

There are gates installed in my temples. They slide shut from each side, like the ticket gates at the metro, and seal off my face. Picture two hands playing peekaboo with a baby. Where's Mommy? Where is she? Heeeeere she is! And on the 'here' the hands part and the baby bursts out laughing. But the gates in my temples aren't made out of hands, they're made out of a smooth, clear, resistant material, with rubber strips lining the edges to cushion them when they close and ensure an airtight seal. Just like the gates at the metro. You can see everything happening on the other side, but they're too slippery to climb over and too low for you to crawl underneath. When my gates close, they cover my face with a hard, transparent mask that allows me to see and be seen, and even though it looks like there's nothing separating me from the outside world, the information has stopped flowing from one side to the other and only the basic stimuli necessary for survival make it through. To get into the metro, you have to climb over the ticket scanner that connects and divides every set of gates. That or pay for a ticket, obviously.

My gates aren't always a hard, transparent mask. Sometimes they're a shop window, and I'm looking through them at something I can't buy, or I'm being gazed at, desired by another window-shopper. When I talk about my gates like this, I'm not speaking figuratively. I'm trying as hard as I can to be literal and explain how this mechanism works. When I was

little, I couldn't understand song lyrics because they were full of euphemisms, metaphors, innuendos and all those shitty little rhetorical tricks, shitty frameworks of predetermined meaning, like when Ana Torroja sings about 'a woman against a woman', but she doesn't mean two women fighting, she means two women fucking. What a twisted, subliminal, rancid way to write a song. You'd think she could at least say 'a woman with a woman', but no, whatever it takes to avoid acknowledging that two grown women are licking each other's cunts.

My gates aren't a metaphor, I'm not talking about some kind of psychological barrier that cuts me off from the world. My gates are visible. There's a retractable hinge in each of my temples, and my gates engage and withdraw along grooves that run from my temples to my jaw. When disengaged, they're stored behind my face, each occupying the reverse of one half: half a forehead, an eye, half a septum and one nostril, a cheek, half a mouth, half a chin.

The last time they activated was at my contemporary dance class, the day before yesterday. The instructor took six or seven brisk, gleeful seconds to dance on her own, then marked the choreography a little more slowly for us to memorise and copy. She hit play again and stood in front of the mirror so we could follow along, which is easy for me if she goes slow. I do the steps about a second after her, glancing at what she's doing and trying to remember what comes next, but I move decisively and confidently, which is gratifying and makes me feel like a good dancer. I am a good dancer. But that day the instructor felt more like dancing than like teaching us how to dance and I couldn't keep up. She counted five-six-seven-eight and off she went, hair blowing in the wind she herself had stirred up, calling out the steps over the music without slowing down. The retractable hinges activated and the polyurethane panels slid cleanly and silently across my face, where they

sealed shut. Now I'm not dancing, I'm just grudgingly flailing around. I take a couple of half-assed steps, skip parts and copy the women who know what they're doing in an attempt to get back into it, but eventually I stop and lean against the wall to watch the others. It looks like I'm studying them to learn the routine, but it's just the opposite. I'm not trying to untangle the ball of yarn that is the dance to understand its movements. I'm not grabbing the loose end of the string so I don't get lost when they turn this way and that, finding their way through the labyrinth that is the dance. I'm just batting at the ball of yarn like a kitten, thinking about my classmates' bodies and outfits.

In among the seven or eight women in the class is one man. A man, yes, but first and foremost a male, his malehood on constant display within the group of women. He's ill-shaven and long-haired in washed-out clothes, and he's always blabbering on about community and culture and yadda yadda yadda. In other words, a fascist. Fascist and male are synonymous as far as I'm concerned. It's hard to watch him dance; the man is made of wood. I can't fault him for that, just like I shouldn't be faulted for my gates, which, by the way, all of the women in the class noticed, so they left me alone. The male, on the other hand, acted like he couldn't see them and, when the routine was done, he came over to enlighten me about where I'd gone wrong before offering some corrections. Turns out his brain is made of wood too, and that's something I can fault him for. Mmm, hmm, yeah, yeah, I answered, not moving from where I stood. Just let me know if you ever have any questions, he concluded with a smile. Jesus fucking Christ. Thankfully my gates were closed and the full force of his malehood was muffled by my total lack of interest in my surroundings. This is a great example of when the gates are a shop window and I'm on untouchable display.

And, for the record, it's not like I couldn't follow the choreography that day. I just didn't want to. I didn't feel like dancing in step with seven random women and one male prick, I didn't feel like jacking off the fantasies of the dancer who'd ended up as an instructor at a municipal civic centre and fancied herself a choreographer, I didn't feel like pretending to be part of a professional dance company when we're really just a bunch of girls in a daycare centre for grown-ups. But people never get it when not doing something is the thing you actually want to do.

I don't know if I was any better off under state totalitarianism, but seriously, fuck market totalitarianism, says my cousin, who broke down into sobs this afternoon when she went to a meeting at the Platform for Action on Housing (PAH), where she learned she'd have to earn at least 1,025 euros a month to get access to social housing.

Don't cry, Marga, I say, handing her a tissue. At least now the market has a woman's name: the totalitarianism of Mercadona, the supermarket chain where the security cameras are pointed at the cashiers instead of down the aisles, so we can swipe deodorant and pads and even remove condoms from their alarm-stripped boxes and carry them out the door in our pockets. I've told Margarita she should switch to a menstrual cup and quit stealing pads and tampons. That way she'll have room in her bag for other, more expensive shit, like honey or Nesquik.

She says menstrual cups cost like thirty euros and she doesn't have thirty euros, and they don't sell menstrual cups at the supermarket so you have to get one from the pharmacy, and it's basically impossible to shoplift at the pharmacy because there they do keep the cameras pointed at the customers plus they have those doors that beep when anyone goes in or out. She's got a point – one time I wanted to steal a menstrual cup for a friend for her birthday and I couldn't find anywhere to do it, not even at a department store, and a pharmacy felt too risky.

What about late at night, at a pharmacy with a really old pharmacist? I ask.

How about you quit stealing condoms and switch to the pill? she says to me. Unwrapping the forty layers of plastic around the box takes forever and it's super conspicuous.

