(IM)POSSIBLE MEMORY:
personal and collective history in the dramaturgical creative process

(IM)POSSÍVEL MEMÓRIA:
história pessoal e coletiva em processo de criação dramatúrgica

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Abstract: This article addresses the dramaturgical creation process of the show *(im)possible memory*. The process of building the textual material is presented, with emphasis on the genesis of the material and on the devices and creation procedures adopted. Furthermore, the work reflects on the interrelations between history, memory and dramaturgy, dialoguing with the concept of artist historiography.

Keywords: dramaturgy; creative process; history; memory; artist historiography.

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Resumo: O presente artigo trata do processo de criação dramatúrgica do espetáculo *(im)possível memória*. É apresentado o processo de construção do material textual, com ênfase na gênese do material, nos dispositivos e procedimentos de criação utilizados. Além disso, o trabalho reflete acerca das relações entre história, memória e dramaturgia, dialogando com o conceito de historiografia de artista.

Palavras-chave: dramaturgia; processo criativo; história; memória; historiografia de artista.

1 Introduction

In this work, we will present and discuss the dramaturgical creation process of the solo show *(im)possible memory*[1]. The dramaturgy was built by an artist who simultaneously played the roles of playwright, actress and researcher, and the creative project was based on her concern about the lack of information on the origin of her family. Here, we address dramaturgy, above all, as written text for theatrical representation. However, the specific context of this production, in which the same artist works simultaneously as a playwright and actress, characterizes a common procedure in contemporary times, with undefined boundaries between dramaturgical creation and scenic creation. Thus, as a result dramaturgy incorporates, in its genesis, actions and visual and sound elements that are the focus of *actorial* research, becoming more than a strictly dramaturgical text, since it incorporates and presents information that is part of the concept of spectacular text (Pavis, 1999). Therefore, our account and our analysis will be founded on this complexity.

Curiosity about family history, the culture and origin of ancestors is something common to most people at some point in life; however, in our country, not all people who seek these answers can find much information, due to a social process of erasure referring to black and indigenous cultures present in the Brazilian social constitution. According to Abdias Nascimento (1978), the "whitening of the race" was a genocidal strategy adopted by the Brazilian State as a public policy from the late 19th century[2], relying on the post-abolition miscegenation and immigration policy (which incentivized white immigration) as forms of dilution and erasure of the African-origin population in Brazilian territory, under the veneer of "racial democracy." In this process, the histories of mestizo and interracial families were narrated according to the whitening ideology, according to which the white-passing phenotype was considered advantageous for individuals, unlike their black and indigenous origin. At the same time, this different attribution of values was made invisible. According to Nascimento, the myth of racial democracy engenders the following logic:

> the assumption that people of Indian[sic] or African origin prefer to be labeled white and the simultaneous presumption that the benevolence of the social structure in granting them the privilege of "white" status constitutes proof of the absence of racial prejudice or discrimination! (Nascimento, 1978, p. 76, free translation).

Possibly, due to this whole process, in the artist's family, as in many Brazilian families, origin histories, records and documents are scarce, with a rupture in origin narratives and oral and written

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1 This work was developed during a postdoctoral residency in the Graduate Program in Letters: Literary Studies (FALE/UFMG), and three presentations were held in 2024, in the format of open rehearsal: November 3 at Teatro 171 (Belo Horizonte/MG), November 10 at Teatro Dom Silvério (Congonhas/MG), and November 18 at the UFGD Center for Performing Arts of (Dourados/MS). See: ENSAIO aberto memória (im)possível. Produced by Júnia Pereira. [*S. l.: s. n.*], 2024. 1 video (84min). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ADNYOp1tVI . Accessed: Nov 14, 2025.

2 Including the burning of archives related to slavery, on May 13, 1891 (Nascimento, 1978).

memories of the family tree – a rupture that coincides precisely with the post-abolition period. The artistic project was aimed at building a dramaturgy that, even being based on a personal and even biographical matter, evoked a public debate, raising the issues of the right to family memory and the right to origin narrative, lost, for many people, during the process of formation of the Brazilian State.

