

**KINETIC CONVERSATIONS:  
CREATIVE DANCE-MUSIC PERFORMANCE AND THE NEGOTIATION OF  
IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY HAVANA, CUBA**

by

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated in Loving Memory of

Walter Batiuk,  
my paternal grandfather,  
who always cared deeply for and supported my education;

and

Gregorio Hernández Ríos,  
who made this project possible.

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## Preface

This dissertation results from twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in Havana between 2008 and 2012 conducted primarily with members of the folkloric ensemble, *Oba Ilú*. I lived in Havana from January through mid-September 2011 and made shorter trips during 2008, 2009, and 2012. The mainstay of my research included music and dance lessons, interviews, and observing performances. I also attended rehearsals and participated as an audience-member and recreational dancer in the circuit of venues that host regular folkloric and dance-music events in Havana. I got to know some performers individually and was invited to musical and religious activities outside of the official group, thus my participant-observation grew to encompass some of the wider folkloric scene in Havana.

I initially met Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández through friends at the *Escuelas Nacionales de Arte*, whom I had met on earlier trips to Cuba. Initially he put me in contact with Isnavi Cardoso Díaz for dance lessons. Then in 2011, after I proposed my dissertation research project to him, Hernández invited me to attend weekly rehearsals and agreed to give me song classes and interviews. He served as the patron of my work in Havana and called upon me occasionally to tape performances for his own records and alerted me to many of the group’s official and unannounced functions. On more than one

occasion, people with whom I had little or no direct contact recognized me through my association with Hernández (*la muchacha que anda con El Goyo*, the girl who goes around with Goyo). This was particularly important for me especially after I relinquished my bid to gain official sponsorship.

I organized the ethnographic research around three goals. First, I set out to create a series of case studies centered on individual performers and their creative performances. Second, I sought to describe a standard performance practice for each kind of dance-music featured in the case studies and to understand how creative performances diverged from standard performance practice. Third, I sought to understand how performers and others reacted to and conceived of these creative performances. To accomplish these goals I relied on a core set of fieldwork techniques that included music and dance lessons, interviews and videotaping performances. Interviews were organized around three sets of questions covering autobiography, performance practice, and a feedback interview in which we viewed videos that I had taken of particular performances. I interviewed multiple performers for each type of music and dance studied (*guaguancó*, *columbia*, *abakuá*, *salsa/casino*) in order to get a sense of the habitus of a particular performance practice. I often videotaped interviewees explaining or demonstrating steps, styles, and techniques. That is to say the commonalities as well as the individual variation. This three-part format could be compressed into one interview or spread out across a number of sessions, as was the case with my teachers.

With the main performers and teachers, I conducted a minimum of three interviews, covering each topic (biography, genre, and performance feedback) in a separate session. In addition to the main performers featured in the case studies, I

interviewed other performers from *Oba Ilú*, and in the folklore/rumba scene at large. I also interviewed dancers from the venues where I documented Cuban-style salsa dancing for the case study in Chapter 4. Although I focused on performers and participants at dance-music events, I also interviewed dance-music instructors and a small number of musicologists. The same procedures were used for interviewing salsa dancers, however, the three interviews were compressed into one interview session.

Building on my knowledge of Afro-Cuban percussion and salsa dancing, I studied music and dance with members of *Oba Ilú*. I took dance classes (*rumba* and *salsa/casino*) with Isnavi Cardoso Díaz and Miguel Martínez, studied *abakuá* songs with Gregorio Hernández and percussion with Amauri Fernández. While this group forms the core of my studies and research, they were by no means the only people with whom I took lessons. The variety of lessons allowed me insight into how people conceived of performance practice, pedagogy, as well as shared ideas about the performer's body, expression, and identity. These experiences gave me opportunities to reflect on some of the ways that my own identity as white, woman scholar from the US positioned me as an outsider. The distance between me and interviewees and teachers seemed to cut both ways: at times creating space for people to reveal and share and at others to emphasize unbridgeable differences. I have not reflected on these issues at length here, but I will note that the processes of training merit more discussion. What I have done is to attempt to create portraits of Cardoso, Martínez, and Hernández through their creative performances. I worked hard together with all my teachers and am grateful for the challenges, patience, and generosity that each of them showed me. My dance-music

studies allowed me to begin to develop an understanding of performances beyond simple visual appraisal.

An important part of the research process was documenting performances. I videotaped public performances, dance lessons, and demonstrations of particular techniques during interviews. Between January and early April, I videotaped *Oba Ilú* every Sunday at the Hotel San Alejandro in Mariano. In addition, I taped performances at regularly occurring *rumba* and folklore events when Isnavi Cardoso Díaz often performed. These included: *Sábado de La Rumba*, a weekly event held on the patio of the National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba (*Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba*, CFNC), Ambia's Peña at the *Hurón Azul* (the Blue Ferret) at the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), Fridays at the patio of the EGREM recording studios, and Sundays at *Callejón de Hamel* (Hamel's Alley, a folkloric venue and tourist attraction). There were a variety of special events including an international anthropology conference hosted by the Cuban Institute of Anthropology (ICA), the *Timbalaye* festival (which began in 2011), among others. Smaller events that included *rumba* and folkloric performances by *Oba Ilú* or Hernández by himself that ranged from the inauguration of a small park in memory of the legendary *rumbero*, Tío Tom, an awards ceremony at the National Theater, as well as events such as one in honor of the Five Heroes (also known as the Cuban Five) at the Palace of Rumba (*el Palacio de la Rumba*). I taped several versions of Hernández's lecture-demonstration "From the roots to the synthesis" (*De las raíces a la síntesis*), which traces the *abakuá* roots of *rumba* up to contemporary popular music. The talk, which used live performances by *Oba Ilú*, proposed an interpretation of the origins of *rumba* that runs contrary to the narrative proposed by Fernando Ortiz. It

was always enthusiastically received. I documented *salsa* performances by my teacher, Miguel Martínez less frequently, as we worked mostly in classes together. I did videotape him on two separate occasions at *Casa de la Música de Miramar* and *1830*. In both instances, I recorded multiple performances and selected the one that was most representative of his skill and creativity as a dancer. The examples selected for analysis are both representative of certain modes of operating that each of the performers has cultivated in their professional lives. In other ways, each of the performances is extraordinary in that they capture the spontaneity of performance shaped by a particular moment in time and social space.

