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In Search of *Sabrosura* and *Sabor*: possible connections between anthropological methods and performance

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ABSTRACT – In Search of *Sabrosura* and *Sabor*: possible connections between anthropological methods and performance – The goal of this article is to make connections between anthropological methods and performance based on data collected in research about salsa dancing in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The text describes changes in the approach to salsa and focuses on two different dance styles practiced in two ballroom dance schools. The literature on salsa tends to favor its sound structure, leaving aside other sensory stimuli. In contrast, this article presents an ethnographic approach to salsa dancing based on notions of performance. Thus, the purpose is to contribute to dance research from an anthropological perspective.
Keywords: **Ethnography. Performance. Dance. Salsa. Rio de Janeiro.**

RÉSUMÉ – A la Recherche de la *Sabrosura* et du *Sabor*: interactions possibles entre la méthode anthropologique et de la performance – L'article suggère des liens entre la méthode anthropologique et la performance à partir de données recueillies dans une recherche sur la *salsa* à Rio de Janeiro. Le texte décrit les changements dans l'approche de la *salsa* et se concentre sur deux types de danse spécifiques et distincts pratiqués dans deux centres de danse de salon. Les études sur la *salsa* mettent généralement en évidence leur structure sonore, en laissant de côté les autres impulsions sensorielles. Ce texte suggère, en revanche, une approche ethnographique de la danse *salsa* liée aux notions de performance. Par conséquent, l'article se donne comme objectif de apporter des contributions à la recherche sur la danse dans une perspective anthropologique.
Mots-clés: **Ethnographie. *Performance*. Danse. Salsa. Rio de Janeiro.**

RESUMO – Em busca da *sabrosura* e do *sabor*: encontros possíveis entre método antropológico e performance – O artigo propõe articulações entre método antropológico e performance a partir de dados coletados em uma investigação sobre a dança de salsa na cidade do Rio de Janeiro. O texto narra mudanças na abordagem da salsa, centrando-se em dois modos específicos e distintos praticados em duas academias de dança de salão. A literatura sobre salsa costuma privilegiar sua estrutura sonora, deixando de lado outros estímulos sensoriais. Em contraste, no presente texto se realiza uma abordagem etnográfica da dança de salsa atrelada a noções de performance. Assim, procura-se trazer contribuições para a pesquisa em dança a partir de uma perspectiva antropológica.
Palavras-chave: **Etnografia. Performance. Dança. Salsa. Rio de Janeiro.**

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This article discusses anthropological work and notions of performance from an empirical basis, related to my Ph.D. research about Caribbean salsa dance practiced in ballroom dance schools and events with social dancing in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I consider the multiple senses of performance that appeared throughout the construction of an ethnographic situation about dance. Performance is assumed as an analytical frame to apprehend the intense sensory experience of salsa. I highlight the transformative feature – rather than finished or inflexible – of this category. Thus, I try to point out the research possibilities on dance from the anthropological perspective, emphasizing the extent of performance notions when connected to fieldwork.

The text examines two changes in my position as an ethnographer of dance. It is organized into three parts. In the first part, as an observer from the edges of the dance floor, I suggest a definition of salsa linked to the colonial imprint of the Caribbean. This region is commonly depicted as the birthplace of salsa. Some literature on performance is useful to examine salsa practice in Rio de Janeiro. In the second part of the article, still in the role of ethnographer/salsa learner, I propose to analyze salsa performance as a process, highlighting the rules followed by the dancers and their expectations about the dance. I focus on two specific and differentiated styles of Salsa existing in Rio de Janeiro's ballroom dance schools. In the third and final part I briefly discuss the possibilities and contributions of the connections between anthropological work and performance from the ethnographic situation considered throughout the text.

The data examined here are the result of my relationship with salsa dancers in 2017 and 2018. During that period, I had informal conversations and conducted interviews with the dancers. I also joined events with social dancing and dance classes, either as a member of the audience or as a performer on stage. These data are part of research undertaken from 2016 to 2019 that included an inquiry into written and audiovisual sources besides observation of salsa practitioners. However, the delimitation does not define a beginning, before which I would have supposedly defined the conceptual set to be applied in the field, nor does it announce the end, which would start the analysis phase of the collected data. As I intend to discuss here, throughout the period stated above there were changes in the ap-

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proach and relationships with the participants of the research, and therefore in the issues that I started to consider and analyze.

Therefore, the ethnographic approach I discuss here follows the authors who assume anthropological fieldwork as a form of knowledge production (Goldman, 1999; Pedroso Lima; Sarró, 2006; Peirano, 2014). For these authors, the practice of anthropology does not only mean using empirical material as a central basis for analysis. Ethnographic research feeds on the possibility of strangeness, on the capacity of being surprised by what occurs in the fieldwork.

