WORK, TOURIST ENCOUNTERS AND ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENTS IN HAVANA'S SALSA SCHOOLS

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Introduction

Towards the end of my three months long fieldwork in Havana, I went out with a group of friends, all of them involved in one way or another (either by teaching dance or learning it for a long time) in the local salsa scene. Upon arrival at the hotel where the salsa party had aready started up on the rooftop terrace, we were informed by security that for the moment they no longer allowed anyone in, as the place was already very crowded. We decided to wait and noticed how other groups of tourists and some couples (usually made up by one Cuban and one tourist) headed upstairs to the terrace. When we asked why other people were allowed in, we were told that because of space limitations entrance was only *'por pareja'* ('by couple'). I pointed out that we were six, or 'three couples', if that was the condition for entering. My friend Osmani, dance teacher in one of the salsa schools in the city, immediately backed me up, by now a little bit annoyed by the situation, and tried to move towards the elevator, when one of the security guards stopped him and told him he was not wearing the appropriate attire to go in, as he was wearing a sleeveless top. As Osmani turned towards us and told us it would be best to go to another place, making a comment in low voice about how Cubans treat other Cubans, and how this was not about the space limitations, or couples, or attire, I handed him my draped cardigan and made a last attempt. None of the security guards seemed to even notice us, we headed up to the terrace, and for a moment it felt as if the earlier scene had not taken place.

We went on with our night pretending to be undisturbed by what had happened earlier, but every now and then one of the Cubans in our group would go back to that with some comment: 'Tourists are allowed everything in this country, more than Cubans' or 'Is there any other country out there that treats its people worse than foreigners?' or 'This is lack of respect, you wouldn't see this happening in Europe' or 'This is what it's all about' (pointing out to skin color) or 'They (the guards) are hand in hand with these *jineteros.* They let them in, and make money out of all the tourists who come here to dance'. As we walked out at the end of the night, one of the guards followed us and had a short talk with Osmani:

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'I am sorry brother, you know how Cubans are… the things I see here. This is not against you my brother, I wish more Cubans were like you. Hardworking, honest, I see you came here in your work clothes, you are a good man. But you know how Cubans are…'

And then he turned to me:

'Everything we are doing is in fact for your benefit. Maybe you don't know how bad Cubans are, the things I see here... So many times I saw tourists coming here, they go to the bathroom, leave their bags, and when they come back, the bag is gone. I am tired of trying to warn tourists and make them understand just how bad Cubans can be'.

The following article is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Havana from March to May 2018 and draws upon previously conducted research over several months in 2015 and 2016. I conducted research mainly among professional dancers, dance instructors and owners of private dance schools, employing as methodological tools long term participant observation among groups directly or indirectly involved in the creation, development and commodification of dance-related cultural heritage, as well as ethnographic interviews. Key to my fieldwork was the embodied aspect of dance, as I participated in individual and group dance lessons (casino, rumba, Cuban dance technique), as well as in workshops organized for foreign tourists, training sessions of professional dancers. Whenever possible, I attended dance events in various locations in Havana, from well-established venues, famous among Cubans and tourists alike, to newly opened spaces or parties organized by the different dance schools I worked with.

Main text

In this article I discus the practices, expectations and desires developed around Cuban dance, by focusing on the transnational circulation of Cuban dance forms and the growing number of Cuban small businesses centered on dance instruction aimed at foreign audiences. Body performances become central to complex processes of representation, which are simultaneously cultural and political. Significant parts of the tourist imaginary related to Cuba are adopted and adapted in Cuban narratives about Cubanness, while dancing creates idealized versions of the practice and the practitioners. In light of the increased popularity of salsa events worldwide, situating the dance between cultural heritage and leisure commodity (Pietrobruno, 2009), and of Western representations of Cuba as an island of sensuality, lightheartedness, dance and music, dance practices come to play an important role in tourist experiences, functioning as authenticating tools. Tourist encounters that take place at informal dance events and parties facilitate the emergence and diversification of narratives around racialized and gendered bodies, while emphasizing the inequalities of international tourism and

the boundaries which are made and remade in social practices. At the same time, economic realities and social inequalities that stem from contact with foreigners result in creative approaches for financial gain, perpetuating expectations about Cuban fantasies, as dancing bodies become transactional (in more than one way) through the maximization of bodily capital (Wacquant, 1995).

