Homesick but also questioning what home is.

How come my mental health deteriorates itself when my dreams just came true?

*yo sólo quiero jugar sin sentir el borde, el límite, pero está ahí, en mi piel, en mi cuerpo, en el camino andado y el valor dado a cada cosa.  
me atrapo en mí mismx.  
contando una y otra vez mi propia historia, intentando darle un sentido.  
encuentro alivio.  
encuentro el resultado de un sistema. un CISTema.  
encuentro excusas. encuentro iras.  
me desdoblo entre lo que soy y lo que quiero ser, y termino habitando el espacio en el que no soy. fui y seré. pero no sé si soy.  
el ahora es un mar de preguntas. una constante lucha interna.  
a veces contradictoria, a veces reveladora.  
me libero tanto, pero sigo atadx a la naturaleza social de lxs humanxs.  
quiero hacer las cosas bien.  
quiero que quienes amo vean que hago las cosas bien.  
pero me rompo la cabeza redefiniendo el "bien" que para el resto no me queda energía.*

January the 8th, 2022

*"...necesitaban personas que doblen el lomo"*

-My dad telling me about La Reforma Agraria in Ecuador

*"...el Ecuador es un país donde el otro no existe. (...) Hacemos de víctimas y de verdugos."*

-the poet Jorge Enrique Adoum interviewed by Nadesha Montalvo, my mum, for CARAS, 2006

Spending Christmas in Quito, quarantining under the equatorial sun, talking with my family through the window, made me realise how much my way of relating to my old home has changed. How much I've changed. And how easy it would be to feel like an imposter too, since I'm so far from what "the norm" is over here.

These days of internal and external dialogues at the foot of Los Andes allowed me to realise that I have been mourning the self that I was before coming to Switzerland, a self that I'll never be able to experience again.

Identifying myself as a non-binary, migrant, contemporary dance student is also acknowledging that I have the privilege(s) to do so. These privileges draw the line between an old and a new self. Recognizing myself as I do now, is also recognizing a self that puts me further away from (some of) my people, my old home, my own old perception of the world and of what was possible. Going so far away from familiarity is very confronting. And accepting that there's no going back to that old self is scary as hell. So sure, the conflict between this old and new, could be a trigger for impostor syndrome.

But it is only through this new self that I am to honour my baggage, tell these stories, step into my creativity and maybe even put them on stage. It is only through this new self that I am able to open these new doors that are presenting to me.

January the 12th, 2022

Back to Manufacture, back to work, driving strength from joy and pride.

*“Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged.”*

-The master’s tools will never dismantle the master's house, Audre Lorde

*“We do not have to romanticize our past in order to be aware of how it seeds our present. We do not have to suffer the waste of an amnesia that robs us of the lessons of the past rather than permits us to read them with pride as well as deep understanding.”*

-Learning from the 1960’s, Audre Lorde

February the 14th, 2022

*lo político y lo poético:*

*la toma de decisiones al componer.*

*por ahora, la certeza de querer incluir al público.*

*de aprovechar la colectividad para nutrir el presente performativo.*

First session with Sarah and Johanne: feels good to put into practice the scores that were only living in my head. Giving *La Impostora* a first go. Studying the impostor feeling within the physical body and in the emotional body. Finding there is something powerful about a collective feeling of imposter, mixed with the joy of performing for an audience.

February the 18th, 2022

*“Oppressed peoples are always being asked to stretch a little more, to bridge the gap between blindness and humanity.”*

-*Uses of Anger: Women responding to racism, Audre Lorde*

End of this first week of practical work and research.

The week of the naked torso covered in glue.

The score is clearer but I have to face my dysphoria. What do I want to share? How do I want to be perceived? How much of that is in my control? I don’t want to be this feminized body from the “typical” contemporary dance scene. I know that whether people see my breasts or not, they’re gonna perceive me as a woman. Which is both frustrating and strongly connected to the impostor feeling.

I could profit artistically from it, but I need to take care of myself too.

Learning that value is not the same as validation.

And therefore giving value to the details that build the universe of “La Impostora”.

Spending a lot of time shaking, moving and singing. “El Caminito” by Swing Original Monks brings melodies into my flesh, reminiscing the town festivities, *el zapateo*, the feeling of belonging to something bigger. Then I link it to “Asnos Caso”, a song by another Ecuadorean group, Mugre Sur, that is the sound of the streets, of the Quiteño slang, mixed with the texts of Jorge Enrique Adoum; all together the power of the south.

March the 1st, 2022

I’m not staging a fable.

I know for myself that I'm working from an impostor feeling, but I don't need it to be explicit. I don't have a message to spread while on stage. I'm sharing my experience. I'm sharing my vulnerability. My existence is political, therefore my dances are political.

*cuero festivo*  
*cuero cuir*  
*cuero migrante*  
*cuero gamín*  
*cuero que se cuestiona, te cuestiona*

Breaking down the piece to different scores that happen simultaneously: the body's state score, the movement quality score, the spatial relations score, the gaze score.

Thinking in the transitions in relation to the soundscape.

I've been working, researching a lot out in the sun, so why would I stage my solo inside?

Taking this intimate work to the public space, makes all of us more vulnerable, but has also a touch of cotidianity. Vulnerability as a daily task takes time.

How do I teach myself to take my time? How do I train it?

March the 11th, 2022

Since art has to be enriched by life, I'm out there living.

*Llenando el tanque antes de la recta final.*

Pre-performance week had to be a week of enjoying myself: going to the theatre, putting nice outfits on, partying, seeing and loving my friends, allowing myself to feel loved and valued.

Performance week was the relief of everything coming together. Of finding my stage, my square at the entrance of Manufacture, that is a glass cage and a set of available doors, both at the same time, like Switzerland. Of building the space to share the journey of "La Impostora" with whoever comes to see, to touch and be touched by my own performance, allowing myself to feel the other side of the coin, the pain of a joyful solo, the bittersweetness of having migrated to be here living my dreams, only to awaken questions for further creations.

Post-performance lessons are a simple but strong reminder that people giving me their attention and time is such a gift. Performing is such a gift. It motivates me to want to profit from the connection built on the spot, on the moment, to bring the research to a collective experience. What a privilege it has been to develop this first solo creation surrounded by people that value what I bring to the table, that take me seriously, that offer guidance, support, dialogue. It definitely has helped me to step into my own power. To learn delicacy as the political action of taking care, taking time and being available to honest changes, on stage and on life.

"La Impostora" is now part of a *glue trilogy*. "*Ejercicios para no pensar*", the second piece of the trilogy, made with two of my closest friends, Juan Fernando León and Ignacio Jiménez Vildósola in 2019, was the first piece I performed that was only improvisation work. It opened the door to instant composition and made me visualise much more clearly what I want from my work. And it is exactly what I'm exploring right now.