A Colloquium of Sorcerers:

Mário de Andrade, Fernando Ortiz, and "the music of sorcery"

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Abstract

Brazilian writer and musicologist Mário de Andrade (1893-1945) and Cuban writer and anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) are important references in the study of cultures of African origin in their respective countries. The two intellectuals shared an interest in the relations between music and sorcery in Afro-American conceptions and rituals, as suggested by their field observations and bibliographic references. This essay explores common characteristics and contrasts in their approaches to the theme and suggests that the debate should not be limited to the history of ideas, since it echoes contemporary theories on "speech acts", performativity, and aesthetic agency.
Key words: Mário de Andrade; Fernando Ortiz; music and sorcery; history of ethnomusicology.

Um colóquio de bruxos:

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Resumo

Mário de Andrade (1893-1945), escritor e musicólogo brasileiro, e Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969), escritor e antropólogo cubano, são referências consagradas nos estudos de culturas de origem Africana de seus respectivos países. Um dos temas de interesse comum a ambos, sugerido por suas observações diretas e por bibliografia a que tiveram acesso, é o da relação entre música e feitiçaria em concepções e rituais afro-americanos. Explorando os pontos comuns e os contrastes entre os dois autores na abordagem deste tema, sugere-se que o interesse do debate não se restringe à história das ideias, mas encontra eco em teorias contemporâneas sobre "atos de fala", perfomatividade e agência estética.
Palavras-chave: Mário de Andrade; Fernando Ortiz; Música e feitiçaria; História da etnomusicologia.

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Introduction

The word "magic" is often used in everyday speech with positive meanings – magical phenomena can be frightening and inexplicable, but they are often harmless. Yet they also carry connotations of irrationality, dubious morality, and pagan primitivism, which "magic" shares with "witchcraft" and "sorcery". At least in everyday usage, the latter two are associated more with pre-modern Europe and non-European peoples, respectively. When anthropologists incorporated them into their concerns in the late 19th century, the "monstrous farrago" (in the words of Edward Tylor) of beliefs and rites had already undergone a dual process of otherness in Europe, i.e., vis-à-vis both scientific thought and religion (TAMBIAH, 2006).

The theme has been equally prominent in music studies, as observed in authors like Curt Sachs, André Schaeffner, and Jules Combarieu, among others. In the early 20th century, to theorize on music was to propose some model for its emergence in some imprecise and remote dawn of mankind and its slow complexification – two problems that were virtually discarded by ethnomusicology in the latter half of the 20th century. The discipline that adopted the name became established in the mid-1950s in the United States and changed the research agenda on music among non-Western peoples. Nevertheless, the "instinctive, immediate, and necessary partnership" between "high magic" and "low witchcraft", in the revealing terms used by Mário de Andrade (1983:23), remained as a problem for ethnomusicologists over time. From Gilbert Rouget (1980) to Judith Becker (2004), many have dwelt on the subject.

Mário de Andrade (São Paulo, Brazil, 1895-1945) and Fernando Ortiz (Havana, Cuba, 1881-1969), two exponents of ethnomusicology *avant la lettre* in South America, did not accompany the changes in music studies in the post-War North American scene. Mário died young, and the Cuban Revolution in 1959 hampered communication between Cuban and American intellectuals. Mário de Andrade's ethnographic descriptions, analyses, and theorizations were informed by German- and French-language anthropology and musicology and philosophy, psychology and psychoanalysis, folklore studies, and Africanist and Americanist ethnography. Both Andrade and Ortiz were highly curious about the extraordinary virtues of musical sound, its nature and mode of operation, topics they addressed mainly under the headings of sorcery and *brujaría*.

In this article, I highlight the importance these topics assumed in the research work by both men. A review of the way they formulated and treated the problem is not a futile exercise, since it can be reactivated in combination with other ideas, such as performativity, applied since the 1970s to phenomena of language, music, and ritual.