Fuck that, I say, I'm not going to shoot my body full of hormones and be systematically medicated just so some male can experience the thrill of not pulling out. I don't get what's so fucking liberating about the pill. Dermatologists prescribe it to girls for their zits, because of course teenage acne is a medical condition, it's got nothing to do with looking hot, nothing at all to do with turning yourself into a semen receptacle. This is the health of our teenage girls we're talking about. Sure, whatever. But you can't sleep around without condoms, Marga, what about STDs?

Oh, so STDs are a real medical condition? she says.

Are they not? I ask.

But AIDS isn't even real, Nati, come on. Less than one per cent of the population. In Spain there are more suicides per year than AIDS diagnoses.

But I don't fuck Spanish dudes, Marga, because they're all fucking fascists.

Jesus, Nati, you're a bigger reactionary than the Pope.

And you're a dirty hippie, go cut your hair already.

At another contemporary dance class at Barceloneta Adult Daycare (BADDAY), a different instructor told us to take off our socks. We were practising pirouettes and she wanted to make sure we didn't slip. Everybody took off their socks except me because I had a blister on the big toe of my right foot. The instructor repeated her veiled command. It was veiled in two ways: first, she didn't say 'Take off your socks', she said 'And now we're going to take our socks off'. That is, she didn't give the command at all, she described its result, exempting herself from the unpopular task of using the imperative. And second, she didn't acknowledge the hierarchy that exists in all classes, from dance to constitutional law, between us, the students, and her, the instructor. She didn't say 'All right, class, take off your socks', she said 'And now we're going to take our socks off', including herself in our otherness and thereby making it invisible, creating a fallacious 'us' that doesn't distinguish between instructor and student.

She repeated the veiled command by re-veiling it. I was the only person in the studio wearing socks at this point, but even so, instead of saying 'Take off your socks, Nati', she just worded it a different way, still including herself: 'Now, let's get those socks off!' So in addition to repressing the imperative and concealing our otherness, now she was pretending like more than one of her pupils had disobeyed her. If a few had kept their socks on, she would have grasped that this minority,

however small, had some reason for behaving differently, and she might have tolerated the difference. An insubordinate minority can achieve respectability. But a lone insubordinate? Forget it. Everybody looked at everybody else's naked feet. I'm nearsighted and I have to take off my glasses to dance, so I can't say with certainty whether the other students were staring at my still-clad feet or not. Fortunately, my gates are prescription-grade: -2.25 dioptries in the right panel and -3.10 in the left, so I get a crystal-clear view of the fascism around me even as my gates shield me from it.

After both of her veiled commands failed, the instructor – who is Swedish, her name is Tina Johanes – came to the conclusion that besides being nearsighted, I must also be either deaf or unable to speak Spanish. In the spirit of human compassion, she pressed play and, while the other students were practising pirouettes, she approached me, interrupting my awkward twirl, and spoke, finally, to me and me alone.

‘Are you OK?’

‘Me?’

‘You understand Spanish?’

‘Yeah yeah.’

‘Oh, it's just that you haven't taken your socks off.’

‘Oh, it's just that I have a blister on my foot.’

‘Ah OKOKOK,’ she said, taking a step back and showing me the palms of her hands in a sign of apology and conflict-avoidance, and to make it clear that she wasn't hiding any weapons in her leggings.

After that, no pirouettes, no nothing. Just the uninterrupted observation of my surroundings, of the others, of Tina Johanes, of myself. Fuck this whole pretence of learning to dance. Fuck the four euros an hour I still have to pay for classes after the unemployment discount. That's four euros I could spend on a train ticket to the rehearsal space at the

university, where I can dance alone, naked, mamboing as terribly as I like. Four euros I could spend on four beers at the Chinese bazaar, four euros that could get a party started or have me out cold in bed not thinking about death. I am at the Barceloneta Adult Daycare (BADDAY). Everyone else here is either a left-of-centre moderate or a pro-Catalonia separatist. Tina Johanes is an authority figure. I'm a bastardist with a Bovaristic past, and thanks to that shit heritage I spend all my time thinking about death, so I might as well be dead already.

Can't you get to the university by jumping the gates at the train station? That's risky: it's a long ride and being on the lookout for the ticket inspector the whole time wreaks havoc on my nerves; my stomach goes haywire and I end up needing to shit, so I spend twelve long stops trying to quell the cramps. I start letting out silent farts, clenching my butt so they don't make a noise, balancing on my sit bones, embarrassed by the smell. A few times I've shit my pants by the time I get to the university. If you let yourself poo a little it's easier to make it the rest of the way, but then you have to go six more stops with a lick of shit on your ass. Aren't there toilets on the train? No, not on Catalan commuter rail. If you want to piss, shit or fuck you've gotta take care of it before boarding. There are toilets on the national rail lines run by RENFE and the Ministry of the Interior. If you want you can have sex on the train from Cádiz to Jerez, which are about as far apart as Barcelona and the university. Thus, we can conclude that the absence of toilets on the commuter rail is yet another form of oppression and that, insofar as toilets and trains are concerned, the Generalitat of Catalonia is more totalitarian than the Spanish state.

Spit it out, Angelita, I know what you're thinking and I want to hear you say it: Tina Johanes was asking you to take

off your socks for your own good (Angelita didn't say Tina Johanes, she said 'the teacher'). So you wouldn't slip. So you wouldn't fall and hurt yourself. So you could dance better. The same as the guy in the other class when you fell out of step with the choreography (she didn't say choreography, she said 'the dance'). You always jump to these crazy conclusions. You have zero empathy (she didn't say it like that, she said: 'You don't know how to put yourself in someone else's shoes and you're selfish'). You paid for dance classes, which means you paid to take orders (she didn't say it like that either, she said: 'You signed up for dance classes and what's the point of signing up for dance classes if you don't want to learn to dance?'). You can't have it both ways (that part she did say in those words). Not to mention, Nati, you're starting to sound like a Spanish nationalist. There it is, Angelita, that's what I was getting at! That's the dress I wanted to wear out tonight! Thank you, thank you, thank you! (And now she's all offended because I called her by her original Spanish name, Àngela, and not by her Catalan rechristening, Àngels, plus I tacked a condescending *-ita* on the end.) Nati, you know people only let you get away with being all reactionary like that because you're not bad-looking (she actually said: 'You act like a snotty little girl and no one ever says anything about it because you're cute'). If you were less attractive or downright ugly they'd see what a resentful little bitch you really are (that is: 'If you were ugly or old or fat, people might feel bad for you but they wouldn't listen to you'). You're wrong, I answered. You're very wrong. A girl who's half pretty – and don't even get me started if she's beautiful or hot – doesn't have the right to be radical. What's a pretty girl like that got to complain about? How could a pretty girl like that be unhappy? Where does a pretty girl like that get such a foul mouth? That's so unattractive in an otherwise