Videotaping performances was important not only in developing analysis during the write-up, but also figure in the on-going process of fieldwork as I used recordings in feedback interviews. Furthermore, the dissertation traces some of the connections between verbal repertoires and dance-music performance that are central to Afro-Cuban dance-music. To accomplish this, I began transcribing performances, but quickly found that this generated more questions than it answered. I sought expert assistance and worked together with Amauri Fernández on the transcriptions. The work was tedious but extremely rewarding. Transcribing and comparing performances created an invaluable resource for upon which the case studies unfolded. I am deeply grateful for his work in this capacity. We transcribed a number of *columbias* that Cardoso appears in, and *abakuá* folkloric performances by Hernández and *Oba Ilú*. The transcriptions touch upon all of the main languages used in Cuba, including Spanish, Yoruba (traditionally referred to as Lucumí), Carabalí, and to a much lesser extent items from the Palo/Congo lexicon (in transcriptions of *columbia*). My usage of ethnonyms reflects contemporary common

usage. Translations of Carabalí are a combination of what I learned in song classes and my own translations. I have created these by compiling a variety of sources including interviews, song classes and Lydia Cabrera's *La Lengua Sagrada de los Nãñigos*. It is also important to note that, all of the Carabalí texts are from public folkloric performances and thus do not directly reflect ritual practices. With regard to the songs, I learned the general significance of the texts and in some cases of particular vocabulary items. Due to the fact that rituals and their liturgy are not meant for the uninitiated, I did not study the recited texts and have limited knowledge of the song repertoires. For that reason the recited texts remain un-translated and information has been excluded or remains un-translated in keeping with the secrecy of *abakuá* rituals. Finally, all of the transcriptions and translations of interviews and texts in Spanish are my own.

This project remains partial and incomplete, a practice of everyday life in many sense and dependent on the contributions of many people. I believe its strength lies in the case studies, in which I have attempted to describe and portray individuals and their dance-music practices in a helpful if not compassionate way. All of the shortcomings and errors are my own. Any richness or insight owes to the work and generosity of my teachers in Cuba and in the US.

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## Abstract

### *Kinetic Conversations: Creative Dance-Music Performance and the Negotiation of Identity in Contemporary Havana, Cuba*

In this dissertation, I examine creative dance-music performance as a way that professional folkloric performers pursue individual agendas and negotiate identities central to everyday life. Based on ethnographic research carried out between 2009 and 2012 with members of *Oba Ilú*, a Havana-based Cuban/Afro-Cuban folklore ensemble, I present three case studies in which performers creatively alter standard genres in ways that are both aesthetically arousing and socially effective. The first case study examines the choreographic transvestism of Isnavi Cardoso Díaz, a woman who performs the traditionally male solo genre of *columbia*. The next case study explores how Miguel Martínez negotiates his identity as a seductive partner through a fusion of folklore and social dance that I call *salsa cubana*. In the final case study, performances of *abakuá* folklore by Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández, who negotiates his identity as a patriot and public leader of this recently legalized but still controversial ritual community. Each case study is situated in contexts of interviews, autobiography, and historic processes of change in Cuba during the past two decades. I hypothesize that these creative performances operate as language-like domains of reflexive practice, which I call kinetic conversation.

Taking the agents' creative alterations as evidence of identity negotiations, I analyze their performances as a form of discursive interaction organized by musical sound and constitutive of a set of relationships including the protagonist, the interactive dyad, and a community of interpreters. Rather than treating these relationships as symbolic or representational, I consider them in terms of the embodied significance of performance informed by underlying neurobiological processes. Using the concept of *habitus* and theories of embodied cognition, I trace the kinetic performances of identity that arise through creative performance and how they reveal the intersections and slippages between the performances roles and identity as lived experience. The framework shows how contemporary identity discourses form part of the subjective significance of dance-music performance and suggests that music plays a part in shaping the kinetic dimension of social roles.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to kinetic conversation

One night in 2009 at the Yoruba Association of Havana, during the weekly folkloric show, an unusual performance unfolded. The famous *rumbero* (performer of *rumba*) and folklorist, Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández changed the course of a traditional *guaguancó*. What resulted from his alterations was a remarkable series of dance-music performances by members of the audience. In the secular, festive genre of *guaguancó*, the most ubiquitous sub-style of *rumba*, a percussion ensemble accompanies a lead singer, a chorus, and dancers. First, the lead singer presents a solo verse; then, during the second half of the song, dancers perform to the call and response of the soloist and chorus. The increasing tempo builds energy and excitement; their dance, playful and virtuosic, symbolically enacts seduction and sexual conquest. That night, Hernández presented a verse interwoven with the call and response of liturgical songs belonging to a controversial ritual community, the *abakuá* brotherhood. In the second half of the song, he prevented the ensemble’s dancers from taking the stage as expected, leaving a gap in the show. As the chorus continued their exchange with Hernández in the *abakuá* language, men from the audience knowingly responded to the tacit call with the dance of a spirit being. Taking turns they produced a compelling show commandeering the public space for their displays of ritual knowledge. The performance was perhaps the most

exciting among a standardized but creatively wrought show. The spontaneous disruption of the folkloric show shifted its basic orientation. Rather than presenting national culture in a way that was equally accessible, the performance parsed the audience between those who understood the music, dance, and language of the *abakuá* and those who did not. Furthermore, the performance gave pride of place to initiates of the ritual community over professional performers, and commented, even if indirectly, on the ownership of the tradition. The performance was charged with excitement that did not reflect folklore as a fading relic of the socialist era in Cuba, but rather one whose meanings seemed to shift with the times. This act is but one example of countless expressions in dance-music performances that raise important questions about the significance of folkloric performance and its relationship with the lived experience of identity.