The dramaturgical structure of the show is composed of a prologue, two scenes and an epilogue. In the prologue, the artist introduces herself to the audience by means of a song and thus introduces the first scene. She dons a costume that characterizes her as a researcher, connected to the imaginary universe of anthropology and archaeology. In this first scene, the show employs resources from documentary theater, especially the lecture/performance genre. Using an overhead projector, the actress shares with the audience some of her research, illustrated with documents such as photographs and historical data, and her findings about her family history, in addition to the gaps and opacities that still remain in that history. The scene ends by showing the discovery of the existence of Tata – thus called because her name is not known –, an enslaved woman from the 19th century Minas Gerais who would have been the artist's great-great-grandmother. In the next scene, the playwright/actress dons Tata's costume, composed of a typical outfit of 19th century enslaved women, and seeks to install her scenic and fictional presence, as if the character were summoned to the stage to tell her story, which, although told/fictionalized, also remains full of gaps. The construction of the Tata character introduces fiction and the actress then proceeds from lecture/performance to theatrical representation. In the second scene, the actress invents and performs the character that would be the link with her African origin. That which cannot be accessed through historical records is felt and embodied through theatrical presence and performance. There is a transit of affections, shared with the audience, seeking to access and trigger their collectivized memories. The show ends in an epilogue in which the actress divests herself of Tata's costume and reflects on her own quest.

In order to discuss the places and scope of memory in art, and in dialogue with the concepts of history and memory, we describe and comment elements and procedures that arose in the dramaturgical creation process and that were determinant for its final composition.

2 Development

Firstly, a brief reflection on the dramaturgy woven from the personal and collective memories of the artist who is one of the authors of this work seems important to us; such memories, in turn, are consistent with the affectivities, identities, life stories and subjectivities of several other people who, somehow, share – through gaps, lapses, traces – their memories, especially if we take into consideration, as mentioned, the indigenous and black population in the different Brazilian regions. We will divide our account and our reflections into four parts,

which correspond to the four parts into which the dramaturgical show is divided: Prologue, Scene 1, Scene 2 and Epilogue.

2.1 The song, the dream

> Nga zèyi
> Makutèlanga ndozi
> Mu diâmbu dia kânda diâku
> Um diâmbu dia nsi âku
> Ndozi
> Ndozi
> Ndozi ye ndozi
> (Bunseki Fu-Kiau, 2024)[3]

On September 2, 2023, long before initiating, in fact, the research and creation process that would give rise to the *(im)possible memory* show, the artist awakened with the memory of a dream and sent a message to a friend, telling her that she had dreamed of being with her, in a theater, rehearsing. And, in that rehearsal, she sang a song. This message recorded the memory of the dreamed song, whose lyrics we transcribe below:

> Lost, lost
> Nothing in the lost world
> Nothing lost in the lost world
> Lost
> Lost, lost
> Nothing lost in the world
> Nothing lost in the lost world
> Nothing lost (Pereira, 2023).

This song became the first textual material for the dramaturgical composition of the show, whose writing process only began in June 2024. This fact associates the genesis of the creative process with the dream; an involuntary activity that, from the outset, disturbs our traditional notion of authorship. The playwright's verses, which are repeated, move us and lead us to think about the codes that condition and recompose our memories, which are composed of fragments that we seek to reconfigure throughout our existences, through interaction with our family, friends and people who cross our paths, often filling in some traces of what was lost.

As a composition that is carefully built by an artist, our notion of dramaturgical authorship often presupposes the control and purposeful choice of each element. On the other hand, writing practices that embrace intuitive processes value the haphazard and the elements that arise from the imponderable. In the case of this song, produced unconsciously, we note the ambiguity and

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3 Do you understand?/What dreams tell you/About your community/About your country/Dreams/Dreams/Dreams and dreams (Fu-Kiau, 2024, translation to Portuguese by Tiganá Santana, free translation to English).

ambivalence established between the expressions "lost" and "nothing lost," which interchangeably deny and affirm the loss of something in the world and the loss of a world, which, in itself, is composed of losses. According to Congolese philosopher Bunseki Fu-Kiau (2024), a dream (*ndozi*), in Bantu-Kongo cosmology, is a message with which one can learn "about people and their health, about society and its organizations, about science, about the past, present and future of humanity and the world" (Fu-Kiau, 2024, p. 148, free translation). Without addressing here the different meanings that a dream can have in different cultures and in psychoanalysis, we are mainly interested in the unforeseen nature of its appearance and the absence of rational control over the content arising from the oneiric experience. According to Fayga Ostrower, the haphazard not only marks artistic creation, but is also not exactly random events, as they depend on the artist's perception so they can gain importance in their life and work:

> When we notice a significant chance occurrence – and it can be an event in itself insignificant –, it is "recognized" immediately. This recognition is direct and with absolute certainty, without hesitation, and without intermediate stages of reflection or intellectual deduction, establishing at that moment a correspondence, a kind of consonance with something inside us. [...] It is never, then, random events, in the sense of being unrelated to the person who perceived them. Rather, on the contrary, we should understand that, although flukes can never be planned, programmed or controlled in any way, they happen to people because in a way they were already expected (Ostrower, 1995, p. 3-4, free translation).