attractive girl. How dare she get all ugly with me when I cat-call and whistle at her! Can't the cunt see I'm trying to give her a compliment? The other form of censure heaped upon pretty radicals looks a lot like what you just said, Angelita: they can afford to be critical because they're attractive, they can afford to be outspoken because they're attractive, and they think that if they wrap their protestations up in the pretty little packages of their bodies, people might actually listen. But watch out, Angelita! Because – pass me the beer – that's a crock of shit. That's the kind of logic spouted by those twenty-somethings with flowers in their hair and bodies like *America's Next Top Model* who parade their tits in Parliament or at the Vatican, those hippies who call themselves Femen but ought to be called Semen, in honour of the nocturnal emissions they provoke in the very agents of the patriarchy they're targeting.

I love drinking with Ángela because, though you wouldn't know it from the outside, on the inside we're bouncing off the walls, we get crazy talkative and her stutter gets worse and worse and we end up alienating the handful of other people at the gathering, though usually it's just Ángela, Marga and me. Sometimes my half-sister Patricia joins us with one of her friends. The friends are always Semen girls, unless they're guy friends, in which case they may or may not be males – I can't say for sure, since they're not Spanish and I've never spoken to any of them for more than fifteen minutes because they're inevitably self-styled bohemian types and therefore even more insufferable than the Semen girls, their natural comrades-in-arms. But the only time my half-sister has ever shown her tiny boobs in public, nipples clinging to her smooth pectorals like egg yolks, was at the ticket counter to get into a porno-terrorist show, after the woman behind the counter said if she flashed she'd get in for free.

Marga reads literally nothing, not even magazines at the hair salon, not even magazines at the hair salon with nothing except pictures of different haircuts, so it was incredibly generous of her to bring me a zine from the anarchist social centre that the PAH referred her to. It's a reprint of the happy moment when Bolivian activist María Galindo coined the concept of bastardism, on pages 106 and 107 of her book *Feminismo urgente: ¡A despatriarcar!*, published in Buenos Aires in 2013:

Because desire did not and does not circulate freely in society, because desire has been regimented under a colonial code of domination, we cannot talk about the condition of assimilation and racial mixing known as *mestizaje*.

Given the colonial domestication of erotic desire, I prefer to talk about *bastardism*. There was mixing, yes, the mixing was so extensive that it encompassed all of society, yes, but the mixing was neither free nor horizontal; it was always forced, subjugated, violent or clandestine, and its legitimacy was conditioned on extortion, policing and humiliation.

The half-truth of *mestizaje*, behind its veil of shame and hypocrisy, is *bastardism*. The half-truth of *mestizaje*, beneath its make-up, its dissimulation and its disguises, is *bastardism*. It is a half-truth from a brutally troubled,

heart-rendingly unresolved, ardently illegitimate, repeatedly forbidden social space. To call it by its rightful name – to say here there are no mestizas, only bastard daughters – is an act of liberation. The status of white women, like the status of Indigeneous women, is a kind of fictional shelter to conceal something far more distressing, the unresolved question of origin.

You could say that bastardism is my ideology, even though María Galindo despises the notion of ideology because it's authoritarian and academic and, therefore, embedded in the hierarchical structures of patriarchy. In fact, she never talks about bastardists at all, just bastards, plain and simple. I was the one who added the *-ist*, that classic signifier of ideological adherence.

I saw the author give a talk at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art a few months ago, before her books, which are impossible to find in Spain, were zineified and distributed in anarchist spaces. She brought copies with her from Bolivia, and even though they were very cheap (ten euros for more than two hundred pages, with colour photos and even a DVD), I have no money, and I wasn't about to steal a copy from the woman whose talk had made me cry. At first I thought I was crying the way newborn babies do, from the passage from one life to another, the passage from darkness to light. But that implies pain, and Galindo's words hadn't hurt me at all, they'd caressed me, they'd held me, they'd made love to me like an understanding, experienced lover when her beloved says it's her first time. I was a virgin in bastard consciousness. Galindo doesn't believe that pain and trauma lead to liberation. I must have cried, then, from pleasure. In this particular case, from the pleasure of politicisation, of radicalisation, of emerging from the mire of a subjugated state. The pleasure

of discovering your index finger, extending it and turning it towards your oppressor. The pleasure of passing from victim to subject. The politicisation happened quickly, in the brief fifty minutes she had to speak.

Some white lefto-feminist will say that Galindo is talking about Bolivia and I can't transfer the context of her experience to my own situation of oppression in Barcelona. We should reply to this Eurocentric femifascist as follows: Did you perchance live in England in 1848? And does that stop you from conjuring ol' Grandpa Marx every time you talk about social class? Did you experience the Gulag in the thirties? And does that prevent you from summoning the authoritarian spirit of trusty Uncle Trotsky? Do you not have a lay altar to our frivolous bourgeois aunties, Simone de Beauvoir and Simone Weil, even though you weren't born in peacetime Paris or Berlin? It seems like the only political theories our shitbag neoliberal sister-in-arms considers universal are the ones that come from the West; somehow those aren't susceptible to problems of context. It's important to remind her that even on the margins of development, people are still articulating, writing and applying critical thought, and if you're not a snot-nosed Occidental brat with a liberal arts degree, you'll learn to recognise the binding power that extends from those originating margins to our own. I speak not as a bastard but as a bastardist, and I do it to lend bastardism a theoretical scope that, as María Galindo proposes, transcends its context, to such an extent that it has resonated with me nine thousand kilometres from its origin.