Reading the classics

Andrade and Ortiz are not two forgotten pioneers, but authors whose contributions to music studies are abundantly acknowledged, and who, when reread, surprise us with something new that had received insufficient previous attention (the reason for calling them "classics", according to Calvino, 2007). They became ethnographers without receiving specialized academic training, which was not uncommon in their generation (STOCKING JR., 1991), and developed research on their own or with limited and intermittent institutional support. To offset or at least mitigate the risks of dilettantism, they founded research associations and journals, such as the Society for Ethnography and Folklore (Brazil, 1937), which published its *Boletim* [Newsletter], the Cuban Folklore Society (1923), the Society of Afro-Cuban Studies (1936), and the *Archivo del Folkore* (1924), copies of which are in Mário's library (see Andrade, 1989). Lévi-Strauss described the situation of isolation in *Tristes Trópicos* (1996:95): in the 1930s, São Paulo had a surrealist poet, modern painter, and musicologist (an obvious reference to Mário de Andrade), where a single human being played each role in the "drama of civilization". In addition to the precarious institutionalization of ethnographic and folklore research activities, they wrote in Portuguese and Spanish, respectively, languages that limited their work's international circulation.

Nevertheless, the idea of transculturation, which Fernando Ortiz addressed in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, was well-received by Malinowski (1940) and achieved success several decades later. I was surprised to learn that Ortiz launched his interest in Afro-Cubans in a book inspired by the fatalist criminology of Lombroso (*Los negros brujos* is from 1906). This was a virulent libel by a positivist reformer who attributed the problems of *mala vida* (polygamy, family breakdown, grave-robbing...) to the mixture of races and blacks' primitive condition and delayed moral progress. The work was motivated by a scandalous case in which blacks were accused of kidnapping and killing a white girl to use her blood in rituals. Ortiz did not question the accusations: "...although fortunately it is not common for Afro-Cuban sorcerers to make *embós* that require such horrible preparations, the murderous seed remains latent in the sorcerer's psyche." (ORTIZ, 1906: 241)[1]. The author had to review his racial assumptions in the 1940s: in contact with the "new science" (cultural anthropology) and with the work of Melville Herskovits, he recanted on the "mistake of race" (ORTIZ, 1946). The change that had occurred in Brazilian social thinking, from the pessimistic observation of the racial handicap to the praise for racial miscegenation and cultural crossing, also took place in Cuba. "White, sugar and guitar; black, tobacco and drum. Today, mulatto syncretism, coffee with milk and bongos. Living history with *contra-danza* and *tango*, *habanera* and *danzón*, *rumba* and *bembé*, *conga* that envelopes and *son* that innervates (ORTIZ, 1950:116)[2]. A certain tone of social reformism was maintained, however, even when the author stopped treating as potential murderers the *ngangas* that performed ritual sacrifices, as one reads in *Los negros brujos*. In the 1940s his concerns were over the "dollarization" of grassroots arts and the transformation of "black" dance into an object of white male voyeurism (ORTIZ, 1985).

Of course, the contemporary reader only stands to gain by historical contextualization of their research: knowing the intellectual stimuli they received, the relational networks to which they belonged, and what their predecessors had already established as objects of scientific research helps shed light on the kind of research they undertook. Yet I believe that contextualization does not rule out "present-day" appropriations, that is, attempts to find echoes of today's concerns in their writings.

1 "...si bien por fortuna no es frecuente entre los brujos afrocubanos la composición de *embós* que requieren una tan terribile preparación, no obstante el germen del homicídio continúa latente en la psíquis del brujo" (Ortiz, 1906:241).

2 "Blanco, azúcar y guitarra; negro, tabaco y tambor. Hoy día, síncresis mulata, café con leche y bongó. Historia vivida en contradanza y tango, habanera y danzón, rumba y bembé. Conga que arrola y son que enerva" (ORTIZ, 1950:116).

That very issue encouraged me to value their ideas concerning the connection between music and magic – or put in a way more attuned with performativity theories, the connection between "musical" modes and ritualization of certain utterances and the power, force, or efficacy they acquire.

Such a connection imposes itself in various cases and in various scenarios, from the obligatory vocalization of the bride and groom's vows in marriage rituals to the imperious participation of drums and song in possession by the *orixás* of *candomblé*. It also imposes itself in the case of *jongo*, dance and song practiced by African-descendants in Southeast Brazil. *Jongueiros* say that certain songs exert a magical force and retell in awe the extraordinary events they have witnessed or of which they have heard. When skilled *jongueiros* meet in a circle, mutual questions are sung in verse (*pontos*) that can have deadly results for one of the contenders. A dangerous *ponto* is generally a riddle that goes unanswered or a criticism (also sung). In this case, it is said that the *jongo* is "bound", that is, bewitched.[3] The same is true for the verbal showdowns called *makagua* and *ngala* in Cuba, in which the singers leave their opponents tongue-tied with their riddles (ORTIZ, 1985:69). Scholars are generally skeptical on this subject, with little to say. Maria de Lourdes Borges Ribeiro identified the bewilderment of *jongo* researchers. "Such it is that the *jongueiros* utter their *pontos* before us, their *saravados* ['saluted ones', Translator's note], and we watch it all, record it all, and ignore it all" (RIBEIRO, 1984).