From this perspective, anthropological work is also a creative craft, thus requiring the willingness of the ethnographer to reformulate previous fieldwork experiences or challenge previously assumed concepts. As I show throughout the text, the notions of performance linked to speech acts and their multiple levels of communication enabled me to analyze the initial relationship with the participants of the research. Other notions, linked to ritual and theatrical terminology, were reconsidered in the light of the interactions developed at the moment of the dance. Therefore, the ethnographic approach discussed here is confronted with previous notions, as much as it is reformulated by them because of the relationships with some colleagues and participants of the research.

Salsa from the Edges of the Dance Floor

In the literature about its origins, Salsa is commonly associated with Fania Records, a label based in New York City, in the United States. Although this label was not the only one responsible for the peak of salsa in the late 1960s (Guadalupe-Pérez, 2015), its hegemony in the international music market contributed to building a narrative that describes salsa as a Caribbean metaphor, composed of variations and fissures, evocative of spices, sauces, flavors, smells, sounds and dances from the Caribbean (Colón Montijo, 2015). Thus, always according to the vast textual and audiovisual production about salsa, it could be described as a sensory experience that condenses and synthesizes the Caribbean experience.

What does it mean to talk about the Caribbean experience? The anthropologist Sidney Mintz suggests considering the grounds of the colonial enterprise. These bases were decisive in what is known today as the Carib-

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bean. According to the author, the history of the Caribbean has been virtually colonial, developed upon slavery and the plantation system as foundational elements of the production and flow of commodities. This resulted in a modernizing experience in the region, some centuries before European modernity (Mintz, 1996). According to Mintz (1996, p. 296):

> The processes set in motion by the creation of the New World plantations have never stopped. But in their earliest overseas phases, they were concentrated within a definable area, of which the relatively tiny Caribbean colonies were a part. It was what these reborn enterprises achieved in mobilizing resources, adapting to stolen labour, producing capitalism's first real commodities, feeding the first proletarians, and changing the outlooks of so many people on both sides of the Atlantic, that embodied a dawning modernity.

I do not deny the importance of the period before the European invasion that took place between the 15th and 17th centuries. What I want to stress here is that what is known as the Caribbean becomes intelligible as a mass of people and territories specifically from the imperial ventures, which were culturally diverse. The Caribbean populations, formerly forced migrants, submitted to violent processes of change, have been incorporating particular ways of experiencing individuality and relationships, generating a "[...] transmuted vision of the world itself" (Mintz, 1996, p. 296).

The Caribbean colonial enterprise and its laboratory of modernity have imparted uniqueness to the region. Situated far away from the centers of scientific production, the Caribbean did not fit into the classification systems of anthropology developed in the first decades of the 20th century. The Caribbean populations hardly resembled the *primitive* Bali people examined by the Mead-Bateson couple of anthropologists, nor were they formally similar to the Africans studied by E.E. Evans-Pritchard, to mention two examples of classical authors, equally outstanding in the discipline for their innovative approaches to dance at the time (Trance..., 1952; Evans-Pritchard, 2014). Although the Caribbean African ancestry is evident, the brutal intensity of slavery and the economy based on it have generated hybrid and unique forms, as has been shown by various authors (Quintero Rivera, 1998; 2009; Díaz Quiñones, 2007).

From this perspective, the early Caribbean modernities cross and surpass the national territories drawn on maps. It is not by chance that Miguel

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Rondón, author of a key book in the literature about salsa, points out that New York City, an important locus of salsa, is the northernmost border of the Caribbean (Rondón, 2015). Similarly, Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano describes the Caribbean as a geography of sound and dance, which covers the Antilles, the coasts of southeastern United States as much as those of northeastern Brazil, the coasts of Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador (Quijano, 2009)[1].

With this expanded notion of the Caribbean, based on the enslaving experience and the opacity of national fiction, I would like to take distance from certain common opinions about the ethnographic situation I examine here. In the early days of the research, it was suggested to me, at an academic event where I discussed some initial ideas on the fieldwork, that it would be interesting to identify the pastiches derived from the fact that salsa is a foreign dance in Brazil. To follow such a proposal would mean to assume a priori value judgments about the dancers in Rio, to attribute to salsa danced in Rio the condition of copy, a distorted mirror of salsa danced in the Caribbean. According to the common notion, Brazil is not integrated into the Caribbean. Also, to go along with that suggestion means to attribute some qualities to the dancers that would enable them to dance salsa or not. These qualities would supposedly be inherent to national belongings. According to this logic, foreigners in Brazil who were born or raised in the Caribbean, dancers or not, would be able to dance salsa. Yet salsa danced by Brazilians would be an improper reproduction. However, the dancers acting in ballroom dance schools do not perceive their dance in terms of this value hierarchy.