When I was younger, I founded the Bovary Club, also known as the Boobery Club, depending on the degree of asinine gusto with which we carried out our amorous chores. There was no initiation ceremony. It was better that way. Of our four members, only one had read *Madame Bovary* and only I had seen the two films based on the book, which I,

with tremendous effort and an unwavering commitment to the history of literature, was unable to read past page 14. The films, on the other hand, are stimulating, edifying. Madame Bovary is blonde in one and brunette in the other. The two other members of the club represented greater and lesser degrees of Bovaristic malaise and they didn't know anything about *Madame Bovary* besides what the girl who had read the book and I told them. I think the transition from Bovarism to bastardism is normal and a sign of maturity. I think that not finishing *Madame Bovary* is also a sign of maturity and an early manifestation of bastardistic inclinations.

My Bovaristic phase coincided with my years at the dance conservatory. It peaked during my master's and came to a grinding halt when I joined a research group for my doctorate. Now, looking back on it, I see that the Jiminy Cricket of bastard consciousness was whispering in my ear from very early on. I remember how one afternoon I was studying for the third-year classical dance exam and I felt true alienation in my flesh for the first time. For the second time. The first time had been four years earlier, when I was sixteen, at a protest against the second invasion of Iraq. Just like when I was reading *Madame Bovary*, I had to quit after fifteen minutes. An unambiguously bastardist act.

Alienation can be one of two things: the original version as described by Grandfather Marx, or the version that's adapted to each individual's particular circumstances of oppression. Grandpa Karl said alienation is workers' estrangement from the product of their labour. I say alienation is the identification of our desires and interests with the desires and interests of power. That's not the heart of it, though; that's just a constant in democracy: we think voting benefits us, so we vote. We think our company's profits benefit us, so we work efficiently. We think recycling benefits us, so we keep

four different bins in our thirty-square-metre apartments. We think pacifism is the answer to violence, so we march ten kilometres banging drums and blowing whistles. No, the core of our alienation isn't this ridiculous civic life, but its recognition: the instant someone realises she's doing as she's told from the moment she gets up in the morning to the moment she goes to bed, and even then, she sleeps in obedience, because she sleeps seven or eight hours on week nights and ten or twelve at the weekend, and she sleeps straight through the night, without allowing herself to get up, and she forces her body awake all day, without allowing herself naps, and if her sleep doesn't conform to the stipulated hours then something must be wrong with her: insomnia, narcolepsy, laziness, depression, stress. In the face of the omnipresent civic jubilation, three things can happen. First possibility: you don't realise how obedient you are, so you never feel alienated. You remain a good citizen with a wide range of electoral and sexual choices. You'll keep studying third-year classical dance because that's what you're expected to do. That's why they gave you a scholarship, after all. You'll keep going to protests and chanting no blood for oil, chanting patients over profits, chanting one-two-three-four-we-won't-take-it-any-more, because that's what freedom of speech is for, and this is what democracy looks like!

Second possibility: you realise how obedient you are, but it doesn't make a difference. You don't feel alienated because you rationalise due obedience. You say our system is flawed, but it's better than the alternatives. The lesser of two evils becomes your mantra and you readily apply it to politics. You champion all things public. You keep studying classical dance because it's your only viable option, because it beats waiting tables, because you're hoping to get a decent job. You keep going to protests and chanting Catalonia is not Spain,

chanting housing not handcuffs, chanting five-six-seven-eight-stop-the-po-li-tics-of-hate. Because whose streets? Our streets!

Third possibility: you realise exactly how obedient you are and you can't fucking take it. Now this, this is alienation. Congratulations! You can no longer tolerate waiting in line for the privilege of tapping your credit card. Lining up to pay, instead of them lining up to take your money, is the pinnacle of alienation! You can't stomach Election Day: the well-dressed, clean-shaven electorate goes to their designated polling stations, where they run into their neighbours and make small-talk about how they're voting and why. They read the whole ballot, take a look at all of the candidates, and allow themselves the tiniest margin of doubt over their choice, but the decision they made at home always prevails in the end. They even bring the kids along! They scamper around and play tag with the other kids, and Mom or Dad lifts them up to the ballot box so they can insert the little envelope, or, if they're big boys and girls, they put it in themselves. Some people even take home a pamphlet from each party for their collection. And then everybody goes and gets a beer, someplace with an outdoor patio if the weather's nice. The festival of democracy! Win or lose, the real winner is always the democratic process! During the last EU election I went to the polling station to reaffirm my repugnance and everybody was staring at my tits. I was wearing no bra and a tight T-shirt. The joyful, civic-minded men and women blathered away, worms wriggling out of their mouths as they made animated Sunday-morning chit-chat and shifted their gaze from their neighbour to my nipples, from the registration table to my nipples, and they struck me as sanctimonious, stick-up-the-ass benefactors and benefactresses of prostitution, even if none of the men had ever gone whoring (despite frequently fucking girlfriends and wives who clearly had no interest) and none

of the women had ever technically charged for sex (despite frequently fucking their boyfriends and husbands when they didn't feel like it, impelled by the sex-love contract that binds them). The men, whoremongers. The women, setting the table for when their men got home. And to be clear, I wasn't the whore in this scenario, nor did I represent her, since the full extent of my insinuation was to exist. I was silent, I didn't harass anyone, and I left as soon as I felt my gates starting to activate. The whore, that is, the person over whom they were lording their authority, was nowhere to be found. Her presence at the polling place was unnecessary, because the political task of the voter – insofar as it's mystic, insofar as it's symbolic – doesn't need an object to subjugate. Unlike the tyrant or the rapist, whose political task requires an immanent object and experience of domination, the voter is happy with the mere illusion of possession, happy to hold someone's destiny in his little envelope. The festival of democracy is a Mass, the whole banquet reduced to one consecrate wafer per person. And inevitably the voters were left hungry for dominance, so they wolfed down my erect nipples with their eyes. With their eyes and, to be sure, nothing else, because I don't fuck Spaniards or anyone else who has voted in local, regional, national or European elections, primary elections, union elections, or referendums on declaring independence, signing a peace treaty, extending presidential term limits, amending the Constitution, rejecting the European bailout or withdrawing from the European Union. Civic imbeciles, every last one.