In fact, on that September 2 morning, when the artist awakened with the memory of the dreamed song, throughout the day she did not stop humming that song, as she recognized it as not only a dream, but as part of a new theatrical creation that already announced itself in her life. A few months later, the show project began to take shape, as well as the research project of which it is part. Approximately one year later, the song was included in the prologue of the show, which begins with the artist going on stage, singing that song and stretching a thread, with which she traces the timeline of her research, as shown in the image below:

Image 1 – Record of the Prologue of the show
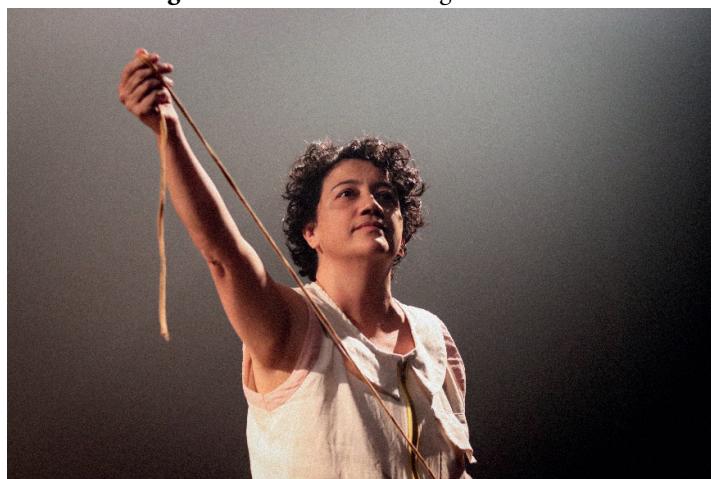
Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024

2.2 Historical research and documents on stage

> it is the memory, at the moment of recognition of the forgotten object, that testifies to the existence of forgetting (Paul Ricœur, free translation).
>
> How simple a thing it seems to me that to know ourselves as we are, we must know our mothers names. And, yet, we do not know. Or, when we know, we know only the names, but we do not know their lives (Alice Walker, free translation).

Once the research and creation project had been prepared, the dramaturgical writing was paused, as the desire was that it could, first, feed on historical research. According to Maurice Halbwachs (1990), history differs from collective memory:

> History, no doubt, is the compilation of facts that have occupied major space in the memory of man. However, by being read in books, taught and learned in schools, past events are chosen, approximated and classified according to the needs or rules that were not imposed on the circles of men who for a long time kept their living memory (Halbwachs, 1990, p. 80, free translation).

Therefore, history lacks the personal and living relation with the facts, the affective and identity bond that is formed together with personal memory and associates it to collective memory. That is why the dramaturgical research and writing project was entitled *(im)possible memory*: since the memory of the artist's ancestors was not preserved, their point of view about historical events cannot be fully recovered, as well as the fabric of personal and collective memory that intertwined with the threads that were preserved in history.

On the other hand, the parentheses, in the title, which separate the prefix "im" in the word impossible, afford as a possible meaning the idea of a "possible memory," that is, a possibility of memory, a memory imagined as a hypothesis, a (re)invented memory, as it should be noted that memory is also created. In turn, the expression "possible memory" also contains the meaning of a reconstituted memory – and, in this case, largely fictionalized, but a memory composed, in concrete reality, of the contingency of our possibilities, of what we have at hand: a possible memory. And, in the absence of interaction and oral transmission, we are left, at hand, with the data preserved in historical records.

Initially, we focused on the 18th century and 19th century Minas Gerais societies, seeking to understand their social constitution process. According to Marcus Vinícius Fonseca (2009), Minas Gerais saw a unique settlement process due mainly to the combination of two factors: the transition, in the 19th century, from an economy based almost exclusively on mining to a diversified economy and the increased number of enslaved people through reproduction in captivity. Also noted is a large number of former slaves, who obtained freedom in different ways:

> The Minas Gerais population was composed through an intense mobility of Africans and their descendants. Thus, in the early 19th century, this population constituted a majority group, present in the most different segments of society (Fonseca, 2009, p. 204, free translation).

By referring to demographic sources from 1776 to 1821, Roberta Giannubilo Stumpf (2017) also found that, throughout this period, the African-origin population constituted the majority social group. In addition, the researcher also notes that, between the late 18th century and the early 19th century, there was a growth in the free black population:

> despite having the largest contingent in absolute numbers of captives in Portuguese America, Minas Gerais society was far from consisting mostly of slaves, mainly because the number of free men/women continued to increase gradually, particularly because of the contribution of enfranchisement (Stumpf, 2017, p. 540, free translation).