She and other scholars showed that *jongo* is part of a cultural and linguistic legacy from Central Africa, mobilized by plantation slaves in Southeast Brazil under strict surveillance and during their rare and meager celebrations (SLENES, 1999; 2007). Not an immobile legacy perpetuated by inertia, but a set of religious and linguistic resources continuously updated in contexts of conflict and negotiation. Such contexts currently include artistic spectacles and cultural projects that communities of *jongueiros* develop in partnership with government. Reports of *jongueiros*' feats can assume a noteworthy performative dimension in these contexts, with concrete political effects.

But the question of the *pontos*' force is not limited to this, obviously, and the rest is more complicated. As far as is known, their force lies in the obscurity of the linguistic utterances. In addition, the form that the singing voice lends to them may also be at play, the reputation of the one that sings, relations between the singers, or all of this simultaneously. The ethnographers' difficulties are analogous to those appearing in the description of cults of possession, shamanism, and other phenomena in which special modalities of verbal-vocal and bodily expression produce extraordinary transformations. It is no coincidence that these phenomena continue to attract and challenge ethnomusicologists (see for example BECKER, 2004).

Incidentally, I call the reader's attention to the fact, still not properly appreciated, that Mário de Andrade and Fernando Ortiz shared many bibliographical references. Mário cited *Los negros brujos* and knew at least two more works by Ortiz (ANDRADE, 1989). Ortiz knew and cited *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira*, "Os congos" which appeared in *Boletim Latino-Americano de Música*, "O samba-rural paulista", and the studies by Oneyda Alvarenga on Brazilian popular music. Both studied the theories of Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos on Afro-Bahian religion, for example, although this does not mean that they interpreted them in the same way. Mário's perspective on magic, trance, and sorcery was shaped by "intellectualist" anthropology, which he tempered with ideas on the "subconscious" and the "primary" strata of the Brazilian psyche (TRAVASSOS, 2002). Ortiz based his work on Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl, and Charles Blondel, but also on Marcel Mauss' *Manuel d'Ethnographie*.

3 Alceu Maynard de Araújo described the scene: "Usually only two *jongueiros* compete, each one trying to sing more difficult riddles to unravel. The riddles are always improvised. In jongo, two contenders stand out, challenging each other" (ARAÚJO, 1964:215).

The web of common references also included Hornbostel, George Herzog, and Herskovits. When the latter wrote in the *Boletim Latino-Americano de Música* in 1941, "There are almost no sound recordings in Brazil and only a few publications on the country's black music," Editor Curt Lange inserted a polite note:

> The author doubtless lacks detailed familiarity with Brazilian researchers' work in this field, since he appears to have access to scanty references. Suffice it to recall the work done by or originating from Mário de Andrade, Arthur Ramos, Nina Rodrigues, and Gilberto Freyre, among others (LANGE *apud* HERSKOVITS, 1941:137)[4].

Five years later, again in the *Boletim*, the same Herskovits made a point of citing Nina Rodrigues, Manoel Quirino, and Arthur Ramos as the first researchers of Afro-Bahian culture (HERSKOVITS, 1946:100). He was certainly already familiar with Brazilian ethnology (having worked in Bahia in 1941-1942) and with certain susceptibilities to foreigners' ignorance of Brazilian scientific production. Herskovits, identified with the "new science", referred to *candomblé* not as "sorcery", but as religion. For example, the words *brujo*, sorcery, and magic used by Ortiz and Mário as translations or synonyms for the native terms *nganga* and *mestre*, *catimbó*, and *mandinga* were not only ripe with negative connotations, they evoked activities repressed by the police in Cuba and Brazil. As Mário knew quite well, *catimbozeiros* were forced to worship in hiding. And in 1906, Ortiz himself proposed repressive measures against witchcraft. Thus, notwithstanding their incipient institutionalization, studies were circulating in the 1930s and 1940s on the religions and cultural life of slave-descendant communities.

The history of these intellectual ties still remains to be written, but it is beyond the scope of this article. Here I wish to highlight the authors' attention to the efficacy of the sounds of musical instruments, songs, prayers, and spells, expanding to phenomena such as Mário de Andrade's "political dynamogenies". The question had already amazed various ethnographers and musicologists, although it sometimes lost primacy in their descriptions and analyses.