The male has a daughter, poor girl. He was walking hand in hand with her this afternoon near the Barceloneta Civic Centre. Who was picking up whom? It's like in those topsy-turvy fairy tales where the prince falls in love with the witch and you eat your soup with a fork: at BADDAY the kids pick up their parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents from daycare. This afternoon, the children were patiently bringing their adults to the daycare's final performance, which starred twelve adults ready to demonstrate all they'd learned in nine months of workshops on contemporary dance, dance theatre and gender mainstreaming for the performing arts. The performance would take place on the street and, while the adults and their Italian director, Eleonora Stumpo, waited the requisite fifteen minutes for any latecomers, the kids kept their parents entertained by allowing themselves to be lifted like planes, by dancing along with them to the bursts of music coming from the soundcheck, and even dancing to no music at all, pretending like it didn't hurt when they fell flat on their faces during those erratic boogies, holding back tears to the perennial adult entreaty of 'You're all right, bud, don't cry!' and not crying so they wouldn't embarrass their parents in front of the other grown-ups, who were trying to have their little adult party in peace.

Those delicious summer evenings in Barceloneta! It's five degrees cooler than every other neighbourhood in the city,

the air tastes clean, and once you're a few blocks from the beach, the number of tourists per square metre drops to tolerable levels thanks to the first-generation Xarnegos and the Pakistani families who have seized the public squares, setting up tables, chairs, radios and televisions so they can play cards or dominoes while they watch football and game shows. The tourists can't bring themselves to transition from one kind of concrete to another, from the pavement to the occupied square, and so they content themselves with taking pictures from a distance. If I were one of those old ladies playing sevens, I'd chase down the tourist who'd just taken my picture without my consent and make him delete it in front of me, just like during riots, where there's always some journalist, insufferable hipster or eager-beaver tourist thrilled with the only dose of reality he'll take home from Barcelona, snapping close-ups of rioters in hoods and bandanas while they smash shop windows and ATMs. Then, without fail, a masked-up rioter who's taken it upon herself to lay into overzealous citizen journalists emerges from the fray and breathes down the shitless photographer's neck, her stick at the ready, as he deletes all the photos. After his hood-and-bandana series comes the endless vintage-filter-selfie series, and, to show his good faith, the petrified journalist/hipster/tourist keeps swiping through his camera roll: a pair of dainty feet with toenails painted different colours, mirror flexing, driver and wingman clinking drinks in the car, kissy face and peace sign, bursting cleavage, plates of food, pints of beer, blown-out sunsets where everything just looks dark, flowers, cuddling pets, artsy shots of the Sagrada Familia, the statue of Columbus, Catalan sausage at the Boquería Market, Gaudí's lizard, and three hundred more, and even though the rioter is long gone and the protest has moved elsewhere, the shittourist/hair-gel hipster/journalist documenting his own existence is stuck to

the asphalt, in hunched submission to his phone, swiping mechanically, blindly, for hours, not responding to texts, not answering the calls from friends he'd made plans with, not getting off the street when the police open it back up to traffic and the cars start honking, immune to drivers' insults as they manoeuvre around him, immune to the cop saying come with me, buddy, immune to the nurse putting an arm on his shoulder and saying come with me, buddy, nothing works, the journalist/shittourist/hair-gel hipster cannot be torn from his phone or from the street. He looks like a Butoh dancer, or like if you balanced a medicine ball on one of those round-bottomed roly-poly dolls' necks, there's no way to make him fall or walk or lift his head, not even when the most handsome nurse tenderly places a hand under his chin, the prelude to a cinematic kiss. His core is tight in dancery or pugilistic tension, ready to leap five metres into his partner's arms or throw a knockout right jab. There's no choice but to subdue him; the needle seeks some exposed patch of skin and finds it on a hairy blond calf. The nurses tighten their circle around him and the first thing to go is his phone, which one of the nurses opportunely saves from impact and tucks away for safe keeping. The knees go next, and there's another nurse ready to grab him under the arms. His head was already bowed, so it stays put, though it bobbles as he's transferred to the stretcher.

At eight fifteen the adults emerged from the daycare centre and, in a very soldierly fashion, took their positions in Plaza Carmen Amaya. That's also where I live, so I watched through the tree branches from my second-floor balcony. Director Eleonora Stumpo approached the audience and, without a microphone because there weren't many people, explained that this street performance would take place in different parts of the neighbourhood and the audience should feel free to

watch it from wherever they pleased. She would guide them to the first scene and, from there, the dancers would suggest the next stages. Stumpo, accustomed as she was to herding adults, couldn't stifle the kneejerk 'Any questions?' Oh, Eleonora, Eleonora, you're such an excellent dance instructor, and my gates so rarely sealed shut in your class. Why must you, too, succumb to didacticism? Why do you believe the audience must be taught how to watch? Do you, too, think that education is innocent? Do you too, Eleonora, believe, like every other schoolteacher marching against budget cuts, there is such a thing as literacy outside of emancipatory politicisation? Do you fake it, Eleonora, because that's what brings home the bacon? Is that why you keep letting yahoos like the ill-shaven masculofascist enrol in your classes? I stopped going because of him. So, Eleonora, you can draw your own conclusions about the real ideology of community centres, and about who has the power to expel whom.

One time the male even corrected Eleonora Stumpo's accent. She said 'pairforrrm' instead of 'perform' when she was saying 'to pairforrrm this movement'. We were all facing the studio mirror, in our positions, ready to start, when the male cut in:

'It's pronounced "perform", Ele, by the way.'

'I'm sorry, my accent is very bad, I know sometimes you don't understand me. We don't have the same sounds in Italian! Thank you for correcting me. To pairform this movement -' she repeated with effort, looking at the male in the mirror.

'No no. You're saying paaaaiiiiirform, it makes you sound foreign! *Per*-form. Can you make the "er" sound? Per! Per!' he insisted teasingly, spittle flying from his lips.

'Ah, it's so hard!' Stumpo said, still smiling, her huge mouth invading her smooth olive cheeks. 'Per!' she gah-gahed back

at the baby. All the other girls giggled like it was still the era of Isabella II, but I barely heard it because my gates were also making popping sounds as the gears moved into place. They needed oil after a period of happy disuse.

