

Tonic States as the Basis of Bodily States in Dialogue with a Creative Dance Process

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ABSTRACT – Tonic States as the Basis of Bodily States in Dialogue with a Creative Dance Process – This article aims to reflect on the concept of bodily states in dance through artistic and academic investigations of corporeality and dance in the traditional Pernambuco cultural performance *Cavalo Marinho*. By analysing the artistic investigation process, encompassing field research in the context of this cultural expression, we aim to conduct a dialogue with theoretical approaches to gesture and perception. Thus, concepts of pre-movement and tonic states have significant value in understanding a creative process based on the relationship between perception, memory, imagination, states, and movements. **Keywords: Bodily States. Pre-Movement. Creative Process. Somatic Education. Dance.**

RÉSUMÉ – Les États Toniques comme Fondement des États Corporels en Dialogue avec un Processus Créatif en Danse – Cet article propose de réfléchir sur le concept d'états corporels dans la danse à partir de recherches artistiques et académiques sur la corporalité et la danse du *Cavalo Marinho*, expression populaire de Pernambuco. À partir de l'analyse du processus d'investigation artistique, impliquant des recherches de terrain dans le contexte de l'expression culturelle mentionnée, nous cherchons à mener un dialogue avec les approches théoriques sur le geste et la perception. Ainsi, les concepts de pré-mouvement et d'états toniques montrent une grande valeur pour la compréhension d'un processus créatif basé sur la relation entre la perception, la mémoire, l'imagination, les états et les mouvements.

Mots-clés: États Corporels. Pré-Mouvement. Processus Créatif. Éducation Somatique. Danse.

RESUMO – Os Estados Tônicos como Fundamento dos Estados Corporais em Diálogo com um Processo Criativo em Dança – O presente artigo propõe refletir acerca do conceito de estados corporais na dança a partir de investigações artístico-acadêmicas com as corporalidades e as danças da manifestação popular pernambucana do Cavalo Marinho. Por meio de análises do processo de investigação artística, englobando pesquisas de campo no contexto da expressão cultural estudada, procura-se realizar um diálogo com abordagens teóricas sobre gesto e percepção. Assim, os conceitos de pré-movimento e de estados tônicos se mostram de grande valor para a compreensão de um processo criativo fundamentado na relação entre percepção, memória, imaginação, estados e movimentos. **Palavras-chave: Estados Corporais. Pré-Movimento. Processo Criativo. Educação Somática. Dança.**

Introduction

Between 2009 and 2011, I developed practical-theoretical investigations in dance based on the corporealities and the *Cavalo Marinho samba*, a traditional popular performance or *brincadeira*¹ [game], as its agents – from the Northern Zona da Mata of Pernambuco state, Brazil – call it. From 2004 to 2008, I was involved in field studies, prioritizing the conviviality with the *brincadores* [players] and the experience in the *brincadeira* in its environment with the participants of the *Grupo Peleja*², of which I am part as a dancer and a researcher. Later, in 2009, I initiated a creative process within the scope of a PhD research. In this process, I turned myself to the corporeal investigations using standards of movement and the sonorities of the *Cavalo Marinho* as a starting point in search of new experiences of movement. Such experiences were not limited to the choreographic structures of the *brincadeira* or its standards of movement following sequences. They were, first and foremost, led by states emerging from the relationship between movement and memories of the field work experience. Emergent memories of the movement that brought the images of the *brincadores* and the landscapes of the field to the rehearsal room, configured not only visually, but by means of sensations and emotions materialized in the body.

In the trajectory between theoretical investigation and the emergent data of the creative process, the dialogue with theories from the Somatic Education, originating over all from the researcher Hubert Godard, were essential for the understanding of the concept of bodily states and the creative approach in question. Thus, I begin this paper with the aim of thinking a dance of bodily states by means of questions related to the perception, based on a specific artistic trajectory. However, I try to address concepts and to bring issues that are way beyond this trajectory.

The bodily states have been analyzed from choreographic artworks by means of different approaches. Several artists, led by particular processes of creation that resulted in distinct aesthetic proposals, have also developed different thoughts on the theme³. However, I understand that the problem, before being a concept to be theoretically defined, is an experience lived and experienced in a particular way. Therefore, its conceptualization, presented here,

keeps the features of a specific creative process, resulting in a solo spectacle first presented in 2011 and entitled *Cordões*⁴ [Strings]. One of the unique aspects of this artwork lies exactly in the reinvention of the corporeality and the *Cavalo Marinho samba* from ways of operating that are articulated with perspectives from the Somatic Education. Thomas Hanna, when defining the field of the Somatic Education, differentiates body and soma (a Greek word designating body). According to the author, what constitutes the soma would be the observation of the self and the fact that, when somebody observes him/herself in a conscious way, he/she does not do it in a passive way, as, simultaneously to the observation, the subject acts on him/herself, “[...] is always engaged in the self-regulation process” (Hanna, 1995, p. 342). During the creative process, when exploring the dances of the *Cavalo Marinho* through the repetition that aimed at its transformation, my attention was constantly turned to my own body in movement bringing about subtle changes in my corporeality. This action of the perception coupled to the emergence of memories from the field generated new sensations, as well as new changes in the movement and in the bodily states. The transit between movements/states, perception, sensation, and images of the field guided, thus, the creative process that started to acquire materiality from the conscience about the subtle changes caused by these intersectings. Parallel to the practical investigation, the theoretical one was also developed when boosted by questions concerning what the bodily states, constituted as a creative principle in the path of a poetical trajectory in progress, would be.