The first part of the article looks at recent developments in Cuban tourism and the role of dance-related practices in the diversification of narratves around Cubanness, racialize, and sexualized bodies. I then move on to analyze recent processes of professionalization and institutionalization of Cuban dance. The final part of the article discusses tourist encounters and romantic involvements in the broader context of night-time work, work flexibilty and the development of small businesses centered around dance, looking into the inequalities and fluid relations that stem from encounters on the dance floor between Cuban dancers and foreign visitors.

Developments in Cuban cultural tourism

Modeled by slavery, colonialism, and plantation culture, Caribbean heritage displays a variety that underlines its unique character: a mix of races, languages, architecture, and fortifications as a result of colonial past, a variety of religions and topography. With indigenous heritage destroyed almost totally, most of the countries in the region had to focus on colonial and Creole heritage (Honychurch, 2003). Due to marketing reality and shift in destination branding, the sun-sea-sand type of tourism was no longer an argument strong enough for visiting the region, so instead 'alternative' forms of tourism shortly entered the mainstream, bringing into the attention of the tourist industry forms of cultural and natural heritage of the region. The emphasis on local goods and services, as a result of neoliberal economic policies in the Caribbean, generated a 'culturalist market' (Scher, 2011) comprising of local agricultural products, spices, foods, artisanal crafts but also local accents manifested through dance, music and exotic bodies for sale. This image, which has to be easily recognizable and appealing to the target audience (the foreign consumer), fulfilling expectations about 'uniqueness', 'exoticism', 'authenticity', was to a great extent created and distributed by tour operators, a transnational industry based mostly in the US and Western Europe. Once the constant flow of visitors ensured, destinations are being promoted and prioritized according to the industry's agenda. Recent years have seen tour operators integrating in the structures of services offered a variety of products and attractions, offering everything from transport, accommodation, tours to local attractions and, lately, active involvement in activities considered typical of local communities (be it cooking, dancing or arts and crafts workshops), all of them offered in a form that favors safety and comfort over local differentiation.

Otherness is often understood as a social reality to be gazed upon by individual subjectivities, thus integrating travel and leisure in a constant process of negotiation of the identities of the gazer and the gazed upon (Urry, 1995).

In the Cuban case, this imaginative construction has involved a multitude of actors, from official institutions of the state to the Western tourism industry and popular media. It was in the early 1920s that Cuba started promoting itself as a tourist destination and became one of the most rapidly growing countries in the Caribbean in terms of foreign tourists, with the US being one of the main markets generating tourist arrivals to the island. This influx of tourists, associated mainly with capitalism, gambling, prostitution and bourgeois excess came to be seen as extremely damaging to the Caribbean nation in light of the Cuban revolution of 1959. The political, social, and economic changes of the new regime were integrated into a larger project that also included the dissociation of Havana from the image of a city of bourgeois excess, heavily marked by US influences, bringing into the spotlight the city's colonial past (Lasansky, 2004). Within this wider project, the Cuban revolutionary government also claimed to have achieved the ideal, raceless society, as emphasized on several occasions by the country's former president (from 1976 to 2008) Fidel Castro:

> Discrimination stems from the economic and social exploitation which exists in capitalist societies. It existed in Cuba, but here there was not a change of men, but of systems. And when socialism was established, economic and social exploitation, and consequently racial discrimination, disappeared (Castro, 1996)

Before the Cuban revolution, the country was considered as one of the most racist in the Caribbean, a reality that was conveniently used by Fidel Castro in gaining support for his revolutionary ideas. The concept of a raceless society, rooted in Jose Marti's works and Marxist ideology, went along with the promotion and support of African heritage, however questionable this turned out to be in practice. Recent studies (Clealand, 2013) suggest that racial discrimination in Cuba is still the result of structural racism, and not just of individual prejudice, arguing that racial discrimination generates a contradiction between reality and the rhetoric of racial democracy in Cuba.