Music and sorcery: inaugurating a research field

As the central task for anthropologists of music, Alan Merriam analyzed the contribution of musical behavior to social integration. The idea was not alien to Fernando Ortiz, judging by Malinowski, who saw in the Cuban colleague a "member of the functionalist school" (MALINOWSKI, 1940: XVII). In his Durkheimian way, Mário de Andrade also insisted on the social value of music, the most socializing of the arts, capable of promoting human beings' common belonging However, when focusing on sorcery and *brujeria*, Mário and Ortiz emphasized the fact that they drew on beliefs that scientific rationality banned. Possession, material objects invested with power by means of spells, and exorcisms with musical instruments were mysteries that begged explanations by ethnographers and musicologists.

When Mário chose to visit the two masters of *catimbó* that "closed his body" [*fechou seu corpo*, i.e., protected him against evil spirts, evil intentions, and the evil eye – Translator's note] in December 1928 in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, African-Brazilian religions were already the objects of medical science, ethnography, and folklore studies. Pursuing the paths inaugurated by Nina Rodrigues and Sílvio Romero, who established black populations as objects of science in Brazil, Mário turned the music of sorcery into a musicological object.

4 "Casi no existen registros sonoros del Brasil y apenas se há publicado algo sobre la música negra de esse país[...] Sin duda, el autor no conoce detalladamente la labor realizada em este terreno por los investigadores brasileños, pues parece ser muy escassa la bibliografia de que dispone. Recordamos solamente los trabajos realizados y originados por Mário de Andrade, Arthur Ramos, Nina Rodrigues, Gilberto Freyre y otros" (LANGE apud HERKOVITS, 1941:137).

In his inaugural work on *brujos*, Ortiz described the vocal expressions of their liturgies as "monotonous" (1906:135). He had studied law in Europe, and we do not know to what extent his assessment was based on direct observation of the Cuban festivals and rituals. The change over time is amazing, since in the 1950s, with his inveterate taste for the metaphor, he expressed his fascination with *música negra*:

> Black music, especially when genuine, provides the delight of an immersion in the virginal waters of the torrent gushing from the dark jungle for those who are only accustomed to bathing at home or on fashionable beaches, where sophisticated persons now bare their pleasures (ORTIZ, 1950:159)[5].

Fortunately, Ortiz ventured far beyond the "Africanist" *topoi* of the jungle and the torrent of virginal waters. He also helped shape this new object, which was far from obvious. As the cliché of the drums' monotonous music suggests, in his first incursion into the theme of Afro-Cuban culture he simply adhered to preset listening that dispensed with the direct experience of the sounds. "Monotony" was now no longer invoked as efficient cause for the "epileptic seizure" (possession). It is true that the fascination exemplified by the previous quote post-dated the consecration of jazz, samba, and Caribbean musical genres on the international market, but the proximity to Cuban musicians is also evident in his studies published at the time, allowing one to assume that there is more than simply adherence to widespread opinions on "black music".

There is thus a novelty in the discourses on Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian ceremonies. They became a new empirical domain to be explored in a new interpretative framework, which we could call "ethnomusicological". The moral scandal of exploitation of popular gullibility by sorcerers, vestiges of which can be found in Mário's description of his body-closing session, lost ground to the scandal of reason: "they" (blacks, sorcerers, frequenters of cults...) believe that gods dance incarnated in men, that objects can be animated by conjurations, that protections exist against diseases and accidents, etc. The songs and spells that operated such prodigious feats were no longer monotonous – they were now recorded and analyzed. The drums, previously noisy instruments, became commensurable with the piano, as seen in the photograph of three percussionists with maestro Gaspar Aguero, collaborator of Ortiz on musical matters, and the folklorist himself.

5 "La música negra, más cuando más genuína, le dará el deleite se una inmersión en las aguas virginales de una torrente precipitado en la selva sombria a quien sólo acostumbra el baño en la rutina casera o en las playas de la moda, donde hoy desnuda sus placeres la gente sofisticada" (ORTIZ, 1950:159).

Figure 1: Reproduced from *La africania de la música folklórica de Cuba*, Fernando Ortiz, 1950, p 363.

Fig. 40.—Estudio de la música de *batá* por G. Agüero, R. Díaz, G. Rodríguez, T. Torregrosa y F. Ortiz.