Bodily States and States of Presence

Thinking on the bodily states from the point of view of those who watch to a dance performance, they could be considered as the sources of what, in the daily discourse, is called expressivity of a body in performance. They could also be coupled to the presence or the irradiation of this body, to use expressions that are present in the daily discourse of actors and dancers. Presence is not used here in the sense of *being present*, but in the sense of *having presence* or *being in the present*⁵. I note that, quite often, the words *expressivity* and *presence*, used to qualify the performance of somebody in a performatic context, are used almost as synonyms in the writing or in the speaking of theoreticians, dancers, and theater artists. Thus, when I think about

dance understood from bodily states, I am identifying specific ways to be in scene that generate “presence states⁶” (Louppe, 2007, p. 77). A body in performance that works is conceived in a certain way, even when there is no conscious planning on this conception. Dance, being triggered by the bodily states, does not structure/organize and does not present itself by sequences of movement, as previously said, but rather by the flow of states. It consists of the transience, of the processing characteristic of the ways of being in scene and, moreover, it is marked by the singularity of the dancing subject. The states are not delimited by the movement, by the shape of the movement – although quite often they follow it – but they consist of the ephemeral, processing, and present character of dance.

It is possible to claim that dances of bodily states have been practiced and thought about in different ways in the contemporary dance, being linked to the presence states. According to Laurence Louppe (2007), the presence depends on a type of *usage of the self*, as a corporeal technique (Mauss, 2002), that would be generated by a certain learning in a certain historical, cultural, and social context. Therefore, there are several ways of being in scene and producing qualities from this being, be it in aesthetic terms or in terms of preparation that depend on the type of experience the subject has lived and the type of experience intended to be caused in the spectator, according to each artistic project. Another definition that complements the vision of the author relates the presence to the “[...] phenomena of projection, internal fictions, decompositions, imaginary and organic reconstructions⁷” (Charmatz; Launay, 2002, p. 31 apud Louppe, 2007, p. 75). It is exactly in this point of connection between the presence and the imagination, or between the states of presence and the imagination, that a conceptualization of the bodily states can start to be structured. In this sense, I look for Hubert Godard’s theory and the field of the Somatic Education as a support to think a practice in dance that goes beyond steps and sequences, beyond choreography.

Tonic States as a Foundation of the Bodily States

Hubert Godard’s approach⁸ (1994, 1995, 2006) regarding the human movement helps to understand what happens in the bodies when we speak about expression and presence, in a precise way, in

muscular, joint, bone, and perceptive terms. The author, crossing both the dance field and the health field, crossing kinaesthetic, psychological, cultural, and aesthetic information, develops his research on the human gesture by means of a performance in these two fields. His thought, shaped more in the practical field than in the theoretical one, has been systematized by its making and has been disseminated, over all, through interviews and articles. What interests me here is his approach on the gesture from what could be addressed as a theory on the tonic function (Newton, 1995).

In his paper *Le Geste et sa Perception*⁹ (1995), the author describes and analyzes the operatory process of the gesture and the perception on it, evidencing different nuances brought about by dancers who make the same gesture. According to the author, one could not understand completely what happens between the execution and the perceptive process of the one who observes the gesture just by the shape. For this, it would be necessary to consider the internal dynamics of the gesture responsible for its expressed meaning, not exactly intentional or conscious (Godard, 1995). The production of meaning of the gesture would be, therefore, linked to the process of its operation and between it and its perception, always being a relational aspect - the body with the space, the person with his/her own body, with his/her own history, for example. The author tries to understand, therefore, what would lie *behind the gesture*.

Godard (1995) explains that the relationship with the gravity and the specific management of each one on it, either in the vertical position or during a movement, provide unique, psychological, and expressive characteristics to each person. Even before the occurrence of any perceivable movement, there would be an attitude against the gravity providing the expressive load of the movement, called pre-movement. This would be the micromovement carried through by the antigravitational muscles that would allow us to be in the vertical position, in balance. Such muscles are actuated even when the person is not aware of his/her action, as it is not necessary to plan for the body to support its own weight. Therefore, its actuating is carried through in an involuntary, unconscious way. This way, the antigravitational muscles are responsible for the organization of the whole body in relation to the gravity and react to the weight that we constantly need to oppose in the vertical upright position or in movement and moving.

At any moment it is necessary to make adjustments to keep oneself in balance, and this is why the work of these muscles anticipates to the gestures. As the author shows through the example when somebody raises an arm right in his/her front, the first muscle to contract – in contrast to what it is probable to deduce as being the muscles of the arms, the shoulders or the back – would be the calf muscle, called soleus¹⁰. According to Godard (1995), the tonic adjustment carried through, for example, by the soleus during the gesture to raise the arm would be also responsible for the tone of the gesture and its quality. The states of tension recorded by this type of muscle at the moment when it is actuated would correspond to the affective and emotional states that characterize, provide nuances and personal distinction to the gestures. In the words of the author:

It is the pre-movement, invisible, imperceptible to the subject himself that makes it function, at the same time, the mechanical level and the affective level of its organization. In accordance with our mood and imaginary of the moment, the contraction of the calf, that prepares, against our will, the movement of the arm, will be more or less strong and, therefore, will change the perceived signification. The culture, the history of a dancer and his way of experiencing, interpreting a situation will induce a 'postural musicality' that will follow or lose the intentional gestures executed. The effects of this affective state – about which we are only beginning to understand its mechanism –, that assign to each gesture its quality, cannot be solely controlled by the intention¹¹ (Godard, 1995, p. 224-225).

In the author's view, it is the pre-movement that differentiates gesture and movement. The gesture is conceived by him as what occurs between the movement - that is restricted to the displacements of the body segments through the space - and the "[...] tonic-gravitational background of the individual [...]", meaning the "[...] pre-movement in all its affective and projective dimensions" (Godard, 2003, p. 17).

The pre-movements are accomplished by the so-called tonic muscles, also known as postural muscles, responsible for the balance. They exert the tonic function defined by the author, like the ability that the body has to self-organize itself in the gravity (Newton, 1995). Together with other anatomical structures, these muscles form the tonic system that, according to Godard, is not apart from the expression system. The reasons for this integration between the systems would be in the relationship between function and structure of the muscles.

The tonic muscles differ from the phasic ones for having more red fibers, a higher density of spindles and a greater ratio of fascia, and using more oxygen as fuel. The phasic muscles, on their turn, used in wide movements and brief and intense activities, are different from the tonic ones for having whiter fibers and using more sugar as fuel. The spindles of the tonic muscles have the important function of bringing back to the central nervous system the sensorial information that will establish the tone of the other muscles, thus being essential sensorial tools (Newton, 1995).