‘You have it! Just like that! *PER*form.’

Safely enclosed like the front window of a riot van, I could clearly see that no one who hadn’t beaten the shit out of a panhandler the night before should keep dancing, even though there was still half an hour of class left and all the females had played along with the phonetic joke, their six sweet cosmopolitan smiles blooming in the mirror. I released my head from the dancery stillness to which the rest of my body remained bound so I could talk to Eleonora and not her reflection.

‘We understand you perfectly and you speak very well. And in any case, pairform sounds very pretty.’

‘Ah, thank you! I always appreciate when my students corrrect me so I can improve. Let’s continue?’

‘Of course, that’s why I corrected her in the first place, Nati, because that’s how we learn to speak new languages properly, isn’t it?’

‘Eleonora, your accent is beautiful and only a fascist would try to make you change it.’

The word fascist transformed the male’s scarecrow button eyes into real eyes, his stitched red mouth into a real drooler, and his broomstick arms into the open hands of non-violent protest.

‘Whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa! I didn’t say anything like that. Did you hear me insult anybody?’ he said to my reflection, unwilling to relinquish his position in the choreography so he could look at me directly.

‘Hey, guys, don’t worrrry about it, it’s not worth fighting over,’ Eleonora implored as the smiles in the mirror began to wither. We were still maintaining the ethereal composure of the dance, our heads at the proper height, our shoulders

down, our knees slightly flexed, our feet perfectly parallel, the volume of our buttocks sufficiently compressed, and from that position we watched our conflict unfold in the mirror. I was the first to break formation:

‘And do you think speaking properly means talking like they do on TV? Why don’t you correct my pronunciation too, since I say “*per-form*” instead of “*per-form*”, because that’s how they say it where I’m from? And while you’re at it, why don’t you correct your own Andalusian accent?’

‘Look, I make mistakes too, I get it.’ The male forced himself to calm down, still holding his position, which he understood to be standing to attention, and he didn’t dare gesticulate for fear of losing the abandon and alertness, the resistance and relaxation required for the dancerly stillness he had worked so hard to achieve. ‘But I can say *per-form* perfectly well. I say lots of things wrong, but not that word in particular. *Per-form*, *per-form*, *per-form*, see? *Per-form*, *per-form* ...’

I laughed so hard my gates started steaming up, and of course all the other girls followed suit, mistaking my yellow teeth for a white flag. Then, in a never-before-seen display of intelligence, the male grasped that I was laughing at him and that the hissing sound coming from the space between my incisors, muffled a little by my gates, was the guilty verdict being handed down on his idiocy. He subsequently mistook the other women’s innocuous giggles as further ridicule and lost all control of his eyes, which bounced across the mirror like billiard balls after the first shot. He was the second to break formation:

‘Can we take a step back for a sec? What the fuck makes me a fascist? Aren’t you the fascist, putting labels on people you don’t even fucking know? Can’t I correct a friend’s accent without some girl jumping down my throat?’

Eleonora Stumpo broke ranks and the rest of the tableau followed. She proffered a feeble ‘Hey, please’, or something like

that, and a new tableau formed: the other dancers turned their backs to the mirror and formed a semicircle around the male and me. They were trying to de-escalate the situation, but the new spatial arrangement just goaded me on and prompted me to take a step closer to the male, bucking my gates like a horn:

‘What? You can correct a woman’s accent, but you can’t deal with a woman correcting your own shitty behaviour? Here’s a label for you: chauvinist fucking prick.’

And then the same thing as always happened: the male says you’re just being hysterical and rude, he doesn’t have a sexist bone in his body, and the females grab you lovingly by the shoulders and tell you not to get flustered. And you shake them off and respond that you’re not flustered or hysterical or rude, what you are is sick of them laughing along with the male’s macho humour without ever realising the joke is on them. They all silently accuse you of spoiling the class. They all silently sympathise with the male, who has had to endure your excesses. You hope for some expression of female solidarity, but everyone keeps their eyes down, including Eleonora Stumpo. When the tears start to well, they take it as remorse, or as the eruption of nerves frayed by God knows what personal troubles that they now have to deal with through no fault of their own. Not one of them takes it as rage or frustration or humiliation that’s immediate and immanent to that morning, to that dance class, to them. They think you need consoling when what you need is for just one other person within those four fucking walls to understand the meaning of ‘correct’, ‘speak properly’, ‘sound foreign’, ‘make mistakes’, ‘some girl’. The first one to console you is, who else, the ever-sensitive male. He apologises for whatever might have offended you, says you both got a little tense but hey, it’s nothing, we’re all human, it’s over now, no big deal, and you fall quiet instead of headbutting him with your gates, which slowly retract as

if there weren't still a roomful of amiability to protect you from, leaving you vulnerable to further macho subjugation while you tie your shoes. For the umpteenth time you swallow the screams like a pellet of hashish, for the umpteenth time you spend a day carrying it in your stomach; the next day you shit it out and, as you smoke your afternoon spliff, you have to admit that the male was right, it's over now and it was, in fact, no big deal.

Gari Garay's Case for Okupation

Referred by the PAH

Acció Llibertària de Sants, 18 June 2018

My name is Gari Garay and I have a case to present to the Okupation Office for Squatter's Rights. Four cousins, all of them intellectually disabled, live in an apartment at 1 Plaza Carmen Amaya, second floor, unit 2, in the Barceloneta neighbourhood. The least disabled cousin watches the most TV, has the fanciest smartphone, and has been deemed 40 per cent disabled, which entitles her to a monthly benefit of 189 euros. She's the one in charge, but she's easily ignored by the other three cousins, who are arranged in a hierarchy that varies according to their stubbornness and psychomotor skills. The cousin with good posture who swings her arms when she walks (who's not the least disabled cousin because the least disabled cousin is obese so she waddles from side to side when she walks, with her arms flat against her body) has the authority to tell the other three to stop on the street if they have to cross to the other side or if she or one of the other cousins wants to look at something in a shop window. That doesn't mean the other cousins listen to her, it just means they let her give harmless orders and don't put up a fight, and no one protesting is enough to make the order-giver happy and feel like she's being obeyed.