Commensurable but asymmetrical, it should be noted. Clearly split into two compartments, the photograph shows Aguero at the piano, entertained – one imagines – with the transcription of the *batás*. The two white men are wearing suits; the three black men are in shirtsleeves. Ortiz is holding a book and Aguero is sitting before a piece of sheet music[6]. On the two white men's side are the emblems of lettered culture, also those perpetuated in a portrait published in memory of an encounter that probably took place in one of their homes. The three percussionists, whose names are extensively cited in the book (Raul Díaz, Rodríguez, and Trinidad Torregrosa), play the *batás* as Ortiz looks on. One of the percussionists looks at the camera, and they all seem aware of the photographer's presence. The photo lends credibility to the author's claims by showing him in collaboration with competent musicians on the *batás* and in musicology. As if by chance, the photographer's invisible eye composes the image in two sections, one occupied by the whites, piano, and writing, the other by the blacks and the *batás*. The dialogue between European and African music did not begin there, but long before, on the plantations, in the churches, streets, and theaters of the American continent, by musicians like Díaz, Rodríguez, and Torregrosa, while "ethnomusicological" research had begun more recently.

The researchers' contact with popular festivals, cults, corteges, games, and processions demanded their perception of the limits of aesthetics (understood as the branch of knowledge capable of explaining the perception of beauty, its foundations, and its effects on humans). Mário de Andrade was clear on this point. Kantian aesthetics based on "impartial judgment" would be incapable of grasping phenomena like possession and trance, much less the idea that the instruments can be persons with a voice. More fitting was the idea of Curt Sachs, in *Geist und Werden der Musikinstrumente*, in the excerpt he translated as follows:

6 There are also generational differences (the researchers are clearly older and wearing eyeglasses) and behavioral ones (the three young musicians are smoking).

> ... the musical instrument, as an object for worship, precludes any aesthetic consideration. It has to act, not to provide aesthetic enjoyment, but appealing to life-conserving forces or banishing destructive forces (ANDRADE, 1983:34).[7]

Since aesthetics did not have the key to all the problems raised by folklore studies in general or by "witchcraft music" in particular, other theoretical resources were necessary. Mário drew on the theories of magic, animism, and the primitive mind by James Frazer, Edward Tylor, Lévy-Bruhl, and Charles Blondel. Rather than turning to the foundations of sensitivity or the laws of musical expression and signification, the ethnographer needed to explain the expectations of efficacy of which musicians and musicologists did not even dream.

Andrade and the powers of music

Two essays by Mário de Andrade written between 1933 and 1935 ("Música de feitiçaria" and "Terapêutica Musical") elaborate on experiences from a research trip he had taken several years earlier. Actually, other published and unpublished studies also provide clues to his insistent work in music, an "occult force, inherently incomprehensible" (ANDRADE, 1983:44). But this will not be new to Brazilian readers and will not be addressed in detail here. When he set out on his research journey, his explicit goal was to conduct a "musical harvest" which ultimately exceeded whatever this expression might suggest. A myriad of unusual tales, like the chanter who claimed to have dueled with "the evil one", and new experiences, like that of having his body "closed" in a rite of purification, became research material in subsequent years.

At the conference on the music of sorcery, amid erudition on religions in Brazil and the world, he made a point of telling the audience details of his own experience in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, in a house on the outskirts of the city, where he was taken to have his body closed. It was strategic to reveal how the chants of the *catimbó* masters had affected him:

> The rhythm of the refrain, the monotony of the lolling chants, the clatter of the rattles, began to make me drowsy, the music entranced me. Bit by bit, my body warmed to the numbing musicality while gradually the strength of my intellectual resistance abandoned me (ANDRADE, 1983 [1933]:37).[8]

The conclusion was that certain musical elements of the session, like the repetitive sounds and regular pulsation, opened the way for ecstasy, a hypnotic state or trance. This state corresponded to a "primitive" or "primary" mental state, as he said, prone to the acceptance of propositions that contradicted physical experience.

> And this is precisely the principal destination of the music that makes it the inseparable companion of sorcery: its hypnotic force. Especially due to the way it manifests itself, with the rhythm in excessive evidence, it acts powerfully on the physical body with Dionysian numbing, leaving us in abandoned states of both weak body and musing spirit, as in violent states of fury (ANDRADE, 1983 [1933]:37).[9]

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7 "...o instrumento musical, enquanto um objeto de culto, exclui qualquer consideração estética. Ele tem que agir, não como proporcionador de gozos estéticos, mas como apelo às forças conservativas da vida, ou banidor das forças destrutivas. O instrumento estoura, estrala, papouca, uiva, muge, sibila, assovia, rosna. Mas ainda não se procura conseguir o som, no sentido musical, pelo contrário, evita-se esse som" (ANDRADE, 1983: 34).