By means of its relaxing, they also control and, at the same time, allow for the movement of the phasic muscles to be triggered, that is, they orchestrate, through the relaxing and the control, the integration of the movements, making their coordination possible. When anticipating the action of walking, for instance, the tonic muscles called ischiotibial (a set of three muscles formed by the femoral biceps, the semitendinosus, and the semimembranosus), that connect the hamstrings to the tibia, relax, thus allowing the movement of the quadriceps (the phasic muscle of the thigh) and the coordination of the movement of the other leg (Newton, 1995).

Moreover, according to Newton (1995), the tonic muscles are responsible for the expression of inhibition. When a psychological blockage affects a person, due to contradictory desires, for example, these muscles lose their subtleness in the alternation between relaxing and contraction, the way through which they organize the movements of the other muscles. Due to the lack of a flexible response, the muscular control is affected in the change of *timing* made during this alternation. This way, it is possible to evidence how the expression is linked to the motor coordination and the psychic history of each individual.

The posture as the central axis of Godard's approach is where our attitudes in relation to the world are crystalized. The pre-movement would be the place of interference in its practice to achieve this crystallization and to cause structural changes in the individual, since he/she "[...] supports himself on the postural schema, anticipates all our actions, our perceptions, and serves as a background, a tensor of meanings, for the figure that the gesture constitutes¹²" (Kuypers, 2006, p. 69). The author defines the concept of postural schema from the crossing between corporeal schema¹³ and corporeal

image¹⁴ - two distinct conceptual categories, even though, since Paul Schilder (1994), they have been used in an interchangeable way (Gallagher; Cole, 1998). The corporeal schemas and images are built according to the set of motor functions of unconscious order, which are set in motion in the relation with the world and the conscious and unconscious representations of the body, being these formed in the interaction between the personal history of each one and the culture. The interference in this schema has, for Godard, both the purpose of extending the gesture repertoire of a dancer and enabling a handicapped one to use, in a wider way, the functions of his/her body (Kuypers, 2006).

The schema is established on a certain way of relationship with the world through the perceptive habits and the own history of each one. Following the image of the body (partially unconscious) and the gestures that are allowed, authorized by the singularity of the action space that each one developed in function of his physical, affective, cultural, and geographic context¹⁵ (Kuypers, 2006, p. 71).

Moreover, the postural schema is organized through the connection between the sensorial function of the foot (with its pressure captors), the visual perception, and the inner ear (known as *labyrinth*). This set of sensorial functions is responsible for locating the person in relation to the vertical line in the gravitational field, functioning interdependently. Thus, a look excessively focused can inhibit the function of the inner ear, which, in turn, can result in the excessive increase of the function of the grip of the feet, causing the loss of the quality of the palpatory function of the foot, becoming a blind foot. That is, the disfunctions of each *sensorial sector* intervene with our autonomy in relation to the gravity.

It is in this sensorial base that the tension of the tonic muscles organizes the posture, being them constantly in action even before making any movement. It is this tension previous to the movement that forms the postural habits of each one, which will endow the body with qualities, supplying a span of tonic possibilities by flows of tensions that are unique to each individual. For this reason, each one, at the moment of accomplishing a movement, will set in motion different muscles, with different degrees of tension, from his/her postural habits. Yet, the first muscles to be set in motion will always be those that are already in action, tensioned by the postural schema that is unique of each person. These different microtensions formed

in the postural schema of each one would lead to different ways of moving and, therefore, to different expressive qualities.

Perceptual Experience, Imagination, and the Tonic States

We learn with Godard (1995) that, in the same way that a therapeutic somatic process can intervene with the pre-movement generating gesture transformations, dance has its own ways of interference in the gravitational organization of the body. One of the ways to reach the increase of the potency of the expressive and affective load of the gesture, according to the author, would be the manipulation of the distance between the center of gravity and the center of the movement. The ability to carry through the modulations of these resistances would be proper of the work of the dancer: he/she would develop a unique mastery on the management of the gravity and, consequently, of his/her expressivity.

It is in in the distance between the motor center of the movement and the center of gravity, within this tension, that the expressive load of the gesture lies. [...] The internal resistances to the imbalance, organized by the muscles of the gravitational system, will induce the quality and the affective load of the gesture. The psychic apparatus expresses itself through the gravitational system; it is by its bias that it loads the movement with meaning, modulates it and colors it with desire, inhibitions, emotions¹⁶ (Godard, 1995, p. 225).



Image 1 – *Tombo da Marieta* of the *Cavalo Marinho Estrela de Ouro*, Condado/PE. Aguinaldo da Silva as the *mestre*, Carlos Barbosa da Silva (Gugu) as the first *galante* and Albemir da Silva (Bemilo) as the second *galante*. Photo: Renata Pires.

According to the author, for the dancer, it is only possible to have access and to manipulate the tonic system, being unconscious, by means of a work with his/her perception or imagination.

This claim, in my opinion, is not restricted to the body of the western scenic dancer, but can refer to all those who acquire techniques of access to the imaginary. Be it through standards of unique movements or transmission processes of symbolic corporeal practice - including the rituals, the parties, the expressions, whatever, the performative practices of any culture. In the *Cavalo Marinho*, for instance, the popular performance studied, the movement standards present in the *brincadeira* are structured by means of postures consisting of oppositions. Both in the *tombo*, presented in the image above, and in the *trupé*, native categories designating types of specific movements, the trunk is kept inclined towards the front with the flexion of the coxofemoral joint at more or less 45 degrees, with small variations according to the *brincador* who performs it. The pelvic girdle is kept stable and, even when raising the feet from the ground, there is almost no oscillation of the height of the body in relation to the ground, since the movements and the body are related with the ground all the time; there are no suspension, aerial movements. The stability of the pelvic girdle, therefore, is the consequence of two opposing forces: the abdominal one, that supports it, vectorized upward, and another one, provided by the inclination of the trunk, which keeps it downward. The trunk vectorized to the front allows the distancing between the two centers of gravity – the upper one, related to the set head-trunk-arms, and the lower one, relative to the body as a whole (Godard, 1994) – producing exactly the inner tensions, that, according to Godard, are responsible for the expressive force of the gesture. Such posture demands constant microadjustments of the gravitational system to support a balance which, in the case of the *Cavalo Marinho*, is dynamic. The way how each *brincador* generates the adjustments, in accordance with his postural schema, shall provide the expressive characteristics that are unique of his dance.