Another aspect that saw a growth in the period between 1776 and 1821, according to Stumpf (2017), was the number of mestizos, identified, in demographic sources, as browns or mulattos. Fonseca (2009), who analyzed nominative lists of the central region of the province of Minas, of the 1830s, problematizes the different terms used to denominate what he considers a free black population: blacks, browns, creoles and *cabras* [goats]. According to the researcher, such terms cannot be read only as racial classifications. While the term black was commonly interchanged for African, the term creole designates descendants of Africans already born in Brazil, not necessarily indicating a process of miscegenation. In turn, the terms brown and *cabra* indicate a process of miscegenation; however, according to Fonseca (2009), they also indicate a social positioning: the term *cabra*, which is more difficult to apprehend, seems to connote an aspect of greater distance from the civilizing process, contrarily to the term brown, which demonstrates a greater assimilation of white culture, including through the process of school education:

> The multiplicity of terms that were used to address blacks can have an important meaning for the social experience of the members of this group, especially in relation to those who, in a period when slavery and prejudice prevailed, managed to establish contact with school spaces. As for them, the predominance of browns is notable, which needs to be problematized. The presence of the so-called browns in school cannot be reduced to miscegenation, as it may be a means of recording the relationship with a civilizing process that brought them closer to whites, who were considered as the group that was at the top of the racial hierarchy established during the 19th century (Fonseca, 2009, p. 218, free translation).

We have, then, in the 19th-century Minas Gerais, a population "of color" in its majority – 74.05% in 1821, according to Stumpf (2017) –, composed of enslaved people (the largest continent in Portuguese America, in the period) and free people, identified in the terminology of the time as blacks, creoles, *cabras* and browns, with this estimation possibly including an indigenous population.

Given these data, the artist once again considered her family history. Notably, in her family tree, the memory of the maternal family reaches, in photographs and oral narratives, the late 19th century, having then a rupture with the past: the great-grandfather, the oldest ancestor of whom there is information, would have been born around 1890 and resided, at least as an adult, in Boa Morte – currently, district of Belo Vale, Minas Gerais. There is no information about his origin and,

about his racial constitution, the information is that he would have been "brown," with the only preserved photograph being an insufficient document to determine his skin color. According to a nominative list of the Boa Morte population in 1831, the black population (blacks, browns, creoles and *cabras*) represented more than 90% of the population. Thus, based on researched historical data, it is possible to imagine that the origin of the artist's family is related to the population "of color," and it is possible that the population whitening public policies from the late 19th century contributed to the erasure of this memory.

On the other hand, in order to corroborate our study hypothesis that the family trees of the black population are, almost always, incomplete, the co-author of this work also sought to conduct the same exercise of recomposition of his family tree, but only managed to reach the names of the paternal grandparents. Through conversations with his older sister, who is currently 84 years old, and with the other siblings (a family of thirteen siblings, of whom, today, only seven are alive), very little is known about the grandparents, whose names are on the birth certificate – Marcos Jerônimo dos Santos and Rita Joaquina de Castro (paternal grandparents) and Antônio Emílio de Souza and Margarida Paula (maternal grandparents). Moreover, according to the fragmented memory of the older sister, the paternal grandfather did not quite like to work (the family keeps his employment record book without any professional notes) and had a catchphrase that he would often repeat to his wife: "Oh, Ritinha, today it can't be a [working] day!" – which is a reason for laughter among family members. This identity incompleteness and erasure characteristic, as mentioned, is very common in black families in Brazil.

Resuming the dramaturgical creation process, the artist then began to try to imagine different characters among this population "of color" of the 18th and 19th centuries Minas Gerais, who might, in a hypothetical past, have been her ancestors. Again, it was a fluke that guided the dramaturgical creation to a greater delimitation of time and space. Although the information that her great-grandfather resided in Boa Morte was already known since the beginning of the research, it was because of a conversation with her mother, who mentioned the place again, that the artist decided to search for more information about the place, finding that it was recognized as *Quilombola* territory in 2005 by the Palmares Foundation.