8 "O ritmo desse refrão, a monotonia das cantigas molengas, o chique-chique suave do maracá, já principiavam a me embalar, a música me extasiava. Aos poucos meu corpo se aquece numa entorpecedora musicalidade ao mesmo tempo em que gradativamente me abandonava as forças de reação intelectual" (ANDRADE, 1983: 37).

9 "E esse é justamente o destino principal da música que a torna companheira inseparável da feitiçaria: sua força hipnótica. Ela, principalmente pela sua forma de se manifestar-se pondo em excesso de evidência o ritmo, atua poderosamente sobre o físico, entorpecendo, dionisiando, tanto conseguindo nos colocar em estados largados de corpo fraco e espírito cismarento, como nos violentos estados de fúria" (ANDRADE, 1983 [1933]:37).

Mário's report of these personal experiences in his lecture was strategic. The report's potential to convince his listeners did not escape Mário. He confided to Oneyda Alvarenga that he explored in oral discourse the "vibrating" character of the word, in a way that was not entirely alien to the master *catimbozeiros*.[10] He wanted to persuade his audience of the force that the sounds, "musically" organized, are capable of exerting on men's bodies and minds.

Mário de Andrade (and other musicologists) always saw the semantics of musical sounds as problematic. Motifs, rhythms, and timbres do not relate to referents in the same way as words do. Analyzing the *catimbó* session, however, his main interest focused on what the *mestres* could do through the music, the kind of transformation they were able to perform in sensitivity (one of the *mestres* received slaps, fell to the floor, and banged his head without complaining of pain or discomfort), in identities, and in relations (evident at the moment of possession, when the officiants were not themselves). Of course, he took interest in the semantic dimension as well, but the focus of the discussion on the sounds of *catimbó* lies not in the difficulty in naming their referent, meaning, or content; the focus is on music's physical-psychological-social effects. On the one hand, Mário wanted to find the key to the hypnotic effects in the musical sound's intrinsic properties, like repeatability and predictability, regular or irregular distribution of events along the timeline, and variations in timbres and pitches. On the other, never entirely satisfied with the analysis, he began to consider the priests' shared beliefs and authority. In short, "Music is terrible, overwhelming and highly mysterious (ANDRADE, 1983:44).

Ortiz and the powers of music

Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore da Cuba (originally published in 1951) begins with a long introduction to the sociality of Afro-American music and dance – whose sonorous expression is its *dialogical* nature. Rather than the collective body being led by a conductor, or soloists that other musicians accompany, it is made of multiple actuations by groups and individuals, visible and invisible, responding to one and another's cues. Echoes are heard in his description of the interactions between individuals and collectives, from what Mário made of the vocal organization of rural samba in São Paulo (which Ortiz knew and cited in *La africania de la música folklórica de Cuba*):

> … everything makes the song create itself. A human spark flies, piercing with primacy and backed by the existing present. The song draws on traditional existing verse, one idea gives way to another; fellow musicians give backup; the images associate with each other, and finally the song appears, made by itself, easy and agile (ANDRADE, 1991 [1937]:129).[11]

> One genius infuses the crowd with the creative spark of his individuality, and the chorus provides the mass to shape it; one and another cooperate to give it shapes with the backbone of rhythms. It's an essentially dialogical art (ORTIZ, 1985 [1951]:38)[12].

10 Mário explained to Oneyda in a letter in 1933: "…in a lecture, perhaps one can and should display discreet outbreaks of oratory eloquence, underlined with blue pencil in order to later delete them mercilessly prior to publication" (ANDRADE, 1983:64).

11 "…tudo faz com que a canção se crie a si mesma. Surpreende-se um fiat humano, lancinante de primaridade e de apoios no já existente. Recorre-se ao verso-feito tradicional […]; abandona-se uma ideia por outra; os companheiros dão auxílio; as imagens se associam e, finalmente é a canção que aparece, feita por si, fácil e agil…" (ANDRADE, 1991[1937]: 129).

12 "Un gênio infunde [en la multitud] la creadora chispa de su individualidade, el coro le da la masa con que se plasma; uno y outro cooperan a darle sus formas con un vertebración de ritmos. Es un arte esencialmente dialogal" (ORTIZ, 1985: 38).