Thus, I understand that the corporeal works, either in the scope of the *Cavalo Marinho* or in the scope of the western professional dance, have their own learning and that, by means of them, develop different capacities of access to the tonic system. These capacities of access determined by different imaginaries, in turn, are built by

the relation between body and environment. If the sensorimotor learnings are different, just like their ways of perception, particular states tonic are produced as well. This is exactly where it seems to me that I find one of the reasons for my interest for the *Cavalo Marinho* game, and the reason why its steps or its choreographic structure did not call my attention, but, instead, the particular bodily states produced by some of its *brincadores*. The persistence in studying the *brincadeira* is originated from the attempt to understand, from the practice, what would be that called so much attention when observing the *brincadores*. Thus, my position in the field disclosed a search towards understanding what was behind their gestures, that is, what was beyond the codes of the dance, what precedes and what remains from the movement and, at the same time, what accompanies it. But what led me to notice different nuances between the ways of moving of the *brincadores*? Such question leads to the attempt to understand some of the functioning of our perception.

Body techniques, according to Mauss¹⁷ (2002), learned throughout generations and by means of specific training – comprising dancers and *sambadores* as learners – can be considered as part of a sensorimotor knowledge that also involves the acquisition of perceptual abilities. It is this knowledge that will provide a *genuine perceptual experience*, as Nöe explains in his work *Action in Perception* (2004). According to the author, “For mere sensory stimulation to constitute perceptual experience – that is, for it to have genuine world-presenting content – the perceiver must possess and make use of sensorimotor knowledge” (Nöe, 2004, p. 10 apud Zarrilli, 2007, p. 644). His conception of perception is defined as an action perceptually guided and originates in the understanding of a corporealized, enactive cognition emergent from the interaction between body and world:

Perceiving is a way of acting. Perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do [...] the world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction possess. [...] What we perceive is determined by what we do (or what we know how to do; it is determined by what we are ready to do [...]) [W]e enact our perceptual experience; we act it out (Nöe, 2004, p. 1).

However, how would this sensorimotor knowledge act in more specific levels, as in the case of the corporeal activities of a *Cavalo*

Marinho dancer or *brincador*? Paul Zarrilli (2007) explains that, in the case of a complex activity as rehearsing a corporeal score in the theater or practicing yoga:

The shape and feel of a practice are not derived from or intrinsic to the sensations per se, but rather are gained from what becomes an implicit sensory, embodied knowledge of the organization and structure of sensation-in-action. [...] as one learns a specific form of movement, both the pattern and optimal quality of one's relationship to the repetition of each form constitutes a form of sensorimotor knowledge (Zarrilli, 2007, p. 644-645).

The sensorimotor knowledge would then be a practical knowledge that does not involve only the ability of acquisition of the shape by the reproduction of movement standards, but also by the mastery of the way the sensorial stimulation varies. That is, learning to dance involves a sophistication of the perception by repetition, besides a motor sophistication. This confirms the almost obvious notion that repeating for the sake of repetition does not necessarily lead to a quality progression, being the way you repeat essential for any qualitative change during the acquisition of a corporeal ability.

In the meaning used by the author, it is the relationship that is established during the repetition, between what you feel and what you do, that makes it possible to acquire motor and perceptual abilities jointly. In a way that is not so obvious, it is possible to conclude that the sensorimotor knowledge, being a perceptual knowledge, implies knowing to dance as a specific way to perceive and to act on the world.

Yet, the author adds that the ability of moving and perceiving does not mean having sensations only, but the perception only acquires content when it comprises the sensation, what leads him to claim that “[...] all perception is intrinsically thoughtful” (Nöe, 2004, p. 3 apud Zarrilli, 2007, p. 644). Therefore, perceiving “[...] is to have sensations that one understands” (Nöe, 2004, p. 33 apud Zarrilli, 2007, p. 644). Based on these claims, I ask myself whether the thought would not be only linked to the generation of the understanding by sensation, but to the creation of meanings generated by the imagination that is transformed into action. Godard (1995) claims that the dancer is skilled in transforming imagination into perception and into a type of postural engagement observed by the variation of the tonic states. Wouldn't this ability that some

brincadores could have acquired by means of a collective imaginary be conveyed through generations?

The researcher Eloisa Domenici (2004, 2009) has proposed new parameters for the study of popular dances, as, for instance, the relationship between bodily states and shared metaphors - based on the concept of Lakoff and Johnson (1999) - by the agents of these dances. Such proposal is opposed to the perspective that uses categories originated from the western dance, as *choreography* and *step*, to deal with local cultures that present other ways of living, thinking, and dancing. From the relationship between states and metaphors, the author points to the feedback between the imaginary shared in a given community and the tonic aspects involved in the corporeal dynamics of the dances. The standards of movement named by specific expressions would carry in themselves a whole complex network of metaphoric images and meanings (Domenici, 2009). Thus, the metaphors found in the performances, as symbolic imagination proper of a community, would generate postural attitudes and types of imagetic-sensorimotor-perceptive engagement that could provide a certain modulation on the tonic states.

Domenici (2004) also observes that, when working with some of these dances out of their contexts, but in such a way that their tonic and symbolic aspects were present, they led to the emergence of metaphors and symbolic images that exceeded the universe of the local culture. When dancing, the images of congregation, communion, and belonging, normally found in the performances, emerged. This evidenced a flow in the two directions: from the symbolic universe towards the movement/tonic states and from the movement/tonic states towards the symbolic universe. In the field, the experience that I and my group had corroborates the observation of the researcher, as, when dancing together with the *brincadores*, we shared feelings in common, in a relationship where their bodies seemed to exert a type of attraction on ours.