Another set of radical changes in Cuba was brought about by the fall of the Soviet Bloc in 1991, as the country lost the support of its most important economic partner, significantly decreasing its income and lowering GDP by more than 30% in just three years (Gawrycki 2010, Krohn 1999). Cubans were forced to deal with extreme poverty and changes to the political and economic system seemed inevitable: two such reforms occurred in 1993, when it became legal for Cubans to own foreign currencies (thus introducing two parallel denominations, access to

which would only deepen economic inequalities and social stratification) and to take up private initiatives, thus allowing them to be self-employed and bringing supplementary income to the state budget. As of 1994, with the opening of a new Ministry of Tourism, new policies regarding this sector followed, as the country reopened for foreign visitors, the government invested heavily in touristic infrastructure and legalized small businesses aimed at renting rooms to foreign tourists as of 1997. Although depicted by Cuban authorities as a 'necessary evil' in the early 1990s (Fernandez, 1999), the sector has had a dynamic expansion during the past two decades, becoming one of the main sources of foreign currency and investment. Other two milestones that would reshape Cuba's recent developments were the shift in power from Fidel Castro to his brother Raul Castro in 2008, bringing about a new age of economic reforms that redefine the relations between state, society and individual, without fully abandoning the socialist model, and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the US, suspended in 1961. Not only did this moment bring Cuba back into the spotlight and the headlines of international media, but it generated a touristic boom that saw the island receiving around 3.5 million tourists in 2015 and 3.9 million in 2016. However, the renewal of diplomatic ties was short-lived, as the Trump administration reintroduced a series of restrictions on travel and trade with Cuba. But the development of tourism and the influx of foreign capital related to it brought about a series of changes in the way Cubans perceive their own future, it opened perspectives of wealth, and slowly started to change work related perceptions and practices. On the other hand, the tourist experiences described in Western media and proposed by tour operators worldwide were deeply rooted in a certain type of nostalgia and determination to 'see Cuba before it changes', to experience a 'land frozen in time', where people are happily dancing and singing in the streets despite all hardship and economic problems. This prevailing discourse fails to acknowledge that while the political system remained unchanged for over half a century, by no means did it keep society in isolation from the rest of the world, in a stage frozen in time. As pointed out by Ruth Behar:

> They [Cubans] are creative geniuses whose ability to crack the Rubik's Cube of capitalism while living under communism reflects a postmodern savviness rather than a premodern backwardness. Let's face it: Cuba has already changed. For the sake of turning a new leaf in US – Cuba relations, it would be wise for Americans to ask themselves whether they want to engage with a fantasy of Cuba, or the real place in all its complexity and contradictions (Behar, 2015).

Becoming a professional dance instructor

Perhaps one of the strongest, most colorful and most appealing components of the Cuban fantasy disseminated in international media and on the tourism market is the belief that Cuba is a land filled with music and dance. From blog posts to magazine articles and the official promotion campaign of the country, *Auténtica Cuba*, the island is praised for a set of key symbols that convey the images of sensuality, happiness, rhythm and lascivious hip movement. In fact, dance and music shape to a considerable degree the modes of visualization and the tourist experience, as they are cultural products sought after by tour operators and individual tourists alike, becoming essential in the process of symbolic construction. Over the years, Cuba has successfully exported music styles and dance forms that have achieved international recognition, becoming trademarks that frame the general perception of the country.

Anthropologists have analyzed dance practices as narratives of cultural contact (Browning, 1995), as means for the articulation of cultural identity for migrants (Skinner, 2007) or as essentialist, transnational expressions of identity (McMains, 2006). As dance practices move and become part of a globalized scene through migration and commodification (Pietrobruno, 2006), they become carriers of multilayered messages, remaining open to embodied identities in the making.

The transnational circulation of Cuban dance forms and their increased popularity due to the international demand for salsa classes, workshops, and festivals, has revealed not only processes of commodification and standardization of these forms, but has also created a rapidly growing market of private businesses developed around dance (dance schools and, recently, 'dance experiences' advertised on platforms like Airbnb, partly made possible by the fact that the state has somewhat relaxed restrictions on Cubans' use of internet). Dance practices often function as an interface for more complex networks of alternative economies set against the transitions of late socialism, shedding light on the rising inequalities and social stratification that arise as direct effects of market socialism (Morris, 2008), creating new spaces, forms and means for revenue.

Although dance lessons in Cuba are not something of recent date, the increased number of dance schools aimed at foreign tourists is related to the legalization of self-employment in several sectors (concentrated mainly in the service sector) approved by the Cuban government in the past few years. While the list does not include any professional specialized business, nor activities in sectors like education or healthcare (considered to be achievements of the Cuban revolution), it allowed many dance aficionados and non-professional dancers to find work in a field that turned out to be more financially rewarding than their previous activities. As pointed out by Stephanie, the owner of one of the dance schools in

Havana, who in 2018 was employing around 40 dance teachers, 'not all of them are professional dancers. They have other professions, but they also learned how to teach dance, so they are dance teachers'. These changes in legislation facilitated the creation of spaces for the professionalization and institutionalization of dance, generating new employment opportunities, and turned dance into a potentially profitable business both for the school owners and the dancers themselves.