The same image of the individual creative spark captured by the collective serves different conclusions, but is suggestive of Ortiz' attention to reading Mário's work. The Cuban researcher also drew on the theory of the pre-logical mind in the hope of understanding the extraordinary effects of music and dance. Yet it is curious that he called it the "para-logical" mind, as Mário had done, without having seen the excerpt where the latter spoke of "poetic paralogism" (the passage is in a draft by Mário, only published later, in 1984):

> If the African's incipient experimental culture mistakenly believes that by dancing he can bring rain, make the seeds sprout for a good harvest, or that livestock increases its offspring by cohabiting, this does not rule out an intentional utilitarianism in his purpose. There is no aberration of a paralogical mind in this, as Lévy-Bruhl erroneously assumed, but simply a false syllogism caused merely by the error of his premises, just as whites and blonds sometimes light a candle to Saint Barbara to placate a storm (ORTIZ, 1985:40).[13]

However, Ortiz drew on authors that Mário had not read, like Marcel Mauss – who provided him with the notion of *mana* – and Jean Piaget – who had identified a phase of "nominal realism" in children's cognitive and linguistic development. Therefore, in addition to the core of shared references, each built a unique bibliography of theoretical references.

The dances and songs that Ortiz described as dialogical put in motion a force or *mana* mobilized by the sound, the voices, or the musical instruments. Priest or sorcerer, the officiant of ceremonies needed to be heard by his interlocutors:

> When the black worshipper, priest, or sorcerer communicates with ultra-human entities, he frequently does so out loud, not only by thought. The latter, although hidden, would doubtless be perceived by the invisible interlocutor, but would not be heard, would not be appreciated as an operating voice, as the word of a creative will (1985:44).[14]

In the case of songs, charms, and magic formulas, in addition to the sound, the words' semantic value was also at play. Ortiz' observations on the statute of verbal language in Afro-Cuban cults were inspired by Charles Blondel and Lévy-Bruhl, authors who had defended the idea of words' mystic participation in things (and vice versa) among primitive peoples. Ortiz approached the phenomenon of children's "nominal realism" described by Piaget. Thus, the arguments from all sides led to the reiteration of the childishness or primitiveness of blacks, Africans, or Cubans. At any rate, Ortiz highlighted that men, gods, the dead, and sorcery acted on each other with songs, prayers, and spells. Since the word had still not alienated itself from things – "*nomen* and *numen* came from the same phonetic and ideological root" (ORTIZ, 1950: 185) –, its sonorous shape could not be entirely arbitrary. On the contrary, the word of songs and spells needs to be stylized. That is why it becomes verse, gains musical contours, and is elaborated rhythmically: "...verse creates, verse has *mana*," the folklorist concluded. "In primeval cultures, language itself is impregnated with religion. Words were primitively considered something more than a means for conveying ideas; words were believed to have the power to work miracles" (ORTIZ, 1950: 185). The author went on to recall that many had attributed the very birth of the twin arts, poetry and music, to this phenomenon.

13 "Si la incipiente cultura experimental del africano se extravia, creyendo que bailando puede producer la lluvia, hacer que germinem los sembradíos para uma buena cosecha o que cohabiten los animales para que aumentem las crias, eso no empece a um utilitarismo intencional en su propósito. No hay en ello uma aberración de mentalidade 'paralógica' como erroneamente supuso Lévi-Bruhl, sino simplemente un falso silogismo causado solo por el error de sus premisas, tal como los blancos y rubios acuden a veces a calmar la tempestad encendiéndose un círio a Santa Bárbara": 40).

14 "Cuando el negro creyente, sacerdote o brujo, se comunica con los entes ultra-humanos, lo hace con frecuencia en voz alta; no solo por el pensamiento. Este, a pesar de su recondidez, sería sin duda percebido por el interlocutor invisibile pero no sería oído, no sería apreciado como fuerza operante, como verbo de voluntad creadora". (1985: 44).