Tonic Dialogues during the Field Research

A major aspect of the research, concerning the specificities of the creation process and the approach on the *Cavalo Marinho* dances, must be highlighted. It is related to the perspective adopted in the field, determining the way how I saw and what I saw in the

brincadeira - in direct relationship with the way how I guided my creation process. This perspective produced a type of learning of the dances in the field and a way to perceive the corporealities and the dances in this process.

As previously said, I chose to observe and learn how to dance with some *brincadores* who called more my attention. Together with my group, I chose to follow, since the first trip to the Zona of Mata, the *brinquedo* of *mestre* Biu Alexandre, *Estrela de Ouro* de Condado, because this is where good *figureiros*¹⁸ and good *sambadores*¹⁹ were. This quality would always be identified by the admiration that we had for the way the *brincadores* of that group put themselves into motion, how they organized their actions in the ring around the *rosie* (in scene) and, at the same time, how their gestures affected us. This motor organization of the *brincadores* did not have anything to do with the amplitude, the power of their gestures or the virtuosity of their movements. I identify that the power of affectation present in this relationship happened exactly by means of the tonic qualities that each *brincador* produced in his gestures, providing nuances to his *samba* and to the corporealities of his *figuras*. Therefore, what always motivated me in the research with the *brincadeira* were the tonic states of the *brincadores*, of certain *brincadores*, and, by having this motivation, my learning on their dances was also guided by the exchange of information in the tonic level.

This motivation also explains my interest for learning to dance during and out of the *brincadeiras*, without even being dancing, as, by means of the coexistence with the daily life of the *brincadores*, it would be possible to find the affective answers that would link us, in some way, to the corporeal knowledge of the *brincadeira*. Thus, the choice that the group and I made to spend one month in Condado (Northern Zona da Mata in Pernambuco), the headquarters of two *Cavalo Marinho brincadeiras*, living in front of the house of one of the *brincadores* and later regularly visiting the same town, opting for the conviviality with some of them, would be determinant. This way, I also observe that, when opting for the coexistence as a learning procedure of the dance, the group and I were trying to be closer to the subtleness of the movement, materialized by this tonic network, the *background* mentioned by Godard (2006), and constituted by affective and expressive states revealed by the gestures of the *brincadores*.

I can claim, thus, that we searched, as a creative procedure, for a tonic dialogue between researchers and *brincadores* inside and outside of the *brincadeira*. In the latter, it was a closer dialogue, stimulated by the “kinaesthetic empathy”, when, even still, the individual feels in movement by the contamination of “[...] intensities and changes of the corporeal space [...]” (Godard, 1995, p. 227). According to Godard (1995), this sensation, also named gravitational contagion, would be caused by an experience of momentary loss of the sense of one’s own weight while the bodily states of the dancer resound in his/her own body. It would be this that would make a person to feel, even when in a static posture, being taken by the movement and the displacement of the dancer when watching a performance. In the same way that the gravity rearranges the movement, assigning quality and a unique expression to the gesture, it intervenes in the perception of the spectator and interferes, in a determinative way, in the production of the senses observed at the moment of the performance. In the words of the author:

The visible and the kinaesthetic, being total indissociable in the production of sense during a visual happening, would not leave intact the bodily state of the observer: what I see produces what I feel and, reciprocally, my bodily state acts on, without me being aware of that, the interpretation of what I see²⁰ (Godard, 1995, p. 227).

During the artistic investigation, the experience of the first field research was a landmark for the development of the group’s training, a qualitative advance for the accomplishment of the *brincadeira*’s dances and a step towards a more creative exploration. The daily conviviality with the *brincadores* gave to me and to the other participants of the group an opportunity to practice the *Cavalo Marinho samba* within the context of the *brincadeira*, being constantly *exposed* to the gravitational contagion by means of the direct contact with the *brincadores*. However, this observation was made only when the group left this context, went back to the training room and could perceive how the corporeal memory of the field had impregnated its movements. This occurred, in the first moment, without the conscience being directed to this memory; it simply happened, it was actuated by the dancing. This was very significant for the group, as it filled the daily training with intensities, putting us in contact with affective states that provided the work with bodily states. This

type of work only became possible after the field experience, when the corporeal memory, full of affectivity, made it possible to each participant of the group to access specific tonic qualities. Such qualities also produced states of presence, of intensities, by means of a flow of sensations continuously renewed by the dancing.

Final Remarks: the bodily states from the *Cavalo Marinho* samba

I believe that the approach on the bodily states has been present throughout my education as a dancer, and became a creative principle characteristic of a more comprehensive poetic project (Salles, 2009). This principle has onset a specific relationship with the *samba* of the *brincadeira*, guided by tonic dialogues, and these were accomplished, in a closer way, with some *brincadores*. Therefore, it is possible to perceive that the point of view adopted in the field corresponded, thus, to a certain sensorimotor knowledge about which Nöe (2004) writes and, therefore, to a perceptual knowledge or ability linked to this corporeal history that allowed me to perceive the bodily states of the *brincador* and put them in relation with mine. Corroborating the research of Domenici (2004, 2009) on the relationships between the symbolic aspects of popular performances, the bodily states, and the corporeal organization of the dances in these environments, it was possible to perceive that the movement of some studied *brincadores* was based on a specific tonic work, combining precision, agility, promptitude, charm, graciousness, force, and lightness. As it was already pointed by other researchers (Acselrad, 2013; Oliveira, 2006a; Oliveira, 2006b; Guaraldo, 2010; Laranjeira, 2013), these characteristics are related both with the meanings and the values present in the *Cavalo Marinho* community and with the type of corporeal work acquired with the work with the sugar cane. Besides, the postural organization of the *brincadores*, characterized by the trunk leaning to the front and structured in opposition between the motor center and the gravity center, causing in the playing body a game of tensions by the resistance to the imbalance (Godard, 1995), makes it evident the management on the particular gravity, implying tonic nuances. This leads me to consider that the history of my perception was not the only determinant factor for me to ponder on this aspect of the corporeality of the *brincadeira*.