Folklore has played a historic role in the construction of national cultures and the definition of identity in the West since the eighteenth century (Pegg 2010). Due to its role in defining divisions internal to the nation such as class and ethnicity, folklore is a contested and often ambiguously defined domain. In the Americas, folklore and related styles of popular music and dance have been particularly important in defining national culture in post-colonial contexts among heterogeneous populations that are divided in terms of racial and gendered categories (Turino 2003, Wade 2009). Performance of music and dance has constituted a “cultural competency” that reflects locations in the sexual-moral order of the nation, which defines racial, class and gendered hierarchies (Stoler 1995). This means that constructions of racial/ethnic, gender, and class identities may be simultaneously regulated, contested, and celebrated through the embodiment of roles and identity in folkloric performance. In this way, folklore remains central to conceptions of

the modern subject. Nevertheless, it is an often under-valued and “disparaged form of aesthetic behavior” (Berger and del Negro 2004). Its status as an “invented tradition” intertwined with nationalist discourses has led to criticism that its constructions range from overtly racist to simply lacking artistic value and having “little in common with what it purports to represent” (Stokes 1994:15). Some scholars have argued to the contrary, that folkloric performance, especially those involving dance, holds value for participants in ways linked with identity and everyday life (Mendoza 2000, 2008, Berger and Del Negro 2004, Nájera-Ramírez, Cantu, and Romero 2009). Questions thus arise about folkloric performance regarding the gaps between official or institutional definitions of identity and lived experiences, about the intersections and slippages between performance roles and individual identity. What gaps might exist in a particular historical moment and place? How might performers of folklore negotiate these gaps? How might creative performance of folklore in a particular context reflect the lived experience of identity and the subjective significance of performance?

In contrast with the identities and meanings ascribed to folklore as national culture, individuals’ creative performances can be approached as practices of everyday life which foreground the subjective significance of dance-music.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand how creative performances of *columbia*, *salsa cubana*, and *abakuá* folklore in contemporary Havana comment on the lived experience of identity, I combine ethnographic fieldwork with a framework of analysis that I am calling kinetic

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<sup>1</sup> The general idea of discourse as a practice of everyday life comes from Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) and has been applied to musical studies by Joseph Lam (2007). Here, I take everyday life to refer to the lived experience of identity in contrast to the ways folkloric performance constructs identity in terms of national culture. It refers to the immediacy of performance and the social context of its performers.

conversation. I take interactions in a discursive system, also referred to as “linguaging,” as constitutive of a set of relationships (Maturana and Varela 1992). In this framework, dance-music operates as a discursive system in performance, whose meanings encompass music, dance, and verbal interpretations (Becker 2001).<sup>2</sup> Each type of dance-music establishes an idiom in which relationships or subject positions are established and permit individuals to conserve and transform identity. The process of identity negotiation can be observed as a process of interaction within a discursive system. The results of which locate an individual in a social landscape. The process of performance, or interaction with a discursive system, produces a set of embodied relationships that permit an individual to conserve and transform their identity. The relationships or subject positions of kinetic conversation are the protagonist, the interactive dyad, and the community of interpreters. The concept of discourse provides a way of mapping a given event according to those relationships that produce the event and inform the experience of self sought by the main performer in their identity negotiation.

Rather than studying folklore as such, the framework examines performances in terms of embodiment and the histories of social interaction that shape knowledge and cognition in terms of sensorimotor processes. In this way, I shift from the idea of folklore to that of dance-music, which implies a unified domain of musical sound, stylized movement and verbal meanings, whose significance is highly contextual. This approach takes musical meanings as multi-modal and experiential. For this reason I use the term “dance-music” to refer to refer to sound and movement as a unified system of behavioral

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<sup>2</sup> Scholars have explored the multimodal or cross-modal meanings of music in recent years. Lam refers to these as sonic, non-sonic and mixed (Lam 2007). Ronald Radano explores the intersections of music and text in the construction of racial identities (2003).

coordination, which arises from shared histories of social interaction.<sup>3</sup> A mode of discursive interaction based on kinetic performances of identity, creative dance-music performance allows individuals to conserve and transform identity, in part due to the underlying neurobiological processes that shape the experience of self. Examining these processes as a dimension of embodiment permits an understanding of the non-conscious and intersubjective aspects of dance-music performance and their significance for cultural processes. By tracing alterations of standard performance and interactions between a main performer and other participants kinetic conversation examines the intersections and slippages between performance roles and individual identity in performances by members of *Oba Ilú* a folkloric ensemble in contemporary Havana. In this way, analysis accounts for the subjective significance of performance by examining the processes of embodiment at play in dance-music performance.<sup>4</sup> In particular, this research focuses on the kinetic domain of musical experience and some of its underlying neurobiological properties.

## **Habitus**

In order to examine the subjective significance of creative performances, we must take into account how subjectivity is shaped by a specific cultural and social context. This is what Pierre Bourdieu meant by the “material conditions” of experience that form *habitus* or socially constructed subjectivity (Bourdieu 1977). Making a break from the idea of a universal subject, Bourdieu uses *habitus* to describe how subjective experiences,

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<sup>3</sup> Also referred to as language use or “linguaging,” discursive interaction can be defined as an act of knowing in a domain of learned behavioral coordination (Maturana and Varela 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Defined as “the process by which collective behaviors and beliefs, acquired through acculturation, are rendered individual and ‘lived’ at the level of the body,” embodiment provides a way into the ways dance-music performance reflects lived experience (Noland 2009:9).

including but not limited to taste and aesthetic experience, result from social interaction and learning. Stating that “to speak of *habitus* is to assert that the individual and even the personal, the subjective is social, [and] collective,” Bourdieu explained of practice how structures of domination were reproduced in the very ways that individuals operate in the social world (Bourdieu 1989). At the same time, as a theory of practice, *habitus* accounts for subjectivity by allowing for variation, between agents as well as among groups or social spaces within society. In defining *habitus* he writes:

The word *disposition* seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of *habitus* (defined as a system of dispositions). It expresses first the result of an organizing action with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a *way of being* a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination (Bourdieu 1977:214).