When I first traveled to Havana in 2011, I quickly became familiar with a few dance schools aimed at teaching various Cuban dance genres to foreign visitors, and already back then some of these schools had been functioning for a few good years. Not only did the number of dance schools increase in the past years and they became more visible in the streets of (especially) Old Havana, but the offers became more diverse, more comprising, and an entire marketing and promotion industry developed around these institutions. When in 2012 I signed up for a group lesson with one of the oldest dance schools in Havana, I was given reassurance that even though the group was a homogenous one and the salsa night was part of their cultural tour of the island, I could still join and be assigned a Cuban partner. Upon arrival, however, I was told that the group was made up exclusively of beginners, and as I already had previous dance experience, it made no sense to join the group lesson, but instead could remain there for the party. After the lesson, most tourists remained on the dance floor in the company of their instructors, but I had a few chances to dance, until the owner of the dance school brought it to my attention that I could not dance more than one song with the same teacher, as that could bother the people in the group for two reasons: first, my level was higher and made me stand out in the crowd, therefore making the other tourists feel bad, two – they had paid for the lesson and the party, I had paid only for the party, so they had priority when it came to dancing, and even if they wanted to dance only the basic step the entire night with their assigned teacher, I had to wait until one of them would get tired. A couple of hours later, I had spoken to around ten of the dance teachers, and eight of them had offered me private dance lessons at my house, asking me at the same time to be very discreet about it, as it went against rules to give lessons outside the school. Some of them praised my dancing skills and explained how they would work with me in order to improve them, others told me I had been taught wrong and that my style needed to be corrected, therefore I needed proper instruction coming from a trained professional, others simply gave me their phone numbers in case I was interested in lessons. In the following years, I noticed more and more emphasis was put on the distinction between street dancers and professional dance teachers. In March 2015, I was writing in my diary: 'Last year, and before that, everyone was a self-proclaimed dance teacher and everyone was willing to offer dance lessons on the spot. The offers are still here and still abundant, but there seems to have been a shift: now they visually differentiate themselves from the rest of

the dancing crowd, they wear t-shirts with the name of the school, they hand out business cards, and lessons are offered at school, not so much at my home. They emphasize the importance of learning from a trained teacher, who has the right methodology, knows how to build a class for the specific needs of each tourist, shortly put, someone who is a professional (a word they make use of very often)'.

In fact, professionalism is often defined not in terms of a set of practices that would differentiate a professional dance instructor from a non-professional one, but it is explained in opposition to 'the street' (which in this case is understood as either popular dance venues attended by Cubans and tourists alike, or knowledge and skills acquired informally, usually from friends or family members). As pointed out by one of my research participants, Noel, who used to work in a beauty parlor giving massages and went on to becoming a dance teacher around six years ago:

> You have a brother, a cousin, you go to a party, you ask them to show you some things, how they are done, you practice and practice and you can be a very good dancer. You really don't need any methodology to be a good dancer. A professional dancer is something different, they have more knowledge, they know where this rhythm came from, how it [the movement] is done, how it used to be done. Children see the adults dancing, they grow up with it, and sometimes they are much better dancers than people in ISA or ENA.

A professional dance instructor is described in most cases as a person with the capacity of transferring dance knowledge to the student, having the proper knowledge, methodology and ethical behavior, whereas the street is all about personal style, empirical learning, inspiration, skills but also a 'hidden agenda' which implies that many such dancers would make use of their abilities and capacity to dance in order to trick tourists for financial or emotional benefits. In many cases, in order to understand what a professional dancer is, one needs to understand what a professional is not, as explained by José, dance teacher in one of Havana's most popular dance schools:

> A professional is not one of those guys from the street who always look for girls. You can't mix your intimate relationships with your work, maybe it starts well, but it never ends well. This is no longer work. When the relationship starts, professionalism ends.