On the Minas Gerais Public Archive website we found microfilms of a nominative list of the Boa Morte district inhabitants in 1831. The report, signed by commissioner of the peace Romualdo José Monteiro de Barros, then owner of the Fazenda da Boa Esperança farm and who would become, in 1854, Baron of Paraopeba, accounts for 108 dwellings and 1,132 inhabitants, being 622 free persons and 510 captive persons. Of this population of 510 captives, the largest contingent associated with a single property is the contingent of the Fazenda Boa Esperança farm, with records of 215 enslaved persons, including blacks, browns, creoles and *cabras*. According to the municipal government of Belo Vale:

> The village called Boa Morte (Good Death in Portuguese), established in the
> early 18th century, served as a crossing point for travelers who moved between

the localities on both sides of the Serra da Moeda mountain ridge. After the promulgation of the Golden Law (abolition law), in 1888, Joaquim Vitor Góes de Lara Resende, then owner of the Fazenda Boa Esperança farm, donated the lands now known as Passo da Fonte to the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Death, so the former slaves would have a place to live and continue near their property, where they remained working. Thus, for a long time, Boa Morte was populated by the freedmen and their descendants (Belo Vale Prefeitura, 2020, p. 89).

The artist, upon learning that the place of residence of her great-grandfather in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was recognized as *Quilombola* territory, immediately associated this information with the possibility that the family origin was related to the contingent of enslaved people in the region, notably from Fazenda Boa Esperança. However, the memory of the artist's family had no evidence of the great-grandfather's connection with enslaved or former enslaved people. It was then that, again, the artist went to talk to her mother and, although this conversation had already occurred other times, this time her mother remembered that her great-grandfather once told her that he had an enslaved grandmother, who would be the artist's great-great-grandmother.

All this research about the family and social history gave rise to a scene of the dramaturgical script, in which the artist narrates, to the audience, her attempt to build a family tree of the maternal branch, the limits found in this attempt and the historical and family research that led to the discovery of an enslaved great-great-grandmother. Such narration, which has a metalanguage character – for making the performance an explanation of the origin of the very performance –, also uses elements that bring the scenic format closer to the concept of lecture-performance, which, according to Daniele Ávila Small, "materializes the confluence between action and mediation, critical thinking and creativity; a language that invites to poetic thinking, to critical imagination" (Small, 2019, p. 214, free translation). From this perspective, the dramaturgical performance, on the one hand, exposes the theatrical character, and, therefore, fictional, affective and subjective character of the construction of knowledge. According to Marco Catalão:

> the lecture-performance also unveils the contemporary perception that, like art, knowledge (both inside and outside universities) is not a set of neutral objects transparently transmitted from one generation to another, but fundamentally depends on the modes of exposition adopted by its practitioners (scientists, teachers, but also journalists and several other people involved in the knowledge construction and rectification process) (Catalão, 2017, p. 11, free translation).

On the other hand, and according to Júlia Guimarães (2024), in formats such as lecture-performance, which operate in the relation between performance and historiography, what is in focus is a specific mode of knowing that is favored by the performing arts. In the case of *(im)possible memory*, dramaturgy contributes not only to denaturalize the construction of traditional historical knowledge, but to favor a specific mode of conducting historiography.

Donning a costume that refers to the characterization of an explorer/scientist and using an overhead projector, the artist projects images of her family, of researched historical sources and of the Boa Morte district, a *Quilombola* territory in Belo Vale, Minas Gerais, Brazil. As a support

for the projection, instead of a simple screen, the artist uses a garment produced on the basis of historical references of the characterization of 19th-century enslaved women. This garment, in the following scene, will be used as a costume. Thus, the projection throws images of real documents (photographs and historical sources) on a fictional support (costume) built from sources that are also documentary, thus merging original documents with documents reconstituted by creation and imagination, as occurs throughout the scenic proposal.

Image 2 – Record of Scene 1 of the show

Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024.

Image 3 – Record of Scene 1 of the show

Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024.

The use of the overhead projector provides an analog character to the presentation of the images, referring at the same time to the precariousness of the historical records and their materiality, which needs the artist's body to be projected, in each scenic gesture of putting on and taking off the transparencies. According to Guimarães:

> It is precisely by emphasizing knowledge as a practical phenomenon, associated with an action built in space and time, produced by people with their bodies and affections, that theater proves a favorable space for critically dialoguing with different fields of knowledge (Guimarães, 2024, p. 15, free translation).

In this dialogue between performing art, memory and history, we seek to link the artist's family history to the history of Minas Gerais and Brazil. That is because the study of slavery and the social constitution of Brazil at school is disconnected from our own origin and history, which has aspects of subjectivity, but is, above all, collective. This split between personal and collective history in our school education implies that we often do not recognize ourselves as part of the history of racism in Brazil. It is created an illusion that there is a history of slavery and racism that is Brazilian, but that did not happen in our families, but with other people who have died and that we do not know. However, this unawareness – that is, the gaps in our own family and social memory – may be precisely associated with structural racism. Thus, when asking about the lost memory of her family members in periods prior to the late 19th century, the artist also inquires about the position of her family members in the slave-holding world, so this question also echoes among the audience.