Black music is action, not distraction, it not only says, but does.[15] The relevant ear, in this case, is that of the participant that also acts, that moves his body, joining the chorus, clapping his hands or transforming himself. Ortiz thus sought a broader understanding than that allowed by a strictly aesthetic approach to Afro-Cuban music and dance. To say that music communicates or expresses, or that it is semiotic behavior, is correct, but it would overlook other aspects that could be called performative, as has been done in studies of verbal arts and rituals. The problem is that he attributed to primitive peoples in general, and to Africans and blacks in particular, what is also perfectly true for "us": we know the power of popular music's idols (a term from witchcraft's semantic field) over fans (those that admire them excessively, fanatically). As a contemporary observer notes:

> The voice seems to have the power to turn words into acts [...]. The mere vocalization endows words with a ritual efficacy; the passage from articulation to vocalization is like a *passage à l'acte*, a passage to action and an exertion of authority; it is as if the mere addition of the voice could represent the originary form of performativity (DOLAR, 2006:54).

It is true that Ortiz did not limit these observations to "sorcery", extending them to the sound of the clave, a popular Cuban musical instrument without immediate links to religions of African origin. "...like every primogenial musical instrument, it was without a doubt a magical instrument" (ORTIZ, 1984:58). But there, once again, the argument had to find backing in the instrument's "primitive" character.

Preoccupations with the powers of the word, of music, dance, and dramatizations, are scattered across these and other studies that are beyond this article's scope. The volume of ethnographic data is huge, with numerous hypotheses based on them. In addition to those I cited above, concerning the sonorous *mana* of songs, prayers, and spells, Ortiz developed an extensive argument on the mimetic nature of dances and spells, which would explain their efficacy, and which could be compared with recent discussions on ritualization and mimesis. The imitation that precedes a given desirable state, for example, has been viewed as performative enactment that not only represents what one wishes to obtain, but concretely changes the relations between participants and commits them to future courses of action (TAMBIAH, 1985).

Performativity and magic

Contemporary interest in the performative dimension or aspect of rituals and verbal arts invites one to revisit the ideas that Mário de Andrade and Fernando Ortiz developed to explain music's magical powers. On the one hand, both "magic" and "witchcraft" have been used as terms to stigmatize and segregate beliefs and practices and the populations with which they are identified: Africans, African-Americans, blacks, primitives, etc. As a Western discursive field (FOUCAULT, 2007; PELS, 2003), magic and witchcraft are exoticisms that engender other exoticisms, including "the music of sorcery". The complete identification between poet and sorcerer confirmed, for researchers on the theme, the primitive stage of Afro-American rites. "The peoples of Africa are still deeply submerged in the mists of magic and mythology..." (ORTIZ, 1950:295).

We should not reiterate the strategies of temporal distancing which, exiling Africans and African-descendants on the other side of the great divide, helped to confirm "our" "modern" condition (see FABIAN, 1983; LATOUR, 1993; BAUMAN & BRIGGS, 2006). But would this be sufficient reason to invalidate as a whole

15 "Black music, together with song, dance, and mime, is art for something socially transcendental. It has a teleology, a purpose of collective function; an action, not a distraction. It is not music of 'entertainment' on the fringes of daily life; it is precisely an aesthetic 'version' of all of life in its transcendental moments. Music that not only says, music that does, that prepares people for life's path and not to sway them from their collectively human roles" (ORTIZ, 1985: 39-40).

the efforts at understanding beliefs in the force of sound and music? Others have sufficiently contested the theories that attributed to "primitives" (and to "blacks") the confusion between words and things; but this does not mean to discard the possibility of observing conceptions and uses of language that cannot be reduced to the modern view of language. Researchers trained in the modern scientific tradition have also developed theories on the efficacy of linguistic utterances and the concomitant gestural and bodily aspects (BAUMAN, 1977; BAUMAN & SHERZER, 1974; TAMBIAH, 1985; FINNEGAN, 1969; 2007). The theory of "speech acts" had almost immediate repercussions among anthropologists interested in the verbal arts (FINNEGAN, 1969) and later among theoreticians of the ritual. Stanley Tambiah (1985) treated as universal the performative aspects of ritual speech, aspects that would be available in any language.

In the contemporary social sciences, alternatives to the symbolic and semiotic approaches to the arts emphasize "agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation…, systems of action intended to change the world rather than to encode symbolic propositions about it" (GELL, 1998:6). Perhaps new bridges between "native" theories of magic and "academic" theories of the arts – precisely the terrain in which aesthetic and semiotic discourses became hegemonic – can also be launched by music scholars. If we wish to foster a dialogue between the discourses of magic on the one hand and theories of aesthetics and performativity on the other, it will be useful to revisit the efforts by Mário de Andrade and Fernando Ortiz to understand the powers of music.

Translation by Christopher Peterson

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