During the research laboratories with the *Cavalo Marinho* dance, at the moment of creation of the solo, the emphasis on the bodily

states was also established when experiencing variations of the span of muscular tensions that act on my posture by means of different ways of pressure on the feet. In a certain moment, the relation of the feet pressure modified the placing of my head, causing subtle changes in the balance axis. Together with the tonic modulations produced by this use of the supporting points of the feet, the field memory emerged by means of images of the *brincadores* walking. Such images corresponded to the movement of coming and going forward and backward in a rhythmic walking characteristic of the *mestre* in the *dança dos arcos* [arch dance] and comprised the way how the *brincadores* moved, how they impressed force, lightness, and tension to the movement. In this experience, there was a crossing between the sensorial stimulation of the feet, the emergence of an affective memory, and the perceptive action, what involved the understanding by the action and by the sensation of modifications caused in my corporeality. In this crossing, it was possible to perceive a way of interference in the postural schema that pointed to the theory of Godard, who considers the mechanisms of pressure of the feet as part of a sensorial structure that organizes the tonic muscular tensions. In this case, this interference led me to the field images and to an emotive corporeal memory that loaded a mere walking with meanings. The repetition of this walking stimulated a rhythmic race that unfolded by means of improvisations in the movements of the images that follow, called *carreira*.

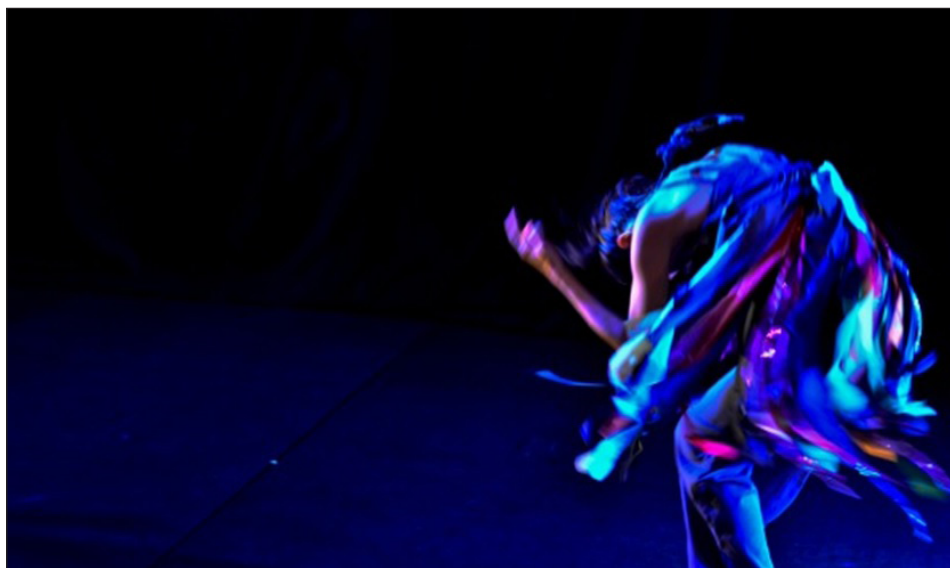


Image 2 – Movement called *carreira com nó* derived from the race present in the *Cavalo Marinho dança dos arcos*. Carolina Laranjeira in the performance *Cordões*, Recife/PE. Photo: Renata Pires.

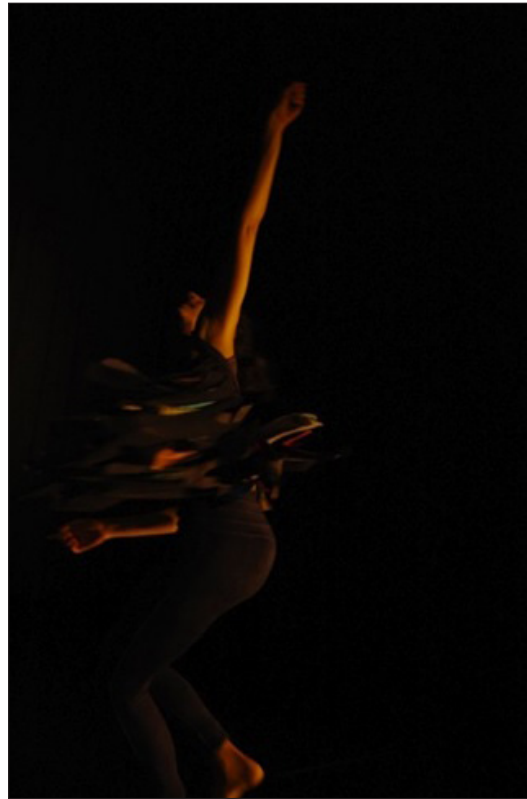


Image 3 – Movement called *carreira* derived from the race present in the *Cavalo Marinho dança dos arcos*. Carolina Laranjeira in the rehearsal of the performance *Cordões*, Salvador/BA. Photo: Eduardo Ravi.

The attention directed to the sensation of what happens in the body itself while dancing also made me to perceive which were the first muscle groups to be set in motion during the triggering of a certain movement. With this, this attention provided conscience to the ignitions of the movement and the emotional states generated by the relationship between putting into motion and perceiving the movement.

Another type of interference in the tonic states was provided by the vibration caused by the repetitive and intense movement, for instance, when working with a specific *Cavalo Marinho toada* (music) corresponding to the *trupé* of the moment of the *cavalo* [horse]. Repeating the gestures of a short trot with the feet together, I was led to decrease the apparent external movement and to keep the internal, short, almost imperceptible pulsation, what led to the remaining of the weight oscillation corresponding to the trot by means of the pressure of the feet on the ground (the following pictures correspond to the movements developed from this pulsation). At this moment of the laboratory I identify, among other aspects, an alteration of the perception, when a type of condensation of senses happens and I feel that I am discovering something unknown by means of the

sensation of the states. These would also be irradiation moments, when the other – in my case, the collaborators with whom I worked - perceived the bodily states reverberating in their own body.



Image 4 – Movement developed from the exploration of *trupés* in the part of the horse in the studied *brincadeira*. Carolina Laranjeira in the performance *Cordões*, Recife/PE. Photo: Renata Pires.