According to Small, the concept of artist historiography does not define a theatrical genre, but "a mode of operating on historiographic narratives in contemporary theater" (Small, 2019, p. 275, free translation). The elements systematized by the researcher as constituents of this mode of doing theater notably include some that are most present in the dramaturgy of *(im)possible memory*: 1) the self-reflective relation, that is, the scenic exposition of research means and processes. This occurs on stage when the artist uses the overhead projector to project and discuss images and documents that were part of the research process that gave rise to the show; 2) the ethics of the present, which concerns assuming and marking the place of speech of the discourse. This is present in the very origin of the show, which is based on an issue related to the artist's family, noting that this aspect of the individual through the family relationship assumes – or can assume – a collective character in the reception of the spectator by establishing a relation to their personal stories and subjectivities; 3) the transit of affection, which means acting on the politics of affection. The artist intends to do this by creating affection in relation to a character (her great-great-grandmother) who did not exist in personal and social memory and imagination. She brings a totally forgotten and "erased" historical character to the stage, creating for her images, memories and, above all, affectivities; 4) art as epistemology: the artist uses theatrical work as a means of knowing and accessing the lost memory of her family, which is part of a larger set of lost memories, which concern the state of Minas Gerais and Brazil; 5) the historical bodies, which concern the corporeal practice of the spectacle: this is present at the origin of the work, since the artist acts simultaneously

as a researcher, playwright and actress, and therefore there is no separation between her research, her dramaturgy and her bodily practice on stage; and 6) the public sphere, which concerns how the work proposes a relationship with the audience, promoting the opening of listening channels and an invitation to interaction. This is an important element in the dramaturgical project, which aims to bring to the stage the issue of lost memory not only as an autobiographical issue of the artist, but above all as a public and social debate about memories lost in the process of formation of the Brazilian State, marked by structural racism.

2.3 Tata – memory as fiction

> we consider memory as the non-knowledge that knows, this place of inscriptions that restore a history that was not written, the place of the emergence of truth, of this truth that is structured as fiction (Lélia Gonzalez, free translation).

Inspired by the thought of Lélia Gonzalez, the dramaturgical construction of the second scene of the show seeks to structure, as fiction, an unwritten memory of the artist's enslaved great-great-grandmother, possibly born in one of the slave quarters of Fazenda Boa Esperança, municipality of Belo Vale, Minas Gerais, in the mid-nineteenth century. The attempt to represent this character seems contradictory, since the show deals, above all, with the impossibility of access to any images, documents and information about her life. This apparent contradiction, however, finds in the artist's body and in the scenic and literary writings its way of being overcome. Artistic expression becomes here not only a form of historiography, but also a way of rebelling against a collective past of violence and erasure. Through dramaturgy and performing art done by the body, this character is brought from oblivion and is present, communicating directly with the audience – even if scenically and for a few minutes.

Scene 2, or Tata's Scene, begins with the artist dressing in the clothes of the character, clothes characteristic of a 19th century enslaved woman, as can be seen in the image below:

Image 4 – Record of Scene 2 of the show

Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024

In short, the expectation in relation to the scene was that the character would satisfy the artist's curiosity in her research, answering, in some way, the questions about her life, her history and her origin. During the process of writing this character's monologue, the first question that arose was: to invent or not to invent? On the one hand, invention, inevitable in the absence of data, brings both the force of disobedience to silence and the possibility of establishing new imaginaries. On the other hand, after all the exposition of a search for information carried out in Scene 1, the simple invention could become, scenically, an easy solution, in addition to the fact that a pact had already been established with the spectators, who could feel deceived in relation to the initial premises of the show. The solution found was the use of a narrative that provides several possibilities, leaving all of them open as shown in the following excerpt:

> Tata: My mother... my mother may have been Luiza, Beatriz or Efigênia, one of those children born in the slave quarters of Fazenda Boa Esperança in 1830. My mother, she may have been a natural daughter, the daughter of an enslaved woman, with a little lord, a daughter that her father never recognized, who did not even give her manumission... [...] she may have learned to spin cotton, the Minas cloths. Or else, she took care of the kitchen in the big house, making cake, candy, lunch, all these tasty things... But it may also be that my mother was not from inside, she may have worked in the fields, planting corn, beans, rice. Although my mother may also have been raped, like my grandmother, it may be that I have a father, perhaps African, perhaps indigenous. My father... it could be that he worked in mining, or in the fields, or in the mill making cachaça (spirit) and rapadura (solid unrefined cane sugar). Perhaps he had a blacksmith's or shoemaker's trade, or made saddles for horses. Maybe he was a musician. It could be that my father stayed close to me in my childhood, or it could be that he left, sold. Or he was killed in punishment, in an attempt to escape. Maybe I didn't even know him, maybe he was someone my mother met only once, at

a celebration, maybe at the jubilee of Mr. Good Jesus, in Congonhas. (hums): "Good Jesus, as we leave this meeting missing you we say goodbye. But we carry with us, radiantly, The assurance of God's blessings…" And then I: Junia's tata. Then I came into the world (Pereira, 2024, p. 5, free translation).