Another opinion I heard about salsa dancing in Rio concerned the role the Latinos or the Latin community would have in salsa dancing in the city. When the categories referring to the Latin world spread in the second half of the 20th century in universities and official policies in the United States, they became a privileged way of enunciation of the populations coming mainly from the Antilles and who settled in different cities of the United States, among them New York City. These cities thus witnessed a new wave of immigrants, no longer transported on slave ships, but attracted to the employment opportunities of continental lands. Most of the musicians who composed the first recordings disseminated under the word salsa were Lati-

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nos, as were the dancers who performed at clubs and concert halls. Thus, in written and audiovisual material about salsa, it appears as an important source of reference for the Caribbean diaspora, commanded mainly by Latinos[2].

However, when mentioned, very occasionally, by professional colleagues and research partners, this category seemed to lose the outlines it has in the United States. The category could include Brazilians as well as the inhabitants of countries whose official language is Spanish, and Brazil's neighboring populations. There was no agreement about the heterogeneous and sometimes opposite elements related to the category when associated with salsa practitioners in Rio. The only possible agreement was that Latino is an artist that performs versions in the Portuguese language of reggaeton hits, related, like salsa, to the Caribbean region. I wonder, therefore, if the use of notions from the Latin world in other contexts, stories, and even languages would affect their explanatory power. Although the Latin notions consider migratory phenomena, their relevance lies in their ability to recognize specific types of migration, specifically those originating in the Antilles and Central American continental countries, with the United States as their destination.

In any case, words like pastiche, foreign dance and Latin community barely define the practice of the salsa dancers in Rio - Brazilians or not. They are guided by the demands of the local ballroom scene and perform a selection process of information and resources to create a salsa dance that has its signature. Thus, the salsa dance in Rio is not conceived as a displaced product or as a finished object, but as the result of a creative work that admits transformations. That is what I try to show in the second part of this article.

These concerns, related to the initial attempts to construct the research questions and, consequently, the fieldwork, appeared at a time I had been observing the dance from the edges of the dance floor. I was particularly interested in identifying a historical context that would allow me to situate the dancers' practice beyond what I observed on the dance floor. As I mentioned at the beginning of the text, salsa consists of intense sensory stimulation. Improvisation and individual creativity are expected and announced. The temporal organization of each instrument of the salsa orchestras occurs

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around the *clave*, a rhythmic pattern sometimes in 3-2, sometimes in 2-3. Translated into phonemes, 3-2 can be something like pá-pá-pá (hold) pá-pá, while 2-3 enunciate pá-pá (hold) pá-pá-pá. The researchers Marisol Berríos-Miranda (2002) and Ángel Quintero Rivera (1998) are some of the authors who analyze the importance of polyrhythm, improvisation, and creativity in salsa. These values also support a significant part of the popular music repertoire, as pointed out by Oliveira (2015).

This notion of salsa emphasizes the sound structure and rules the literature about it. For so many *salseros* and *salseras* – as all those and everything emotionally linked to salsa are called – the music would lose all meaning in the absence of dancers. However, the salsa narratives are focused on activities particularly associated with the sound production of orchestras. The past of salsa is lined up with episodes involving musicians, music recording, and shows, emphasizing live salsa.

Historical information about salsa dancers before the 1990s is scarce. Until that time, it is known that live music was the main source of income for those earning their living from salsa dancing or similar. These dancers were hired by orchestra promoters to perform with the bands (McMains, 2015). This was quite frequent, even more so in the period of brief opulence of the first decades of the salsa scene. According to Cristopher Washburne (2015), the salsa scene has been related to the international drug trade, particularly cocaine, since its beginnings.

Washburne points out that the search for ways to launder money from drug trafficking resulted in the production of bands, salsa shows, and nightclubs (Washburne, 2015). In the 1990s, the changes in the US government drug control policy transformed the salsa business. Police raids on nightclubs, drug seizures, and imprisonment of musicians and businessmen were frequent. Also, many clubs were closed or placed under investigation, and the musicians started being formally hired. Until then they were paid mostly through verbal agreements and often in kind (Washburne, 2015).

According to Hernán Morel – writing about the teaching of tango in the city of Buenos Aires (Morel, 2011) – at that time specialized dance schools gained prominence, focusing on codification skills. The self-taught dancers progressively lost status in favor of specialized practitioners, and festivals, championships, and salsa congresses arose (McMains, 2015). There-

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fore, a specific dance market emerged. This market was driven by dancers specialized in certain musical genres and trained to perform a dance evaluated according to the standards of bureaucratization (Weber, 1964), which defines competitive events. In this context, salsa dancing was integrated into the Brazilian ballroom dance schools[3].