It's not only this difference that is emphasized in discussions around the professionalization of dance teaching. Another recurring aspect is related to the restructuring of labor routines and overall change of temporal structures, bringing changes in work discipline and erasing the line between work time and free time

(Chelcea, 2014). As opposed to being employed in the state sector and therefore having a somewhat fixed schedule, work in the private sector requires increased flexibility and readiness to adhere to an ever-changing schedule, based on the demands of the clients. Many of my research participants explained that while this kind of work was more financially rewarding, it also meant they had to adapt to a different kind of lifestyle, one that put the clients and their needs ahead of their private lives, personal plans and priorities. While not all schools have teachers available on location for potential clients who happen to stop by and request a dance lesson on the spot, all of them require their teachers to be in a permanent state of readiness, for individual and group lessons, therefore making it almost impossible to have any short or long term plans without running the risk of losing customers and, subsequently, money for the lessons taught. The prices for a dance lessons vary from 12 to 15 CUC but can go as high as 30 or 35 CUC / hour, with instructors usually receiving 10 to 15 CUC / hour. As their work permits allow them to collaborate with more than one dance school, some instructors work with more than one dance school at a time, even though juggling with the complicated schedules can lead to misunderstandings, not only in terms of time management, as explained by Boris:

> Unfortunately, many times the boss of the dance school does everything to make the client happy. They don't care what the teacher thinks or how he sees things (…) sometimes two schools call me at the same time, and it is complicated, this one in the morning, this one in the afternoon, I don't like saying no, I like my job, and I like to do it well. Sometimes someone comes and says they want classes with you, because they saw you dancing… this is another thing that happens, when I go out with my friends, and we dance, we are doing promotion for our work, not for the school.

However, the perception of dance school owners differs, and outside established work hours, there is still a lot of work to do in order to develop the business, relying on the 'self-steering' capacities of the individual, designating rules for everyday life: initiative, ambition, personal responsibility. 'The enterprising self will make an enterprise of its life, seek to maximize its own human capital, project itself a future, and seek to shape itself in order to become that which it wishes to be' (Rose, 1996, p.154). Such was the case of Stephanie:

> Sometimes I meet my teachers, who are also working with other schools, I see them in the street with the flyers of these schools, where they only earn 4 CUC, and I ask them what are you doing, promoting this school? And they say well, the boss says we have to do it. But they have the business cards of my school, they can promote this one, because what they are

doing, in fact, is promoting a business that pays them less. And the same with the t-shirts. They should be wearing them all the time, not just during class. But they change immediately after class and just wear their clothes.

In the case of larger groups of tourists, the policy of most dance schools is that after a certain number of classes, tourists get the chance to go out with their teachers and practice what they learned during class. Such activities are remunerated separately, and the clients also have the possibility of requesting to be accompanied by their teachers at dance parties and concerts. In this way, the school takes responsibility for the actions of the teachers and creates 'safe spaces' not only for running the business, but also during the free time spent together with clients. Taking dance lessons from professional instructors and spending time with them outside class, in an organized setting, guarantees not only the quality of the learning process, but also reduces the possible risks that may occur in less structured interactions.

Over the past few years, more and more dance schools started including in their offers the service of 'taxi dancer', giving clients the possibility to be accompanied at parties or concerts by a dance teacher, for a fee that covers entry tickets to the venue chosen by the client, drinks and a few hours of dancing (usually from two to four). 'For better understanding and progress, it is important that you enjoy going out at night to dance and fully dive into Cuban music. Therefore, the classes can be accompanied, if you wish, by the special offer of a taxi dancer (…) this service includes going out at night with your dance teacher to a dance club to practice' (www.salsaborcuba.com). While financially such activities pay off, giving dance instructors the possibility of earning in one night the equivalent of half a month's state salary (prices for a night of taxi dancing usually start at 15 CUC), night work is inscribed in an ongoing circle of objectification, (mis) representation and emotional entanglements, shedding light on the ways in which sensuality is commodified in social spaces for self-affirmation.