*Habitus* attends specifically to those aspects of social and cultural life that are learned largely “unawares” and manifest as embodied conditions (Becker 2001). This concept underscores how movement in social space and interaction play a roles shaping subjectivity. Through the on-going processes of social life individuals non-consciously acquire or learn habits of perception, which shape ways of being-in-the-world.

Furthermore, *habitus* is relational in that it reflects conditions shared by a group. Thus Bourdieu’s concept helps us understand the ways that subjective experience takes shape through intersubjective processes specific to a social and cultural milieu. As Bourdieu was interested in studying class and the reproduction of domination, the *habitus* reflects the specific contexts and conditions in which such tendencies and dispositions are formed. The *habitus* reflects the social space and its conditions in which dispositions were acquired:

[as] a system of schemes of perception and appreciation of practices, cognitive and evaluative structures which are acquired through the lasting experience of a

social position ... its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated (Bourdieu 1989:19).

In this sense, *habitus* captures the differences between the dance styles of the initiates and the professionally trained dancers who learn the dance under different circumstances and thus develop different styles of embodiment. The spaces and conditions in which the dance-music was learned become apparent in its enactment to those who are familiar with the field of production.

*Habitus* addresses learned dispositions such as taste, aesthetic enjoyment, or a feel for the processes of social life, which seem natural to the individual but arise through a largely tacit process of learning and social interaction. Acquired through the on-going interaction of social life in particular social spaces, Bourdieu regards *habitus* as “durably installed” as well as the result of movement routines (Bourdieu 1977:85). Non-conscious and embodied, such dispositions are, according to Bourdieu subject to “learned ignorance” (Bourdieu 1977:19). Thus, while it accounts for dispositions and practical know-how, which escape explicit or conscious articulation, *habitus* explains reproduction rather than transformation of embodied dispositions.

Some scholars have taken issue with the extent to which Bourdieu’s concept forecloses on the possibility of agency and fails to account for processes of change (Sewell 1992, Ortner 2006, Noland 2009). Carrie Noland explains that for Bourdieu *habitus* becomes kinesthetically imperceptible and thus inalterable (Noland 2009:14). She argues that transformation at the level of embodiment is possible, however, through the cultivation of kinesthetic awareness in a variety of cultural practices, such as yoga (discussed by anthropologist Marcel Mauss). Arguably professional dance-music training and performance offer other modes of transforming embodied routines and behaviors and

certainly for acquiring and maintaining socially and culturally valuable modes of stylized movement. Dance scholars have argued similarly that, embodied practices entail the possibility of transforming patterns of movement (Sklar cited in Noland 2009). Similarly, William H. Sewell, Jr. argues that Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* is unrealistically static and closed to change (Sewell 1992). He argues that the ability of an actor to transfer a schema or disposition from one realm to another constitutes a type of agency (1992:17-19). It seems that the rigid separation of conscious and non-conscious processes at work in the reproduction of *habitus* demand a fuller understanding of consciousness in order to determine how transformations occur. An expanded definition of embodiment affords an understanding how dance-music operates at conscious and non-conscious levels to shape subjective significance of performance. This approach to musical experience expands the traditional phenomenological approach, which focuses on first person experience.

### **Embodied Cognition**

Elaborating *habitus* within the framework of embodied cognition offers a three-fold conception of embodiment, which accounts for first person experience, the interaction of being-in-the-world, as well as the body as a physical structure (Becker 2001, 2004). Embodied cognition refers to a sub-field of cognitive sciences which holds that "cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that comes from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and ... that these sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context" (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991:172-173). Thus the cognizing subject or self arises from the experiences of biological, as well as cultural and social contexts. Embodied

cognition seeks to understand the body as a (first person) lived experiential structure and the context of cognitive mechanisms (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991). This view can be used to expand the notion of *habitus* to account for both conscious and non-conscious processes at play in the social and cultural construction of subjectivity. It also accounts for processes by which identity is transformed as well as conserved and cultural domains are reproduced. Embodied cognition restores movement, emotion, and intention to fundamental roles in cognition (Freeman and Núñez 1999). Such an approach takes interaction and every-day know-how (such as that described by *habitus*) as cognitively and culturally significant.

More specifically, theories of embodied cognition understand movement and interaction as central to the formation of perceptual habits and the formation of cognitive structures, which make perception and knowledge possible. This is referred to as the theory of enaction, which holds that: (1) perception consists in perceptually guided action and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1992:173). An organism's recurring interactions with an environment and with other individuals in that environment create the cognitive structures that enable those individuals to experience a world of shared significance. Thus a history of interaction shapes cognitive structures and make the coordination of social interaction or the act of "linguaging" possible. For the study of creative dance-music performance, this can help us understand how the interactions of dance-music events shape individual identity in relation to a community in on-going processes of interaction and transformation.