In order to strengthen the relations with salsa practitioners, I began to attend events held in ballroom dance schools and shows promoted by salsa orchestras in Rio. I preferred to stay on the edges of the dance floor, declining any dance offer. I have never felt comfortable with partner dance, which is the most common type of salsa dance. Although at that time I didn't want to try dancing salsa with a partner, I was especially interested in investigating the communication possibilities of this type of dance. Observing from the edges of the dance floor, I was intrigued by the non-verbal exchanges that make dance possible and from which it occurs, through a sequence of gestures, interjections, and whirls.

At first, a specific notion of performance served to identify the agency of those involved at the moment of the dance. As we know, Richard Bauman is one of the authors who were inspired by the anthropologist Victor Turner's last phase (2005). Based on the category of performance, Bauman proposes analysis models of human action, addressing artistic, anthropological, and philosophical concerns at one time. Bauman suggests considering performances as modalities of speech, pointing out their deeply communicative character (Bauman, 1984). Inspired by the Austinian notion of performative acts and their transformative effects of reality (Austin, 1962), and by the multiple levels of communication proposed by Gregory Bateson (1998), Bauman proposes considering various types of expression in performance and the multiple meanings emerging from it (Bauman, 1984). According to Bauman, creative capacity, diverse participants with multiple levels of agency, and intense relations between the verbal and non-verbal define performance.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, this approach was useful to identify flexible boundaries. On the one hand, there are distinctions regarding the positions of those participating in shows and dances. For example, the space for orchestras, DJs and dancers is nearly delimited. On the other hand, the positions could be combined. Salsa improvisation includes not only instru-

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mental solo moments, called *fraseo*, or singing, called *soneo*, but also small sequences of salsa dance steps performed by members of the orchestra while watching their colleague's solo. Besides, it is usual for those who occupy the dance floor to clap their hands reproducing the *clave* during the show.

Thus, although it is possible to identify – with relative ease – who the musicians are and who the dancers are, the salsa performance is developed precisely by the myriad of body stimuli that it demands from its participants. The body is, simultaneously, a means and an object, technique and instrument of salsa performance. I recall the analysis of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his last days (2014). The philosopher was interested in introducing phenomenological analyses in the field of sense. He points out that apprehension and realization of reality are only possible through vision and movement, one depending on the other, stimulating thoughts, referring us to our points of view, "[...] it is not enough to think in order to see. Vision is a conditioned thought; it is born 'as occasioned' by what happens in the body; it is 'incited' to think by the body. It does not choose either to be or not to be or to think this thing or that" (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 24, emphasis added by the author). Therefore, it can be understood that the sense is an intrusion, an imposition. What we call thoughts are permanently blending with what we call senses, producing agency. Merleau-Ponty's propositions are relevant here because they suggest assuming a broad perspective of human action. According to the philosopher, movements, senses and thoughts do not take place separately and autonomously. Thus, dualities such as mind/body or nature/culture lose their strength as analytical categories and can even become mystifying definitions of human experience.

Salsa in the Middle of the Dance Floor

During the research, my position as an ethnographer of salsa dance changed. As I mentioned, I preferred to examine the dance at a distance, on the edges of the dance floor. This attitude caused some annoyance to those who attended salsa events. At events with social dancing and shows, those wandering around the dance floor and seeking to engage in conversation, and also refusing to make or accept dance offers are viewed with suspicion. The dance is mainly developed upon the twists and turns of the pair's feet

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and arms. On the dance floor, the dancers do not request to spin out the verbal interaction.

Since I could hardly talk with the dancers, I chose to attend salsa classes taught by teachers I had met at events with social dancing and shows. I thus became an ethnographer/apprentice of dance for nine months. From the edges of the dance floor, I jumped into it, participating differently in the salsa performance that takes place at events with social dancing and shows. I started to engage in a new way of knowing. Besides sight and hearing – mainly used during the observation of events with social dancing and shows – this way demanded movements of feet, arms and shoulders. Also, it demands a new memory, built from my interpretation of my movements and the observation of the movements of my dance partners, as well as the verbal instructions I listened to[4].

Finally, this way of knowing depends on the procedures of organization and standardization of ballroom dance schools. I moved away from the informal learning scene that features in regions of the world where salsa has been incorporated into popular culture. In these regions, salsa dance plays an important role in learning rules of public behavior, especially those concerning gender. According to the narratives of *salseros*, the initiation of children into salsa is the responsibility of women'[5].