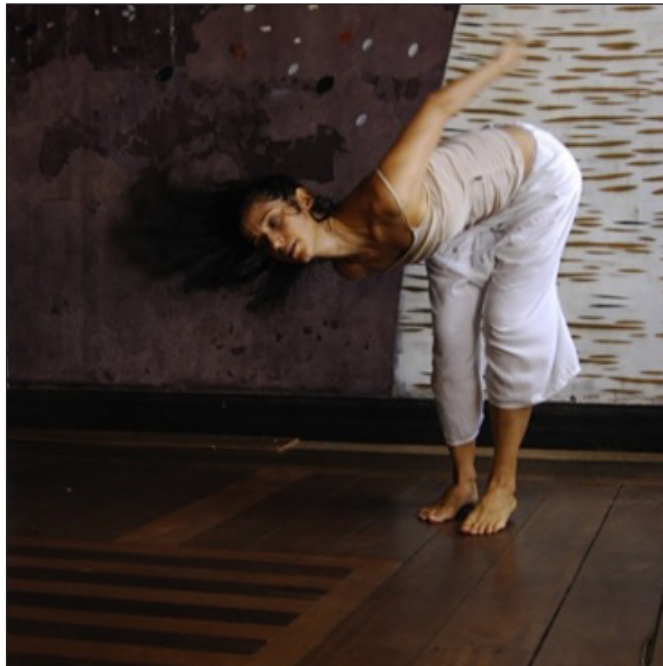


Image 5 – Movement derived from improvisations with the *trupés* in the part of the horse in the studied *brincadeira*. Carolina Laranjeira in the rehearsal of the performance *Cordões*, Salvador/BA. Photo: Eduardo Ravi.

The descriptions and reflections on the process of creation of *Cordões* reaffirmed the potentiality of a creative work from the technique-expressivity of the corporealities and the dances of the *Cavalo Marinho brincadeira*, under aspects often ignored in the processes of re-elaboration of traditional dances. When the relationships between states, movements, and memory are prioritized - supported by a work with the singular perception -, new ways to deal with such dances, different from those that try to reproduce movement standards and to format them in sequences, have been suggested. This way of choreographing, perceived not only in the works with popular dances, reduces all the complexity present in the popular performances. In contrast with this, this research tried to highlight the relationship between the corporealities, the imaginary, and the quotidian of the *brincadores*, being this expressed in visions of the world that produce corporeal *brincadeiras*, scenic relations, movements, plasticity, and particular dramaturgies. The direct contact with the *brincadores* and their context in this research points to the possibility of generating experiences in the relationship between the quotidian and the moment of the festival that allow the learning of something that is beyond the codes and choreographic drawings corresponding to the subtleness of their gestures from tonic dialogues. The experiments with the corporealities produced in this research are only one of the ways of re-elaboration generated by the field immersion. The *Cavalo Marinho brincadeira*, especially because of the diversity of languages involved and the multiple meanings that were found, expressed by criticisms or by the reaffirmation of social hierarchies, is a fertile field of artistic research that still can be undertaken.

Another aspect to consider is the importance of the dialogue between theory and practice and the feedback possibilities between these places of knowledge. Although this article does not approach exactly the reflections on the dramaturgy of the *brincadeira*, as it was presented in my doctorate dissertation, I claim the importance of the descriptions and analyses of the creative process and some of the procedures undertaken so that they could have occurred. When thinking on the creation process, it was possible to understand both the corporealities of the *brincadeira* and its dramaturgy, besides circumscribing a notion of bodily states in the dance. In this paper, I tried to highlight the relationship between bodily states and tonic

states according to Godard's theories (1994, 1995, 2006). For the author, the expressions expressive quality and affective quality are mixed and crystallized in the postural schema of the subject, and the access or the manipulation of these qualities would be allowed by the imagination of the dancer. By means of the experimentations in the creation process, I perceived that the symbolic relationships and the imaginary linked to the field research had led me to produce new affective and expressive corporealities and possibilities. Still in dialogue with the same author, I conclude that the work with bodily states in dance proposes a poetics focused on the manipulation of the tonic states. In this context, what matters is the attempt to reverberate the perceptive effects caused by nuances of states between the body that dances and of those who watch to the dance. This attempt of reverberation seems to be, first, consequence of the emotion of the dancer with his/her own movement, so that this way he/she can extend the effects of the pre-movement, leaving them echoing in the gesture that follows it. Thus, I highlight that the dance of the bodily states is not concerned with the gestures themselves, but with the tonic states that *precede* and follow them; the sequence or the phrase of movement that is produced are not important, but the reverberation that will cause the variations of tensions, stimulating the discovery of new states and new nexuses of meanings in the body. These are states perceived more by the radiant sensoriality than by the constructions of meanings that would possibly lead to the posture or to the gesture. Not necessarily orally *decipherable*, but assimilated by the sensations, that are not separate from the imagination and the reason and, therefore, are liable to the constitution of meanings; however, meanings that are proper to the experience of the dance.

Notes

¹ *Brincadeira* [game] refers to a complex type of popular expression that, in the case of the *Cavalo Marinho*, combines profane and religious party, theatricality, musicality, poetry, and dance. I use the word *brincadeira* in order to highlight the plurality of meanings assigned to this expression by the research subjects. For the same reason, I use other native categories throughout the text, like *brincador*, *figura*, *figureiro*, and *sambador*, calling the attention to the significant particularities contained in these expressions.

² The Peleja Group, created in 2004 from the initiative of Daniel Braga Campos in Campinas, is currently formed by Tainá Barreto, Lineu Guaraldo, Eduardo Albergaria, and Carolina Laranjeira.

³ It is important to highlight that the work with the bodily states is quite current and diversified in the context of the contemporary Scenic Arts. It is possible to identify it in the thought on the work of Myriam Gourfink (Louppe, 2007), La Ribot (Goumarre, 2004), Trisha Brown (Godard, 1995) or in Eugenio Barba and Nicolas Savarese (1995). Since it does not objectify a generalization of the definition of bodily states, I have opted for not presenting here points in common between these works and this research. However, I highlight that the diversity of practices and analyses of artistic works using this expression points to the plurality of meanings linked to it.