Dance teacher by day, taxi dancer by night

A few years ago I attended a concert at Casa de la Música in the company of one of my Cuban acquaintances, whom I had met a couple of weeks before at a dance party. He was one of the regulars in one of Havana's most famous dance venues, very familiar with the city's salsa scene, and a skilful dancer. We had met through a common friend who at that moment was dating a friend of mine, and Richard immediately made a very personal mission out of 'taking care of me' because 'I didn't know just how tricky and bad Cubans could be'. It was not the first time we were going out together, and as the night was over, he asked me whether I wanted him to drive me home or I wanted to go back to his place. I said I wanted

to go home, but shortly after we got into his car, I noticed that we were driving away from, and not towards, Old Havana. I asked him whether he was sure that was the right way to my rented house, he said there was nothing to worry about, and ten minutes later we were in front of a block of flats somewhere behind Plaza de la Revolución. He took me by the hand and walked towards an entrance, and as I stopped and asked what was that all about, he told me he was tired of my moodiness, my indecision and the way I was leading him on, and that since we had gone out dancing a few times over the past days, it was only natural this would at some point lead to sex. I told him I had specifically asked to go home, and that I was not interested in a sexual encounter, when he told me that when European women say no, it usually turns into a yes in the end. I turned around and headed towards Plaza de la Revolución, determined to walk the distance back home, but he followed me and told me it was impossible to go home by myself, as the streets of Havana at night could be very dangerous and that was a crazy thing to do. He then offered to drive me home, and I accepted, and on the way back he told me there was no need for all the drama, as in his opinion he had done nothing wrong or questionable. When I explained that from my point of view he had, by disrespecting my decision and choosing to ignore my words, he told me that many times female tourists who come to Cuba, a hot and sensual country, have a difficult time opening up and fully enjoying everything the island has to offer, so they need a Cuban man to show them the way. Richard has been married for two years now, living between Cuba and Europe with his wife, and we have kept in touch after that episode, which we sometimes talk about when we meet. Inexorably, he replies: 'I did nothing wrong, I took my chance. You didn't understand me. *No es facil*'.

For many tourists, dance teachers are the first (and sometimes only, except perhaps *casa particular* owners) interaction with the locals. It is not uncommon, especially for tourists who come to Cuba for the first time, to find their interactions limited by the expectation they would offer gifts or money to their Cuban acquaintances. Such was the case of Peter, who had signed up for dance lessons because street interactions were difficult and tiresome: 'Every time I talked to someone, they asked if I had pens, shampoo, candy or money, so in the end I signed up for salsa lessons because I wanted to talk more to Cubans, to know more about their lives'. So he kept returning to the dance school in an attempt to not fully isolate himself from the tourist experience, but trying to keep it in a zone that felt comfortable and regulated by what he perceived as a more equal (paying for certain services provided by the dance school) and less stressful exchange. For other tourists, dance teachers become the gatekeepers to a complicated, sometimes impossible to understand (or navigate) society, and thus they are the first persons tourists turn to when in need of medical care or assistance with unexpected problems such as theft or misunderstandings with the owners of the

houses for rent. Many of them explain this availability as an important element in defending the good image Cuba has, and not letting an isolated incident give off a wrong image of the country. This creates a certain type of attachment, as tourists come to see their dance teachers as more than just professionals who are doing their work, and in many cases it was pointed out that tourists become very possessive of their teachers who, in return, have the responsibility of taking care of their clients, during class but outside of class too, especially when going out at night, as pointed out by Noel:

> Sometimes I go out with my clients and I tell them it is fine if they want to dance with someone else, but if you want to leave with the guy, you need to let me know. Of course I know many of these guys, and you can find very respectful people in the street, but many times girls don't understand that guys have other intentions, that they want money, or sometimes just to be with a foreigner. There is always a difference between *I love you* and *I like you*. *I like you* pretty much always means I like your money, I like your phone. Some guys go out dancing with this purpose of finding a girl, some of them maybe for dancing, but a lot of them for a relationship, or even for a night.

This image of Cuba and Cubans becomes central to the way dance teachers perceive themselves and their work. While in terms of dancing and dance teaching they want to differentiate themselves from the street style and in doing so they place emphasis on methodology and technique, in terms of how their image as dancers is perceived, they want to differentiate themselves from street dancers who may often be mistaken for hustlers. As seen in the ethnographic vignettes above, these differentiations are an important part in any kind of interaction or relationship with tourists. This relates to the phenomenon of *jineterismo*, widely discussed in Cuba and often considered a consequence of tourism (Rundle 2001, Simoni 2016). The term literally means horseback riding, but it is used to define hustling and / or prostitution. The persons engaging in *jineterismo* (called *jineteros* or *jineteras*) offer sex, company, guidance and sometimes goods (usually cigars but not only) in exchange for money, meals or a night out. Often sucg engagements with tourists are expected to lead to marriage and, subsequently, the possibility of leaving the country. Relationships are seen as either purely sexual – usually between Afrocuban women and male tourists (cf. Fusco, 1998) or romantic, lacking economic connotations (Fernandez, 1999). When it comes to Cuban men and foreign women, such relationships are often framed as 'romantic involvements', although not excluding the economic component, and they reinforce sexualized racist fantasies that attract female (sex) tourists to the Caribbean (Kempadoo 2004, Simoni 2015).