The kid's games mediated by the dance soon become a game for sexual initiation, far from home and led by men in dance and music clubs. A relation can be established with other popular dances. According to Felipe B. Veiga (2011), access to the *gafieiras* and dances in traditional dance halls in Rio de Janeiro meant a passage to adult life to their former frequent visitors. Similarly, for older tango dancers, dance halls were spaces for male competition and dispute for women's attention, according to María Julia Carozzi (2012). Like so many other popular dances, salsa describes, above all, a heterosexual courtship, with each member of the pair playing a specific role that makes the dance possible.

In the dance schools, partner dances are an important locus for learning gender-based interaction. In the dance hall, those self-identified as men become *gentlemen* (*cavalheiros*), and those self-identified as women become *ladies* (*damas*)[6]. The ladies are advised to express that they want to be led around and know how to do it. To achieve this, they have to do certain

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movements right after the gentlemen make a subtle gesture. These gestures – a slight pressure on the hand, shoulder or back, a lock on the waist – are signs for the lady to perform previously learned movements. There is a script to follow. Ladies must foresee the range of possible movements and act accordingly, just as the gentleman must know how to lead, expressing the signs at the right time and being light. The lady is not allowed to get ahead of the gentleman. This is called *antecipar-se* by the dancers. She cannot perform the expected movements before the gentleman's signal. Therefore, expectations are carefully planned and must be expressed at the right time. According to the dancers, gentlemen are instructed to protect or take care of the lady, looking at her or trying to maintain a face-to-face posture with her.

The participants view the classes as necessary preparation for events with social dancing and shows, which are important moments of exhibition and brilliance. The main objective of the classes is to develop the salsa leading techniques, consisting of sequences of coming together and moving away, as well as continuous turns, to build the public image to be projected, seen and admired at the event with social dancing. In dance classes, teachers frequently talk about this public image. In fact, unlike those events, in classes, the conversation, present in teachers' instructions and students' questions and comments, is profuse and expected.

The notion of performance process is useful here. Richard Schechner uses it to suggest an approach to the group of rules and expectations of any performance, including those based on improvisation (Schechner, 2002). For Schechner, this group unfolds at several moments and spaces and involves characters playing certain roles (Schechner, 2002). To examine rules and expectations implies the idea of performance as a permanent construction, involving the rehearsals and the backstage. Thus, performance as a sequence takes on a temporal dimension. The performers are active subjects behind and beyond the stage.

Schechner draws on Erving Goffman's theatrical perspective in the understanding of social situations. According to Goffman, the existence of interaction occurs through gestural and verbal exchange. This enables the maintenance of face, defined as a certain image that people have of themselves in public and organized by approved social values (Goffman, 1980).

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Most of Goffman's analysis lies in conversations and daily interactions. Besides those interpersonal interactions, in salsa dancing – as in ballroom dancing – each member of the pair has specific and opposite duties and functions. The pair is advised to demonstrate knowledge of sequences of mostly non-verbal signals. This procedure is required to preserve the initiated contact. In the classes, the improvisation and creativity of salsa are considered with the aim of building a dance sometimes called Cuban salsa, because it is associated with the Caribbean island, and sometimes called salsa in line, related to New York City. I would like to begin with Cuban salsa.

According to Ángel Quintero Rivera, an approach to the current hegemony of dance music in America implies considering the development of that type of music as a historical form that emerged on the territorial, cultural and political margins. These are epicenters of rhythmic and corporal challenges (Quintero Rivera, 2009)[7]. Unlike the emphasis on lines and the upper body as the center of the court dances and scenic formats like ballet, most of the Caribbean dances involve movements in circles, incorporating shoulders, legs and arms, in order to produce what Quintero Rivera calls off-centering *(descentramiento)* (Quintero Rivera, 2009). The Cuban salsa of R. and M., teachers whose classes I attended, seems to unfold from these elements, mixing with specific sensations to be projected.

A guiding rule of the teachers mentioned above is the observation of a specific distance between the bodies, making a semicircle with the holding arms and offering light but sustained pressure to the partner's hands. This pressure, offered as much as to the leader as to the follower, helps keep the circle, enabling the game of distance and intimacy that features in Cuban salsa, according to the teachers. Loss of pressure on the hands, arms too rigid or too flaccid, could deprive the dance of meaning. Cuban salsa is developed over the *sabrosura,* described through the word and movement.

What do Cuban salsa dancers need to learn in order to show off their *sabrosura*? They learn to base their dance on what teachers call *pa'lante*, *pa'trás*. This is a usual contraction in everyday Caribbean oral life, from *para adelante*, *para atrás*, and expresses the direction of the steps - forward, backward. Subsequently, dancers are encouraged to move shoulders, upper body and arms. Another evidence of *sabrosura* lies in interjections like *ai! qué rico! aí na'má!*. These words are usually uttered when the singer takes a

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break and confirm the full participation of the senses. Any *salsero* recognizes the exclamation *Azúcar!*, which had become the hallmark of the Cuban singer Celia Cruz, and also identifies *Ecuajey!*, from the popular *sonero* Ismael Rivera. Finally, a smile, a wink and the singing of passages from the music playing at the moment of the dance are also signs of *sabrosura* manifestation.