The two cousins who're able to cut their own nails (the least disabled and the second-least disabled, you can tell them apart because the second-least disabled can smoke without coughing and she wears make-up) have the authority to decide when the others' nails need cutting, and by extension when and what colour they should paint them and how they should get their hair cut, but for the haircuts the least disabled cousin, the waddler, forces them, and this order they can't ignore, to go to the salon (she pays, since her participation in Mercadona's Integrated Workforce Pilot Programme as a restocking assistant legitimises her as household treasurer), even though the second-least disabled cousin, who has been deemed 52 per cent disabled and awarded 324 euros a month, wants to cut her family members' hair herself.

The third-least disabled cousin is the quietest, with the sweetest expression, and takes the most pills because the psychiatrist told her that besides being disabled she's also depressed about being disabled, because one day she, Margarita (66 per cent, 438 euros), the third-least disabled, came to the glaring realisation she was mentally retarded and the three women she lived with were too, and this discovery and subsequent depression, according to the psychologist, explained why Marga kept quietly masturbating in every corner of the flat like a domestic cat urinating and defecating in protest when you leave it alone for too long, or masturbating locked in her bedroom so she wouldn't get told off or spontaneously slapped by her cousin Patricia. Patricia is the second-least disabled cousin, the one who wears make-up.

With her lucidity clouded by the pills, Marga can once again exercise her authority over the thing she knows best: cleaning. But since, at the end of the day, Marga is almost the most disabled cousin in the house, her second cousin Patricia and her first cousin Àngels, the ex-Mercadona employee, don't

listen to a single thing she says. The most disabled cousin, whose name is Nati, is the only person who sometimes helps depressed Marga out. The caseworker, Susana Gómez, and the psychologist, Laia Buedo, insist that poor Nati, because she has something called Gate Control syndrome (70 per cent, 1,118 euros), should be taken out more often to do some of the things she likes, but her half-sister Patricia and her second cousin Àngels don't like going out with her because they're afraid of recreating the attitudes of all the non-disabled guardians, disability aides, nurses, social workers and caseworkers they had to work so hard to emancipate themselves from. Just like the other three residents of this so-called supervised flat run by the Generalitat, Nati has a set of keys, and supposedly she can come and go as she pleases. I'm Margarita – Marga – but when we're talking about okupation, I'd rather you call me Gari, just to be safe.

When we heard the music, we all ran onto the balcony in our respective nightgowns, which are lilac, sky blue, pistachio green and lemon chiffon. The lemon chiffon is mine. They're all exactly the same except the colours and they make us look crazy or at least like old ladies because these days no woman who is thirty-two (Nati), thirty-three (Patricia), thirty-seven (me) or even forty-three (Àngels) wears a nightgown. They're from the Chinese bazaar downstairs, so they're synthetic and hot as hell, but I can't take it off without showing my tits, which would be fine with me because I'm a redhead so I have nice tits, but every time I show them Patri fights with me about it because relative to me she has 14 per cent less disability but 99 per cent less tits, and whenever I'm naked or even wearing a bra she just stares straight at them with her 52 percentage points of mental retardation and her lower lip, painted *rouge*, flopped open. So in order to avoid seeing my cousin's epithelium I leave the nightgown on but I do tuck it

into my panties (also sweltering synthetic material from the Chinese bazaar) so I can at least feel the breeze on my legs, my redhead legs with their cellulite dimples under the butt cheeks, voluptuousness guaranteed.

Nati, in her pistachio-green nightgown, said the dancers were from the municipal civic centre across the street and they were her ex-classmates from dance class. Angels, in her bulging sky-blue nightgown, asked Nati why she wasn't in her class's final show, but she was looking at her phone and laughing when she asked, so it looked like she was laughing at the phone or something on the phone. Maybe that was why she was laughing and the question about why Nati wasn't dancing with her classmates was serious. In any case Nati, who either can't take jokes or doesn't get them because of her Gate Control syndrome, took it seriously just like she takes everything seriously, and answered the same way she always does: because they were all fucking fascists and because the municipal civic centre was a daycare centre for grown-ups and it was even worse than the Occupational Centre (the Occupational Centre doesn't have anything to do with okupation, by the way, it's just a place where intellectually disabled people go to do arts and crafts). It's true Nati is a bigger reactionary than the Pope, but it's also true Angels is the least disabled and Nati is the most disabled so it's easy to laugh at her, even though she's the one who walks the straightest and she's more graceful than the rest of us, because she was a dancer I guess.

Patricia, in her lilac nightgown and with her lilac fingernails and toenails, told them to shut up because the performance was starting. A woman sitting on a bench in the square was playing a cello and two others were moving like cats on the bench in front of the Chinese bazaar, and the owner, Ting, had come out to watch. A third dancer twirled vaporously around

the fountain dedicated to Carmen Amaya and skimmed the water with the tips of her fingers. A fourth dancer robotically climbed up and down the stairs that connect the square to the tourist superhighway on the waterfront promenade. A fifth, already on the promenade, was grabbing a railing with one, with two, or with no hands, and that was her whole dance. Each one was wearing a different colour, like us, except unlike us they were all wearing different clothes. Our nightgowns all match because Ting let Àngels have four for twelve euros, according to the receipt. To be allowed to live in a supervised flat like ours, we have to give a receipt to the Generalitat at the end of every month for everything we buy, and we have to follow the proper chain of command: Patri, Nati and I give our receipts to our cousin Àngels; Àngels gives them to Diana Ximenos, who is the director of our flat, which means she's the one who makes sure the four of us meet our integration, normalisation and independent-lifestyle targets; and the director gives them to the Generalitat. For Àngels' and Patri's receipts, that's where the chain of accountability ends, but for Nati and me, the Generalitat still has to give them to the person who declared us legally incompetent, i.e. the judge of first instance, who is responsible for safeguarding that our guardian, the Generalitat of Catalonia, safeguards the best interests of the incompetent individual, i.e. us, even though the judge is the Generalitat, Diana Ximenos is the Generalitat, our cousin Àngels is the Generalitat, and Patricia, Natividad and I are also the Generalitat, which means the whole chain of command thing is really just a bureaucratic delusion.