Through the constant use of the expressions "maybe" and "may be," the Tata character's discourse proposes the conservation of ambivalence between possible memory and impossible memory, and thus dramaturgy invents and, at the same time, does not invent information, choosing to remain on the threshold between fiction and history. On the other hand, the dramaturgy of the scene intends to build Tata's presence in a credible manner in her characterization, body and vocal expression. About the characterization, it is possible to see in the images below its realistic intention:

Image 5 – Record of Scene 2 of the show

Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024.

Image 6 – Record of Scene 2 of the show

Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024

Thus, while the words and their rationality remain prudently in the field of speculation, the artist's physicality on stage seeks to convey to the audience the veracity of Tata's presence. The fusion of these two layers affords complexity to the dramaturgical and scenic proposal, providing a multiplicity of readings and meanings that reinforce the game with memory, between the possible and the impossible.

The presence of fiction in relation with historical data is not something new in the context of documentary theater. In *Há mais futuro que passado – um documentário de ficção* [There is more future than past – a fiction documentary], by Clarisse Zarvos, Daniele Avila Small and Mariana Barcelos, this is due to the inclusion of a fictional character (Ana) among historical characters (20th century visual artists). In this case, the character is presented to the audience as if she were historical and only at the end of the show is her fictional condition revealed. Ana, unlike the historical artists, is neither white nor rich. According to Daniele Small:

> The creation of the character Ana, the romantic and engaging illusion of her life story and the revelation of her fictional condition constitute an important dramaturgical resource in this sense [of historiographical criticism]. First of all, that is because it shows how the social conditions of artists are determining factors for their works to be considered worthy of making into art history. Then, because by making the audience curious about a character and then showing that access to their works is unfeasible, it is a way of drawing attention to a lack – the lack, for us, at present, of art that has not been historiographed (Small, 2019, p. 269, free translation).

In *Derretiré con un cerillo la nieve de un volcán* (2013), a show by the Mexican group *Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol*, the amalgam between fiction and documentary is not revealed to the public, even after the show. According to Júlia Guimarães:

> in *Derretiré con un cerillo...*, the macro-history of the PRI appears interspersed with the family micro-history of the character Natalia Valdez. A single mother, teacher and trade unionist, supposedly missing since April 2000, Natalia is presented in the show as the author of the book *La Revolución Institucional*, which tells the story of the PRI and would have served as the basis for the historical research of the show. After the end of the presentation, the cast improvises, in the theater itself, a space for the sale of the book. The invitation is related to the encouragement for spectators to continue in dialogue, now on their own, with the historiographic research presented in the work. What, however, is never revealed to the audience is that both Natalia Valdez Tejeda's biography and her supposed book are fictional constructions inserted in the documentary dramaturgy of *Derretiré...* Although it has Natalia's signature on its cover, the book *La Revolución Institucional* was actually written by the members of *Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol*. Between the lines of this choice, with complex ethical implications, there would be a reliance on fiction and theater as fertile spaces to invent reality in order to better understand it (Guimarães, 2024, p. 11-12, free translation).

In our work, we chose to keep explicit, in verbal discourse and throughout the show, the fictional character of Tata's monologue, using, in addition to the aforementioned use of the expressions "maybe" and "may be," the resource of metalanguage. It is the character herself who addresses the audience, at the beginning of her scene, to reveal the origin of her words:

> Tata: Those words I use are not my words. My words really, the wind took... forever. The words I use now are from Júnia, my great-great-granddaughter... they are the ones she imagined for me... it is not how I would speak, but it is how I can speak, today (Pereira, 2024, p. 5, free translation).

Although the strategies of inserting fiction in the documentary dramaturgical text and sharing this insertion with the public are different in the three works mentioned, there is, in the presence of fictional discourse alongside the documentary discourse, the common intention to destabilize the official historiographic discourse, which is intended to be free of fiction, but which also makes use of its resources – often invisibly. In this sense, our work is related to the others mentioned, as part of a certain trend of contemporary theater.