Knowledge and the ability to guide one's actions in a particular context arise from the phenomena of structural coupling (Varela Thompson and Rosch 1991, Maturana and Varela 1992, Núñez 1997). A term used in biology to describe structural congruence between two systems, structural coupling occurs at a variety levels (Maturana and Varela 1991). It is important to pause here to define what is meant by "biological process" and why this will be helpful for understanding dance-music performance. Biological

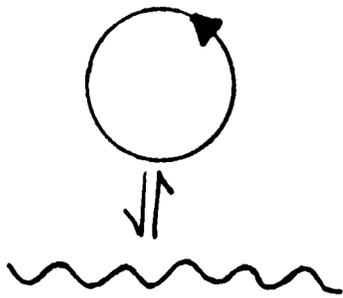


Figure 1. An autopoietic unity is a self-producing system that is separate from but interacts with its environment. It is defined and sustained by the dynamic processes of interaction among internal parts of the system. (Maturana and Varela 1992:74).

processes are defined by a kind of organization that allows a particular unity or system to be self-producing or autopoietic (Maturana and Varela 1992:42). Developed by the biologists Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, the concept of autopoiesis is central to what is meant by a biological

process and that which distinguishes living systems from machines and other non-living unities.

Autopoietic unities thus have boundaries that separate them from their environment and a network of components that produces its own components

(Maturana and Varela 1992:46). These processes not sequential but are simultaneous and characterize all living beings. In addition to being self-producing, living systems or autopoietic unities are discrete from but interrelated with the larger environment, the dynamic relationship of their internal organization determines change and such a system only allows change that conserves the relationships between its inner parts or organization (Maturana and Varela 1992:47).

This conception of biology shifts the concerns of classification from structure to organization, to a concern for organization and internal dynamics. This perspective also cuts across familiar categories in that it addresses multiple levels of organization from atoms to organisms to social groups. So it is the on-going processes of interaction and change within a system and between a system and its environment that determines its viability and defines a phenomenology, or way of being-in-the-world. Dance-music can be understood in terms of the ways the interactions of performance and learning create embodied relationships among individuals, linking them into communities with similar perceptual schemas and thus who share a way of being-in-the-world.

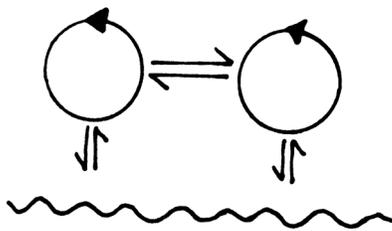


Figure 2. Structural coupling. Interactions between two autopoietic unities with their environment and with each other produces a condition of congruent organization known as structural coupling. (Maturana and Varela 1992:74).

The formation of an autopoietic unity  
 “always determines a number of phenomena associated with the features that define it; we may thus say that each class of unities specifies a particular phenomenology (Maturana and Varela 1991:51). The on-going processes of interaction with the environment and among the constituent parts of a unity comprise a succession of structural

transformations that comprise the ontogeny or life history of a unity. As long as structural changes continue without loss of organization the unity continues living; once there is a loss of organization of the unity, it ceases to exist. At the level of multicellular organisms the nervous system plays a central role in sustaining this dynamic. This underscores how central interaction and transformation are to the maintenance of being-in-the world.

Modifications are constant and arise from the dynamics among the parts internal to a

system or from the interaction of the system with its environment. Like the concept of *habitus*, autopoiesis reproduces a mode of being-in-the-world, but here there is a process of on-going structural change, which for multicellular organisms operates in large part through the nervous system. Varela summarizes the “fundamental logic of the nervous system is that of coupling movements with a stream of sensory modulations in a circular fashion,” (Varela 1991 quoted in Noland 2009:73). In a constant process of structural transformations perceptual abilities take shape through the processes of action and interaction in social space.

Autopoietic unities or living systems that are in close proximity can also interact with one another. Over time, mutual interactions lead to the phenomena of structural coupling. Structural coupling refers to the structural congruence between two systems or organisms that results from a history of recurrent mutual interactions (Maturana and Varela 1992:75). In such a situation, two unities or individuals develop similarly organized structures due to their history of repeated interaction. In this way they come to share a way of being-in-the-world. Structural coupling is a kind of bonding indicative of shared ontologies, which occurs at many levels of biological processes and through a wide diversity of media from chemical secretions to language (Maturana and Varela 1992:186). For humans, third order or social coupling occurs in domains of language or learned behavioral coordination (Maturana and Varela 1992). This results from the way that perception is shaped by recurrent sensorimotor patterns, which has been articulated as the theory of enaction (Varela Thompson and Rosch 1991).<sup>5</sup> Based on structural

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<sup>5</sup> The basic premises of enaction are (1) perception consists in perceptually guided action and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1992:173).

transformations of the nervous system that result from interactions between individual and with a shared environment, structural coupling explains how separate individuals come to share ways of interacting and perceiving the world. It accounts for perception as a result of interaction with a particular environment and with other individuals in that environment. Like the concept of *habitus* embodied cognition does not take subjective experience as existing in a pre-given world, but rather one that is shaped through a life history of experiences of interaction and social spaces. Over time in processes of mutual interaction separate individual come to have similarly organized cognitive structures, which allow them to respond similarly to a particular idiom of dance-music.

The processes that produce *habitus* described above in terms of third order structural coupling or social coupling can be thought of as supra-individual (Núñez 1999, 1997). Supra-individual biological processes refer to something that “is manifested in individuals [...] but it is realized through biological processes that take place beyond the [...] individual” (Núñez 1997:155, 1999). This concept captures the sense of intersubjectivity at play in the ways that subjectivity is socially and culturally constructed through interaction. To explain illustrate what is meant by a supra-individual biological process; Rafael Núñez offers the examples of the linguistic accent and disease epidemic (1999, 1997). Both of these present in individual bodies but exist as a phenomenon among members of a community. Such processes have self-producing dynamics that sustain them and furthermore are separate from their environment.