The students do not learn such expressions as they learn other movements, through imitation. They need to recognize the right moments to express the gestures and exclamations. According to Cuban salsa teachers, this can only be effectively achieved by going to every event with social dancing and show. Through a successive public exhibition of their dance, the salsa apprentices will be able to capture the right moments for the manifestation of gesture, building their performance and dancing with *sabrosura*.

The Cuban salsa class may finish with an exhibition of *Rueda de casino*. The teachers and the class form a circle in pairs, who stay very close to each other. The music begins, and with it the *pa'lante*, *pa'trás* of ladies and gentlemen. R. announces the name of the first pattern that should be executed immediately by all pairs. After a few seconds, R. mentions another pattern for the dancers to perform and so on, until the end of the song. Some of the patterns demand a pair change, with ladies and gentlemen walking in opposite directions until they find the next partner. Other patterns require interaction with the dancer situated at the side. Finally, some patterns consist of clapping one, two or three times on either side or in front.

The *Rueda de casino* is a group dance that depends on the synchrony between the pair and with other pairs. It is necessary to keep the circle initially formed, as well as the round shape of the dance. In the *Rueda de casino,* speech plays a key role. The patterns are not announced' in a specific order. The dancer who calls on the dancers to join the *Rueda de casino* will announce the patterns throughout the music, saying the name of some or all of the patterns previously learned and used also in the salsa dance as well as the *Rueda de casino*. The patterns that demand interaction between pairs are restricted to the *Rueda de casino*. The call is usually made by the teacher. The dance unfolds through brief instructions and tips between ladies and gentlemen, directed to those experiencing some difficulty in executing the

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patterns. The *Rueda de casino* can only be dissolved when the music finishes. The movements and patterns are intense and consecutive, so the tips or instructions hardly reach the dancers. Since the exchange of partners is frequent, the pairs that join the dance may not be the same ones that finish it.

For that matter, participation in a *Rueda de casino* implies that dancers have great knowledge of several patterns because there is no individual autonomy in the execution of the patterns. Each dancer must be able to follow the commands of the leadership. In the events, the formation of the circle necessary to the beginning of the *Rueda de casino* occurs quickly. With the teacher's announcement of *Rueda!*, *Rueda!*, those who want to take part soon pick a partner with whom they will start the dance. The pairs gradually enter the circle formed, which moves as the music unfolds. Thus, the dance is a sequence of verbal acts and dramatization of those acts. Discursive action is necessary for choreographic action. While the interjections – *ai na'má, qué rico* – do not depend on verbal interaction and may or may not have effects on the choreographic sequence, the commands of the *Rueda de casino* are essential for the development of this dance. It is necessary to understand the commands, making associations between the names of the patterns and sequences of movements performed. The announcement is essential and must be understood by all participants to produce specific reactions, causing a collective effervescence that will finish at the last second of the music with a strong hug and applause among the participants of the *Rueda.*

It is time to examine salsa in line. In this dance, the pair must keep the face-to-face position and moves along an imaginary line with the arms and legs. The dancers bend the knees slightly and move them to the sides.

F. is the teacher of the other salsa class I attended. He is well known in Rio for his work with salsa in line. F. told me: *In 2009 I started studying with Eddie Torres, who is my mentor. He invented salsa in line. Every time I go there [New York City], I attend classes with him*. Torres was born in 1950 in Harlem, a New York neighborhood with a significant Latino and African-American population. His name is associated with the introduction of a style that had come to be known as modern New York salsa in ballroom dance schools throughout the United States (McMains, 2015). Torres learned to dance at clubs where, according to him, "[...] no one knew how

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to explain at that time how to do a certain pattern by explaining theoretically. They just would say, 'Come on Eddie, man your right hand does this, your left foot does that'" (McMains, 2015, p. 126). With the help of his ballroom dance teacher, June Laberta, Torres organized his knowledge on dance into labeled sequences. He thus created a method for teaching salsa dance (McMains, 2015).

In this way, salsa in line is associated with the creation of a lexicon suitable for performances on stage with certain features. According to Torres: "I always used to tell people, 'oh, I would love to see a musical on Broadway with mambo dancing and I would love to see the dance get the recognition that jazz and ballet has [sic]. And I would love for it to one day be known and respected as a classical art form of dance'" (McMains, 2015, p. 126).