⁴ *Cordões* is a solo performance performed in collaboration with the following artists and their functions: Clear F. Trigo and Renata Lima, advisors/dramaturgs; Inácio Lucindo and Aguinaldo Roberto da Silva, technical consultants of *Cavalo Marinho*; Dustan Gallas, composer; Carol Diniz, costume designer; and Eduardo Albergaria, lighting designer. The video of the performance is available at: <<http://grupopeleja.com.br/cordoes.php>>.

⁵ Meanings mentioned in the lecture of the theater theoretician Josette Féral during the III International Dance, Theater, and Performance Seminar – Technological Poetics, in the School of Theater of Universidade Federal da Bahia (November 11, 2010).

⁶ The expression is borrowed from Laurence Louppe (2007), who, in turn, took it from students, as he explains in his book *Poétique de la Danse Contemporaine: la suite*.

⁷ In the original in French: “La présence ne serait-elle pas davantage liée à des phénomènes de projection, de fictions internes, de décompositions, de reconstructions imaginaires et organiques?” (Charmatz; Launay, 2002, p. 31 apud Louppe, 2007, p. 75).

⁸ Hubert Godard, besides being a somatic educator trained in several somatic techniques, carries in his curriculum the formation and performance in the field of dance, and currently is a teacher at Université Paris VIII.

⁹ The paper can be also found translated into Portuguese: *Gesto e Percepção* (Godard, 2003).

¹⁰ The first experience that evidences the anticipated action of the postural muscles was described by Edward S. Reed. This researcher was one of the pioneers in the non-mechanicist approach of the movement, addressing the movement not by motor units, but as action systems. The author explains that, to carry through the action of a member, the adjustments occurred in these postural muscles are not done separately, but in specific functional regions (Newton, 1995). Therefore, Godard calls “[...] flows of gravitational organization” what happens “[...] before the attack of the gesture” (Godard, 2003, p. 17).

¹¹ In the original in French: “C’est le pré-mouvement, invisible, imperceptible pour le sujet lui-même, qui met en œuvre en même temps le niveau mécanique et le niveau affectif de son organisation. Selon notre humeur et l’imaginaire du moment, la contraction du mollet qui prépare à notre insu le mouvement du bras sera plus au moins fort et donc changera la signification perçue. La culture, l’histoire d’un danseur, et sa manière de ressentir une situation, de interpréter, va induire une ‘musicalité postural’ qui accompagnera ou prendra en défaut les gestes intentionnels exécutés. Les effets de ce état affectif, qui donnent à chaque geste la qualité et dont on commence à peine à comprendre les mécanismes, ne peuvent pas être commandés par la seule intention” (Godard, 1995, p. 224-225).

¹² “[...] s’appuie sur le schéma postural, anticipe toute nos actions, nos perceptions, et sert de toile de fond, de tenseur de sens, pour la figure que constitue le geste” (Kuypers, 2006, p. 69).

¹³ According to Godard, from the conceptual differentiation between *corporeal schema* and *corporeal image* developed by the authors Gallagher and Cole (1998) in the article *Body Image and Body Schema in Deafferented Subject*, the corporeal schema refers to the personal organization of the movements conducted by a “[...] system of motor functions that operates without the necessity of a conscious, intentional representation, and generate most of our movements in an automatic way, by reference to the context. This set of functions [...] does not define a ‘self’”, since it can integrate a context, a tool, a prosthesis, a costume etc.” (Kuypers, 2006, p. 7).

¹⁴ According to the authors of the article mentioned in the previous note, corporeal image is formed by mental representations, a set of intentional states that refer to the perceptive experience of the subject in relation to his/her own body, to the conceptual understanding of his/her own body, including the beliefs and attitudes related to the idea of body of a society and a culture and to the emotional attitude of the subject on his/her body. These representations are not necessarily conscious, but they are part of the so-called intentional system (Gallagher; Cole, 1998).

¹⁵ In the original in French: “Ce schéma [...] s’établit sur un certain mode de rapport au monde à travers les habitudes perceptives et l’histoire à chacun. Suivant l’image du corps (en partie inconsciente) et les gestes permis, autorisés par la singularité de l’espace d’action que chacun a développé en fonction de son contexte physique, affectif, culturel et géographique” (Kuypers, 2006, p. 71).

¹⁶ “C’est dans l’écart entre le centre moteur du mouvement et le centre de gravité, dans cette tension, que réside la charge expressive du geste. [...] Les résistances internes au déséquilibre, qui sont organisées par les muscles du système gravitaire, vont induire la charge affective du geste. L’appareil psychique s’exprime à travers le système gravitaire, c’est par son biais qu’il charge de sens le mouvement, le module et le colore du désir, des inhibitions, des émotions” (Godard, 1995, p. 225).

¹⁷ In Mauss’ definition, the techniques of the body relate to the ways by which each society, from generation to generation, uses its own body. Next, I highlight his explanation in which he underscores the motor aspect of the body techniques: “I call technique an efficacious traditional act (and you can see that, in this case, it is not different from the magic, religious, symbolic act). It is necessary that it is traditional and efficacious. There is

no technique and no transmission if there is no tradition”. Mauss also distinguishes other efficacious traditional acts (religious, moral, legal) from the traditional act of the techniques in the following way: “This one is perceived by the author as an act of *mechanics, physical or psychochemical* and it is pursued with this aim” (Mauss, 2002, p. 9-10, emphasis by the author).

¹⁸ *Figureiro* designates *the one that bota figura* [the one who wears a mask], as it is said in the context of the *Cavalo Marinho*; they are the fictional beings of the *brincadeira*. Usually the *figura* is composed by a mask.

¹⁹ The *Cavalo Marinho* dance can be also called *samba*.

²⁰ In the original in French: “Le visible et le kinesthésique étant totalement indissociables, la production du sens lors d’un événement visuel ne saurait laisser intact l’état de corps de l’observateur: ce que je vois produit ce que je ressens, et réciproquement mon état corporel travaille à mon insu l’interprétation de ce que je vois” (Godard, 1995, p. 227).

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