The concept of the supra-individual biological has been used to describe the emotional processes that unfold in musical events. In such cases, the musical event may

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be considered as a supra-individual biological phenomena, in which emotions are experienced by the individual but are produced or triggered through the actions and interactions of the collective (Becker 2001). In dance-music events the processes conserving and transforming kinetic performances of identity can likewise be thought of in terms of such supra-individual processes. Individuals develop similar body movement styles in accord with the context in which a dance was learned and a particular history of structural coupling. Furthermore, on-going processes of change permit alterations of the ways stylized body movement takes on significance for the individual or has particular kinetic features. The coupling of subjectivity and stylized movement not only organizes individual experience but also expresses relationships and social roles, which are equally embedded in social life as they are in different styles of dance-music. The ways that individuals learn by observation and imitation the styles of movement associated with particular social roles, spaces, and communities reflect such shared or collectively enacted ways of being-in-the-world. As such, dance-music performance events as part of on-going histories of structural coupling permit the transformation of subjectivities and their kinetic expressions.

One of the neural mechanisms that likely underpins structural coupling (and thus the formation of the *habitus*) is the operation of the mirror neuron system (MNS). Mirror neurons are a particular class of visuomotor neurons that play a fundamental role in action understanding, intention attribution, and action imitation; they are also implicated in experience-based learning (Iacoboni 2009, Rizzolatti, Fogassi, and Gallese 2001). Referred to as an “observation/execution matching system” mirror neurons provide a mechanism by which structural coupling might create similarly organized cognitive

structures in the form of neural maps (citation). Mirror neurons activate during both observation and execution of certain types of actions, especially those involving hands, feet, mouth and facial expressions (Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004). Scientists have argued that the MNS provides an alternative to the visual hypothesis of human action understanding, which supports conventional understanding of perception as a process of representation of a pre-given, objective world. By contrast the direct-matching hypothesis explains how humans experience the observation of particular kinds of human activities as motor experience linked with an individual's movement repertoires (Rizzolatti, Fogassi and Gallese 2001). Such a neurobiological structure has implications for socially valuable processes such as empathy, imitative learning, and understanding human intention. Furthermore, it supports the notion of perceptual faculties as discreet ontologies, embedded in specific cultural and social contexts.

In terms of first person experience of music, encompass multiple domains, many of which are not specifically auditory including the experience of movement, emotion, as well as the perception of musical structure comprised conscious and non-conscious dimensions (Barucha et. al. 2006:142-3). This means that the subjective meanings of musical events take shape though the movement experienced through participation in musical or dance-music events, just as much as through emotion and perception of structure. It may be noted that motion in musical experience may be self-movement or movement apprehended in musical sound, but both are perceptually real (Clarke 2001). As perceptually real experiences the movements learned in and associated with dance-music events inform a sense of self and identity in the social world. Furthermore, Barucha notes that perceptual experiences of music generate musical expectations (by

creating neural maps); broadly corroborating existing theories of musical expectancy, movement may be considered to constitute an expressive domain in musical experience (Overy and Molnar-Szakacs 2009, Steinbeis et. al. 2006, Juslin 2001, Feld 1984, Meyer 1956).

Regarding perception as perceptually guided action that takes place in the contexts of an individual life, a social and cultural context and the biological structure of the body, a three-fold understanding of embodiment emerges. These three senses of embodiment have been summarized as: the body as a physical structure in which emotion and cognition happen, the body as a site of first person, unique, inner life, and the body as involved with other bodies in the phenomenal world, that is, as being-in-the-world (Becker 2004). In order to understand the subjective significance of folkloric performance, the individual must be located in relation to a community or communities, and in relation to the body as a physical structure, in addition to the most common conception of embodiment as first person experience. Discourse provides a useful scaffold for applying this understanding of embodiment to dance-music performance and musical experience.

This process is usefully thought of as discursive interaction, or learned behavioral coordination, rather than communication in the traditional sense (Maturana and Varela 1992). Learned or inherited like language, but accounting for embodied processes which are both conscious and non-conscious, discursive interaction seeks to account for movement as part of the shared significance of musical experience. It accounts for an individual in a reflexive process of interpreting a role as well as in relation to other participants in a dance-music event. The ways an individual alters a familiar type of

dance-music can provoke emotional responses in other participants. This is part of the arousal that is key to how musical events catalyze experiences of self (Becker 2001). Commonly held conceptions of communication posit a process of data transfer or decoding centered on representational processes. This has been dubbed the “tube metaphor” of communication (Maturana and Varela 1992:196). In the tube metaphor, the act of communication occurs in the production of a message by a speaker and its transfer by some conduit to a receiver, which involves the process of de-coding. By contrast to traditional conceptions of communication as a process of de-coding or representation, theories of embodied cognition define communication as “learned behavioral coordination” or languaging (Maturana and Varela 1992). Languaging depends, not on what is transmitted, but on what happens to the person who receives it and in this way is useful for understanding dance-music and performance events which revolve around the arousal of emotions, usually thought of as aesthetic experience (Becker 2010). In dance-music events interactions often result in further interaction, a response may be that an individual dances, or performs a particular movement as part of a series of dance moves. Learned behavioral coordination defines knowledge as an effective or adequate behavior in a realm or domain [in] which we define a question (Maturana and Varela 1992:174). This means that know-how and social interaction rather than abstract structures or general grammars, constitute what it means to know. A response may be an intensification of the arousal that becomes interpreted as aesthetic experience (Becker 2010). Musical events are aimed at producing affective responses and so the definition of learned behavioral coordination focuses more precisely on what occurs through musical interaction and the types of significance that result. The ways that appropriate responses, emotional or

kinetic, rely on a process of learning, which similar to the concept of *habitus* reflects how subjectivity is socially and culturally constructed.