2.4 Disrobing, dropping the character, what stays and what returns.

> In time the ballerina body
> (Leda Maria Martins)

The dramaturgy of the show ends with an Epilogue, in which the artist drops the character Tata, returning to a characterization close to that of the initial scenes. While disrobing and dropping the character, the actress talks about Tata. Below is the transcript of the excerpt of her final speech:

Maybe Tata didn't imagine I'd miss knowing her story. And it seems obvious that this was not a concern of hers, as we try to imagine what her life might have been like. And when I get close to imagining her life, it seems incredible to me that only a hundred and fifty years later I'm here talking about Tata in the theater. Although it is impossible to talk about Tata (sings again the opening song: Lost, lost...) (Pereira, 2024, p. 6, free translation).

The above text addresses the themes of Tata's absence and the absence of her words. At the same time, as the artist delivers this text, her body is transformed by the performance: her skin is sweaty, her hair is messed up by wearing the turban, her initial costume is uncharacterized, because she previously took off her vest and shoes to dress as Tata, as shown in the image below:

Image 7 – Record of the Epilogue of the show

Source: Personal collection, photo by Nicole Pavarina, 2024

Performing Tata visibly transformed the artist's body, leaving traces of her presence. These marks reaffirm the presence of Tata that is achieved through the show. At the same time, these marks modify the reading of the artist's own body, evidencing the presence of Tata in her existence as a great-great-granddaughter. In addition, when disrobing Tata's costume, the artist extends it again on the hanger and then stands next to it, as if embracing the figure of the character, represented by her costume. The work ends the way it began: with the artist singing the dreamed song, the matrix of the theatrical work. This similarity of the beginning to the end marks a circular time structure, which in itself is opposed to the linear conception of historical time. In this repetition, we can see a reiteration of the past and memory, a revolt against forgetting and against the linearity of the notion of progress.

3 Final considerations

Our research aimed to investigate the dramaturgical creation procedures adopted in this creative process, as well as the dramaturgical and scenic results achieved. In this sense, it is important to note that it was a dramaturgical creation process in which textual production was inseparable from scenic performance. When observing everything that was carried out, we need to consider the specificity of a writing that is done with the body. According to Daniele Small: "the kitchen of historiographic writing in contemporary theater that stages artist historiographies is not only the scenic space, but mainly the bodies of actors and actresses, which are historian bodies" (Small, 2019, p. 217, free translation). Thus, when we say that writing is done with the body, it is not only a matter of considering that the writing process took place amid experiments in the rehearsal room, but also of understanding that such writing is linked to the artist's body, to their stories and memories, in such a way that this dramaturgical work being represented by another actress would not make sense. From our analytical perspective, our work is forged from a historiography that is individual/personal, but that is, at the same time, connected with the artistic/dramaturgical work of the artist and researcher who assumes one of the voices that were inscribed in this text. In the field of performing arts, our exercise of fabulation and dramaturgical writing is completely implicated in a critical view that thinks of art as a possibility to focus on the instances of the personal sphere to promote reflections that enable us to (re)read the factual in its interrelation with the fictional and with the collective memories that affect us socially as artists and researchers.

Leda Maria Martins also tells us about the artistic and philosophical knowledge that is built by the body and, moreover, about how this knowledge is illuminated, in African cultures, by the concept of ancestry:

> Ancestry, in many cultures, is a founding concept, spread and imbued in all social practices, expressing an apprehension of the subject and the cosmos, in all their spheres, from the most intimate family relationships to the broadest and most diverse social and communal practices and expressions. In what ways, then, does this sophisticated experience of ancestry and the immanent presence of the ancestor in the subjects' daily lives also inscribe a singular understanding and experience of temporality as a sophya? (Martins, 2023, p. 23, free translation).

By dialoguing with the concept of ancestry, it is possible to perceive that the show, structured into two scenes, brings two types of documents to the stage. In scene one, documents of Eurocentric epistemology predominate: photos, files, data, information, chronologies. Scene two, on the other hand, brings the actress's body as the main document: it is the testimony of the existence of the character Tata, and it is through it that another memory will be evoked: a memory woven by gestures, rhythms and noises of the body, in which the ancestor's presence pulsates. In the amalgam between these two epistemologies, the dramaturgy of *(im)possible memory* is built, as an artist historiography.

In this work, we seek to present and discuss how the dramaturgical work was constituted in this show, based on a gap in the artist's family history and her personal quest to reconstitute this memory. However, one of the important constituent elements of the artist historiography concept – as argued by Small (2019) – is precisely the fostering of public debate, that is, the goal of the dramaturgical project was not presenting a confessional show, but problematizing the issue in the public sphere, to foster reflection on the erasures produced in our social history through the late 19th century and early 20th century public policies, which aimed at whitening the population and erasing the African and indigenous identities within Brazilian society.

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