Torres's comment is relevant to think about the transformations in the definition and structure of the practice of salsa. Since this dance can be examined as a privileged form of socialization in festive contexts, it can also be considered for its strength as a performance on stage. By aiming to transform salsa dance into a scenic object, Torres seeks to question the position of this dance in the art market. Although for Torres the dancers of the clubs were an important source of inspiration and knowledge, his project consists of building a salsa performance, competitive or not, that establishes new frontiers between the audience and the dancers on the stage. The former watch and contemplate from their seats, the latter appear as uncontested players of the performance.

Torres' salsa in line soon hit the ballroom dance schools. But the objective of these schools is not exactly to train dancers to act on stage far from possible partners or to be observed from below or from above. On the contrary. Ballroom dancing expresses the desire to dissolve hierarchies and heterogeneous positions, creating the sense that all participants are at the same level. I suggest using here the meaning of equalization given by Georg Simmel. For him, sociability is a form of association of individuals whose purpose is the mere moment of interaction. In order for this association to occur, the participants must pretend that they are all equal and that each one could be also particularly considered (Simmel, 1983). For the dancers, salsa is indeed a form of interaction that seems to be exclusively destined for

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a mutual exhibition of skills and codes related to salsa. The dancers must leave aside issues of origin, occupation and opinion to enter into the dance floor.

In the salsa dance classes of F., the sociability of ballroom dancing coexists with the spectacle of salsa developed by Eddie Torres. The classes usually begin with the training of steps, called footwork in ballroom dancing. The aim is to explore a broad range of movements that can be performed when doing a solo, called *suelta* by the *salseros*. In the *suelta* dance, the lady and the gentleman have to exhibit their skills in improvisation, executing movements that do not depend on leading and following. Such movements are repeatedly trained in the classes. As the *suelta* is central and expected in the performance of salsa in line, it takes up an important part of each class. In F.'s salsa in line classes, the movements of arms and feet are encouraged, while those of head, shoulders and upper body are barely mentioned.

In F.'s classes, verbal interaction is understood as an initial moment for the salsa performance that will be developed afterward. It is guided by the values of addition, quantity and repetition and occurs with the dancers in silence, listening to the music. The relationship between F. and his students gradually grows through the continuous engagement of students in classes, dances and workshops. They also help to arrange these activities scheduled in dance school. Some students thus become pupils of F.

The performance of salsa taught by him does not depend entirely on verbal discourse. It also has subtle gestures that will only be learned when performing and it depends on the unfolding of the music, says F. In the classes, the teacher emphasizes that it is necessary to pay attention to the music, because its rhythmic and melodic variations will define the evolution of the dance, according to the teacher. For F., there are two signs of excessive concern about execution, leaving aside the dance itself: a lot of turns at the very beginning of the music and hands and arms too tight or loose. F. says the presence of those signs means *mais execução e menos sabor*.

In the classes, sometimes the word dance was replaced by the word *sabor* to emphasize the movements of salsa to be executed. F. aims to teach that to dance salsa is to pass through the music, organizing sequences of movements along the music's waves, its pauses and its variations. Salsa in

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line dancing develops on long instrumental solos and intense horn sections, which are two features of the so-called *salsa dura*. It is played mostly by the first productions of Fania Records and current New York and Puerto Rican orchestras. Therefore, to dance salsa in line it is necessary to go through the performance, in its formative and transforming feature, as pointed out by Victor Turner (2005).

Conclusion

The literature about salsa, both in audiovisual and written format, usually discusses the sound structure, leaving aside other sensory stimuli invoked by salsa. I thus suggested placing dance at the center through a specific situation, which is the salsa practice of two teachers from ballroom dance schools in Rio de Janeiro. To do so, I propose to consider notions of performance as categories of analysis, showing confluences between anthropological work and performance.

The transformation of informal ways of learning salsa into the standardized ways of the dance schools is entwined with the change of my position as an ethnographer. From a certain moment, the ethnographer also became a dance apprentice. The movement from the edge of the dance floor to the center of the dance floor evokes two ways of learning dance. However, such ways are not in conflict. They do not express strongly separated body involvements. I assume these ways of approaching and apprehending dance as nuances within a broad range of interaction with the participants of the research.

I showed the transit between two learning/research environments. To this end, I discussed notions of performance, seeking to highlight a specific exhibition: the classes in ballroom dance schools. In the classroom, the performance of salsa includes the information shown gradually and separately class after class. Such performance carries data previously described, imitated and repeated. These data will gain brightness when the apprentices know how to put them in their dance, and this will only be possible to apprehend during the public exhibition. In this way, performance is a mode of knowledge, transmitted more by the punctual, vehement, pungent impact that it intends to cause in those who are willing to receive it than by verbal, progressive, gradual and descriptive explanations.