Finally, when dance-music is considered as one system of behavioral coordination, that encompasses the sound and production of music, the movement and interaction of dance as well as the verbal interpretations. Together they form a system of discursive interaction. Dance-music events, in the general sense (including classes and rehearsals, performances, etc.) shape and inform the set of dispositions through which such events are perceived and experienced. Individual learn to perceive and interpret particular types of dance-music through participation. The process of actions and interaction that shape cognitive structures or bodily dispositions link verbal interpretations with the emotions and felt experiences, including motion, of musical experience. This process suggests that verbal interpretations or discourses become part of the experiential realm in a process called recursivity. Maturana and Varela define recursivity as the dynamic by which “the domains of discourse that we generate become part of our domains of existence” (Maturana and Varela 1992:234). Considering how verbal meanings of dance-music feedback into performance practice and its social implications is important for how dance-music shapes identity. In the case of Afro-Cuban folklore, recursivity is part of the dynamics that shape its significance as dance-music and is mobilized in the formation of national culture and the struggle by performers and their communities to define the traditions, which they practice.

### **Kinetic Conversation**

By taking alterations of standard performance practice like those witnessed in Hernández’s creative performance as evidence of identity negotiations, I draw an analogy

between creative dance-music performance and discourse (language-in-action or language use).<sup>6</sup> Although I draw consistently on concepts and terms from the linguistic study of discourse in kinetic conversation, I ultimately shift the ground on which these terms operate. In order to understand how kinetic performances of identity associated with creative performances of folklore reflect the lived experience of identity, as opposed to the meanings ascribed to it as national culture, I focus on the embodied significance of creative performance, especially those processes underlying perception. By approaching folklore as dance-music performance, I frame it in terms of how stylized movement reflects an individual in relation to a community. In dance-music meaning operates through emotion and musical structure, but also through movement and can specify particular histories of interaction linking a group in relation to an interpretative practice. From difference among interpretative practices, kinetic performances of identity for part of the “forestructure of understanding” of a given type of dance-music and as such operate expressively, as a basis of arousal and central to aesthetic experience (Becker 2001). By understanding performances through underlying neurobiological processes and the ways that movement and emotion produce shared significance, kinetic conversation explains how individual performers conserve and transform identity.

Kinetic conversation frames dance-music as a mode of discursive interaction through which performers negotiate identities central to everyday life. Identity negotiation here refers to a process of interaction within a discursive system that locates an individual in a social landscape. Defining the discursive system in terms of the unity

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<sup>6</sup> In linguistics, negotiation has two senses; first, it is a game of bargaining linked with issues of power, in which all parties have an interest. Second, negotiation is also a concept used for explaining dialogic interaction, meaning (egalitarian) dialogue based on validity claims as opposed to power (Weigand and Dascal 2001).

of language, dance, and music, each type of dance-music establishes an idiom in which subject positions are established. Using the theory of enaction to explain how interaction shapes perceptual habits, dance-music events can be analyzed in terms of a set of embodied relationships among participants. These relationships may be understood as subject positions (like personal pronouns in verbal discourse) and may be mapped onto participants in a dance-music event. Interactions between the main performer and other participants, based on kinetic performances of identity, operate through those relationships to conserve and transform individual identity. The subject positions or relationships imply expectations about roles and interaction, such that alterations of standard performance practice are affective and can comment on identity within the idiom. Creative performances play on and reveal the intersections and slippages between individual identity and performance roles and may further produce new modes of interaction and shared ways of being-in-the-world.

The set of embodied relationships or subject positions include: the protagonist or main performer; the interactive dyad, which consists of the main performer in direct interaction with another participant; and finally the community of interpreters which consists of a group of individuals linked by history of interactions in a particular idiom. The interactive dyad consists of the protagonist of a creative performance interacting with another participant in the performance. In addition to reflecting shared knowledge by the protagonist and a discursive partner, such dyadic interaction constitutes the site of structural coupling. The community of interpreters refers to the network of individuals who form around the use of a discursive system, in which music, dance and language are a unified system of behavioral coordination.

To understand the intersections and slippages between everyday experience and constructions of national culture, practice theory and an expanded definition of embodiment explains how the significance of dance-music is produced and shared in an on-going process that conserves and transforms individual identity in the context of a community. In this way, creative performances play a role in the transformation of identity and social space in contemporary Cuba.

In the context of contemporary Cuba, kinetic conversation offers insight into how creative performances reflect the subjectivity of performers rather than the meanings ascribed to folklore in the context of national culture. By examining the intersections and slippages between individual identity and performance roles the analysis shows how performers use the discursive systems of folklore and particular types of dance-music for their individual agendas. Furthermore, by using the term dance-music rather than folklore, I focus on the subjective significance of performance in terms of the three-fold definition of embodiment. Their performances are interpreted in the context of the social field from which they arise, meaning that they are historically specific to the institutions and relationships in which they take place.

In Cuba, folklore is defined as the religious music and performance traditions of people of African ancestry (Hagedorn 2001). It includes the religious music and dance of *Regla de Ocha* (Yoruba origin), *Regla de Palo* (Congo/Bantu origin), *Abakuá* brotherhood (Carabalí origin), and *Arará* (Ewe/Fon origin) (Alén 2000). During the development of folkloric performance after the Cuban revolution, popular traditions such as *rumba*, and the *congas* and *comparsas* of carnival were included in folkloric performance. Based on the research and writing of Fernando Ortiz, starting in the 1930s

folklore has been key in defining *Cubanidad* or Cubanness as a mixture of Hispanic and African cultures and forms the basis of the modern nation. As Jossianna Arroyo argues, folklore has been defined in the writings of Ortiz and other elite intellectuals in terms of fundamentally masculinist discourses of national unity and articulates a uniquely Cuban conception of the modern individual defined in terms of race, sex, and gender (Arroyo 2003). Defining the boundaries internal to the nation, folkloric performance has operated at different times as a site of the public performance of identity and the highly specific contexts of Cuban cultural politics.