So Patricia tried to get Àngels and Nati to shut up with a shhh, but none of us has the authority to tell the others to shut up, not even by shushing. Not telling each other to shut up is actually the golden rule in our apartment, because we spent our whole lives in schools for mentally retarded children,

in Rural Centres and Urban Centres for the Intellectually Disabled (RUCIDs and UCIDs, respectively), and in our Aunt Montserrat's house, being shushed for talking out of turn. Àngels and Nati heard Patricia's shhh but they acted like they didn't. I was quiet because I was watching the performance and trying to understand what the dancers were dancing, paying attention like Patri, who was pensively smoking, enjoying her role as an audience member. I was feeling good because by then the sun wasn't shining on the balcony and the breeze was cool, and because whenever I got tired of looking down I could look out and see the ocean, and when I got tired of looking at the ocean I could look down and see the urban nymphs, which I think is what they were trying to convey with their dance, that they were pixies scattering their magic dust across the overheated summer asphalt, pixies emerging from their hidey-holes to bring the beautiful nightfall and release the city dwellers, cooped up in their houses or at their jobs with their box fans and their air conditioners and their televisions, to finally throw open the windows, have a shower and take to the streets smelling like shampoo and coconut body milk, their wet hair drying in the breeze, wearing sandals with thin leather straps and cotton shorts or light summer dresses, the tennis balls ready to be tossed and the dogs ready to fetch, the babies barefoot in their buggies or slings.

Fuck your shitty fucking performance! yelled Nati. Most of the freshly showered audience stopped looking at the dancers and turned to look at our balcony, or stopped using their phones to film the dancers and turned to film our balcony, so Nati insisted: Fuck this shitty fucking excuse for a shitty fucking performance!

Now every single member of the audience was looking at us, and Nati was feeding off the attention and of course the

three of us knew what would happen next: her gates activated. The transparent mask sealed shut over her face, dampening her voice and forcing her to yell twice as loud, so she had to press herself against the railing in her pistachio-green nightgown and hinge forward to make herself heard, totally berserk at the prospect of ten seconds of what she calls direct action and what Patricia calls direct abuse: What kind of choreofascist shitshow is this? Amélie in fucking tights? Raise your hand if you're an anally retentive ass-clencher or an Ada-Colau-voting, human-chain-for-Catalan-independence neoliberal or both! The cellist kept playing and the dancers kept dancing, but during those few seconds of direct action or direct abuse that coincided with the time it takes a non-retard to realise that we were four retards, the cellist and the dancers all slowed down and the freshly showered audience was unsure for a second if this was part of the performance or if they really were being accosted by some psycho bitch in a nightgown who couldn't keep her gates in check. One guy with dreadlocks was muttering to himself and, even though he eventually registered Nati's mental retardation, at first he was so indignant that he almost responded to her direct action/abuse (which was, of course, exactly what she wanted) as if she were a valid interlocutor and not someone to pity.

Patricia doubled down on the forbidden order of silence. Shut up already! I will not shut up! Nati pointed her threatening gates at her sister. But she did shut up, storming off the balcony and out of the apartment, slamming the door behind her. We saw her walk across the square with her graceful dancer's stride, ploughing straight through the urban nymphs' performance without looking at or sidestepping anyone, gates still firmly in place, like a riot cop in a pistachio-green nightgown.

That's the case I made two weeks ago at the Platform for Action on Housing (PAH from now on), who determined that

I am not in a critical housing situation but that I'm actually a lost cause. That's why they referred me to you, because, as they told me in the one brief moment they dropped their stuffy official parlance, their pahrlance, 'the anarchists in Sants are more direct'. At the PAH they just shook their heads and explained that I clearly wasn't the victim of a foreclosure or eviction and that I didn't have any dependants, so before starting an okupa and claiming squatter's rights I'd have to exhaust all the other legal avenues at my disposal, since that would make the okupa look more legit and it would take the owner longer to kick me out. At the PAH they don't understand that I'm my own dependant and that's already too much, and I don't have any money because my cousin Àngels keeps it all. And the other thing they don't get, even though I said it to them just as clearly as I'm saying it now, is I don't want anything to do with government services ever again because I've spent my whole fucking life locked up in institutions, and a judge has declared me legally incompetent, so if I go to a government employee complaining about the supervised flat, then the government employee is going to call social services and social services is going to send me straight back to the UCID/Occupational Centre (which, again, has nothing to do with okupation with a 'K', it has to do with 'having an occupation', with 'keeping yourself occupied', specifically keeping yourself occupied making cardboard bookmarks and wicker baskets, even though if I do succeed in okupying a space I'm going to call it my 'Okupational Centre' just for laughs), because the UCID is also a government service available to me and that's the whole problem. The pahrasites don't understand that the legal avenues at my disposal aren't going to be exhausted, they're going to multiply (when I said this, the pahchyderms got indignant and went quiet) because all the government wants to do is lock me back up so they can scold

me every time I show a boob. Or maybe the pahcifists understand perfectly and they just think I'm one of those uppity tards who complain about the State giving them room and board – for free! – even though all I want is to get out of that apartment with those three retards who I swear are making me even more retarded, because being depressed and seeing things for what they are (or seeing things for what they are and consequently being depressed) is the best thing that has happened to me in my entire life.

I want to thank Jaén for kindly and patiently putting my words in writing since I don't know how to write.

Gari Garay

Statement by Ms Patricia Lama Guirao, made before the Fourth Investigating Judge of the Court of Barcelona on 15 June 2018, as part of the court proceedings for authorisation of the sterilisation of an incompetent individual arising from the action brought by the Generalitat of Catalonia against Ms Margarita Guirao Guirao.

Investigating Judge: The Hon. Guadalupe Pinto García

Clerk: Mr Sergi Escudero Balcells

With the Hon. Judge having been informed prior to this hearing by Ms Laia Buedo Sánchez, resident of Barcelona, psychologist with licence number 58698, from the Urban Centre for the Intellectually Disabled of Barceloneta, where the Declarant engages in recreational and independent-living activities, that the Declarant suffers from a speech disorder (logorrhoea), the Hon. Judge concedes that it is preferable for the Declarant's statement to be recorded, rather than transcribed by the stenographer.

The Declarant and the stenographer, having been informed of this deviation from standard proceedings, both agree to the change.