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There are differences in the communicative actions necessary for the construction of Cuban salsa and salsa in line. The former pursues the *descentramiento* through the interjections and the use of the Spanish language. Salsa in line, by contrast, moves continuously between ballroom dancing and stage dancing and unfolds through the imaginary lines. This dance focuses on the process and repeated verbal instructions, seeking dialogue with the strength of *salsa dura*, produced in one of the centers of the Latin population.

I also tried to highlight the performance of salsa as an individual task, guided by the senses. Salsa classes in ballroom dance schools consist of learning a script of gestures, touches and individual movements. Interaction is based on the dialogue between dance and recorded music. The same songs are repeatedly played class after class, reinforcing the search for creativity in the moments of *suelta* and musical improvisation – *fraseos* or *soneos*. However, there is little articulation with the overlaps and sequences of live music. The execution of individual skills becomes the protagonist of the salsa dance, which aims to achieve sometimes the *sabrosura*, sometimes the *sabor*.

Thus, notions of performance connected to anthropological practice make it possible to unveil aspects of creation and circulation of meanings among participants of events such as classes, shows and events with social dancing. In the ethnographic situation shown here, performance is not a native category announced by *salseros* to name and define their practice. Instead, performance appears as a window that allows the researcher to see at least two types of effects. On the one hand, by addressing the speech acts it is possible to perceive the myriad of sensory stimuli of dance. On the other hand, it is at the very moment of the dance that the performance emerges as a process and temporal dimension. In this way, the fieldwork is configured and reconfigured through the prism of performance notions.

Notes

[1] It would be tricky to classify northeastern Brazil as the Caribbean since the Caribbean influences may not be expressive in some states. Similarly, it may be difficult to think of the Peruvian coast as the Caribbean, considering that this coast is located in the Pacific Ocean as their populations have been reconfiguring themselves in the light of var-

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ious criticisms of the Peruvian nation's constitution. See, for example, Arizaga (2005). However, Quijano's proposal on the enlargement of the Caribbean can be interpreted as a suggestion to consider the flows and impacts sometimes hidden in modern nation-state building projects. Quijano draws attention to the effects of shared colonial history beyond the borders of modern nations;

[2] The compilation edited by Lise Waxer (2002) is an excellent example of analyses on salsa in the English language and from the perspective of the Latin population.

[3] In the 1980s and especially in the 1990s the Brazilian ballroom dance scene also went through key transformations, related to the trends of the international dance market. According to Felipe B. Veiga (2011) these changes resulted in the strengthening of specific types of teaching and the growthing dance schools throughout the city. This pulled a highly personalistic dance market which was organized in rhythm hierarchies (Veiga, 2011). In the new dance market, the exhibition of rhythms of ballroom dancing an the shows intended for contemplative audiences and performed in specific stages became central.

[4] A brief methodological explanation of my position as an ethnographer / dance apprentice is worth mentioning here. I do not believe that dancing necessarily means having better access to the world of dance, making it possible to grasp otherwise unintelligible knowledge. When I chose to attend dance classes, I did not aim to feel what the dancers feel when they dance, nor did I try to think like them. Although a sensible transference could happen, it does not guarantee the improvement or the depth of any anthropological analysis, as discussed by Strathern (2014), Fravet-Saada (2005), Goldman (2003), among others. When I started dancing, my intention was, paradoxically, to favor, stimulate and incite verbal contact. In my new position, the dancers began to see me horizontally, as a dance partner, feeling confident to talk about their practice.

[5] *Our Latin Thing*, an audiovisual production launched by Fania Records in 1972, is an excellent example of the importance of the family and domestic environment – which may extend to the street – in salsa narratives (Our.., 1972).

[6] The detailed examination of gender issues in salsa exceeds the scope of this article. Furthermore, I would like to recall Judith Butler's well-known analysis about gender as a performative act, sanctioned by historical conventions and approved by a social audience (Butler, 1998). For the author, gender representation is not the expression of something supposedly hidden or belonging to the domains of private life. While acting, gender acts create gender. The latter would not exist without the former (Butler, 1998). Therefore, when *salseros* dance, they are not imitating gender roles that exist outside the moment of dance. Salsa dancing is not a caricature of the genre experienced in the world outside of salsa. When *salseros* dance, they do the genre, developing a heterosexual courtship. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the practitioners of salsa in Rio do not express any thoughts about performances of salsa questioning that type of courtship.

[7] It is worth a brief comment about the notion of margin. Quintero Rivera highlights the formative and transforming character of the colonial project in the Caribbean. Since the dances/songs of the descendants of slaves are produced

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in the centers of economic production (but not ideological, because intellectual hegemony remains in Western Europe), such repertoires could be interpreted as forms that challenge the colonialism (Quintero Rivera, 2009). Thus, the margins are a locus of creativity and resistance in the face of colonial violence.

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