But *jineterismo* brings about not just issues related to economic inequalities, it reveals divisions related to class, race, and gender, and is frequently framed as challenging to Cuban notions of morality. It is also perceived as a very delicate issue for the country's socialist government, constituting an affront to revolutionary morality. The late 1990s appear to have made the moralizing argument against *jineterismo* a dominant one (Kempadoo, 1999): usually white, middle class Cubans tend to consider it a manifestation of a 'low cultural level' (*bajo nivel cultural*), in general ascribed to Afrocubans, thus revealing the racialized ideas of morality and behavior.

For many dancers employed by dance schools, clear delimitations (not wanting to be mistaken for a *jinetero / jinetera*) become a matter of status affirmation and, ultimately, self-esteem. While generating a certain intimacy with the clients, night-time interactions in Havana, although regulated by precise scripts, follow a set of unwritten rules, a script that is multiplied, performed and re-enacted (smiles, willingness and ability to keep dancing, interest). Unfamiliarity with these unwritten rules, juxtaposed with an imagined, fantasized Cuba, makes tourists susceptible to being seduced by these scripted performances (cf. Grazian, 2008). Dance teaching and the images of romantic love created and communicated through performances often lead to a fluid understanding of business and affection on both sides. The romantic theme becomes central to Western consumption, being inscribed in 'a complex pattern of hedonistic behavior, the majority of which occurs in the imagination of the consumer' (Campbell, 1987, p. 89), a pattern which frames touristic behavior and constructs an exotic Other imagined as more passionate, more emotional, and more sexually tempting (Pruitt, LaFont 1995).

While dancers themselves tend to accept that interactions on the dance floor can lead to romantic involvement, dance school owners usually make it clear that they do not wish for their employees to be involved in any other way with their clients, as this can affect the image of the professional dancer and, subsequently, the school, as expressed by Mireya, owner of a dance school in Old Havana:

> It may happen that one day you meet a client you like, and fall in love, or even get married. But if you fall in love every week, this is not love anymore, this is something different. So I tell my teachers that relationships between them and our clients are forbidden. Of course, if you fall in love, who am I to tell what your heart feels? But there has to be respect in the school and for the school. Once I had a client coming to the school asking for dance lessons, and to go out a night. And then he asked if we provided full service. I asked him what he meant by that, and he said dance classes, going out at night, and then, when the party is over, you know… So I told him to go look for another school, because mine was a dance school, not a prostitution school. And the teachers who do that can expect to be fired. I

do not want such people in my school, because it ultimately creates a very bad image of Cuba and of Cuban women.

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In adopting and adapting elements of the dominant discourse created outside the island, Cubans subject themselves to a 'self-folklorization' process (Klekot, 2014), emphasizing the inequalities of international tourism which are made and remade in social practices. Performances and transmission of dance traditions become part of the touristic and political use of culture, strongly determined by economic factors, and operating with essentialist concepts and definitions of identity. For tourists, dance practices become the equivalent of 'embodied souvenirs' (Ana, 2017) which make 'Cubanness' available and, in a way, portable through the body that experienced it. Dance becomes the carrier of multilayered messages, remaining open to embodied identities in the making. At the same time, it offers the venue for negotiation of identity and social mobility, articulated in spaces of cultural interaction of tourists and locals where 'authenticity' becomes a tool for legitimizing and validating the tourist experience.

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WORK, TOURIST ENCOUNTERS AND ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENTS IN HAVANA'S SALSA SCHOOLS

Ruxandra Ana

Abstract

The article looks at the practices, expectations and desires developed around Cuban dance, by focusing on the transnational circulation of Cuban dance forms and on dance instruction aimed at foreign audiences. Tourist encounters that take place at informal dance events and parties facilitate the emergence and diversification of narratives around racialized and gendered bodies, while emphasizing the inequalities of international tourism. The article is based on fieldwork conducted in Havana from March to May 2018.

Key words: dance, Cuba, tourism, work, romance

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