Dominant discourses have until recently defined Cuba as “monoethnic” and “multi-racial” (e.g. Eli Rodríguez 1994).<sup>7</sup> Music and dance have played direct and central roles in this process since the nineteenth century (Cushman 2005). Paradoxically, national culture has thus been shaped around the need for unity and the silencing of the social experience of race (Rodríguez-Mangual 2004:18-19, de la Fuente 2007, Farber 2011, Antón Carrillo 2012). This central tenant of national culture can be traced to historical precedents established by Fernando Ortiz and José Martí. Both Ortiz and Martí acknowledge the fundamental existence of different racial categories, black, white, and mulatto, but both negate their relevance in favor of advancing a unified national identity.<sup>8</sup>

If Ortiz presents a hegemonic national project through his writings on folklore, Lydia Cabrera’s ethnography and fiction pose an alternative vision of the nation

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<sup>7</sup> While the precise narrative of definition of this varies among authors the basic definition of Cuban ethnicity as monolithic appears across music scholarship. For example, Olavo Alén locates Afro-Cuban music as temporally prior to Cuban music describing it as an antecedent or heritage, while fully Cuban music are those genres that reflect subsequent processes of mixture or development as (except *punto guajiro*, a kind of Hispanic peasant music, which is not necessarily mixed but yet not categorized as folkloric).

<sup>8</sup> Historically specific terms for race exist in different eras and include a vocabulary of categories and descriptors.

(Rodríguez-Mangual 2004:12). While often considered a disciple of Ortiz, Cabrera does not simply extend his work, but rather offers a “positive ontology” in that she centers the Afro-Cuban subject (Rodríguez-Mangual 2004). Cabrera’s outlook is evident in introduction to her ethnography *La sociedad secreta abakuá: narrada por los viejos adeptos*. (The Abakuá Secret Society: Narrated by Older Followers) Cabrera writes:

In this way, without risk in Cuba one can be an indianist. There are no Indians. But to probe the old, incalculably rich, depths of African culture, that centuries of slave trade accumulated here, is a task that many brand as “antipatriotic” and negative (Cabrera 2005:8).

Cabrera underscores the fundamental challenge that African culture poses to the domination of social and political institutions by white Creole Cuban culture. She points to the ways that “racelessness” silences the lived realities of Afro-Cubans. Rather than drawing Afro-Cuban religions in a hierarchy, as Ortiz did from primitive (Congo) to advanced (Yoruba), Cabrera by contrast draws parallels among the different Afro-Cuban religions reflecting her understanding of the ways they were practiced by the people whom she interviewed. Thus the writings about Afro-Cuban religions and performance traditions reflect visions of the nation that in its dominant expression produces a heteronormative and masculinist vision of the nation and its subjects.

One way of understanding this situation is that ethnicity is defined as national culture and race defines divisions and hierarchies within the nation. As an analytic category, however, ethnicity can be used to understand “how music is used by social actors in specific local situations to erect boundaries, to maintain distinctions between us and them, and how terms such as ‘authenticity’ are used to justify these boundaries”

(Stokes 1994:6).<sup>9</sup> Folkloric performance converges on definitions of ethnicity and race producing a site of cultural politics. The reinterpretation of folkloric genres through performance and other media (such as Hernández's lecture-demonstrations discussed briefly in chapter five) may provide ways of redrawing the boundary lines of race and ethnicity in national culture through the processes of creative performance.

Contemporary folkloric performance reflects the transition from the earlier era of Cuban socialism, an era characterized by the uniformity of social experience, through the crisis of the Special Period, to the contemporary era characterized by plurality and inequality. Folklore was an important domain of artistic production and everyday life during the decades following the 1959 Cuban revolution. After the revolution, there was a revival of Afrocubanism and folklore became central to the production of new national culture. At the same time, Afro-Cuban religions were repressed and considered to be evidence of "backwardness" and vestigial features of a disappearing social order (Moore 2006, Ayorinde 2004, Hagedorn 2001). The government supported the performance of secular and stylized versions of religious music and dance by professional performing ensembles, most notably the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (CFNC or National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba) (Hagedorn 2001). In particular, official institutions upheld the festive and secular genre of *rumba* as an exemplar of working class artistry (Daniel 1991). The use of Afro-Cuban performance traditions and religious music and dance in public performances of national culture created new performance genres including the

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<sup>9</sup> Gerard Béhague also discusses the dual or multiple sense of ethnicity, citing that the concept can be understood as internally or externally defined (Adams 1989 quoted in Béhague 1994). The idea that ethnicity may be self-identified and or ascribed by outsiders to a particular group, he notes is particularly relevant and meaningful in the Caribbean and Latin America. Finally, Béhague states that ethnicity may also "embody political agendas, in the sense of being reflective of power relations" (Béhague 1994:vi).

*espectáculo folklórico* (folkloric show) and Cuban modern dance (John 2012, Hagedorn 2001). With the institutionalization of folklore its interpretation and even techniques of performance became standardized and regulated (Moore 2006, Daniel 1995, Manuel 1990). Folklore became part of everyday life in socialist Cuba through the work of performing ensembles including but not limited to the CFNC, as well as music and dance education, conservatory training, amateur classes at local cultural centers (*casas de cultura*), performance venues and other institutions of culture (Moore 2006).<sup>10</sup> In this context repertoire and practices for staging folkloric performance became standardized to the point that religious practitioners started to draw on the stylized public performances to shape their own practices (Hagedorn 2001, Ayorinde 2004). At the same time, struggles over definitions of folklore reflect dissenting opinions and differences between communities within the field of its production (Hagedorn 2001, Brown 2003).

In practice, folkloric performance includes more than the dance-music of Afro-Cuban religions. During the first three decades of the revolution, *rumba* and *comparsa* (the ensembles of carnival) as well as salon and social dances were included in the repertoire of the CFNC. Historically national culture and the public performance of identity have been associated with each of these: folklore as the music of Afro-Cuban religions, with *rumba*, and also with the salon dances of the nineteenth-century and the popular social dance of the 1920s and 1930s called *son* (Daniel 1995, Moore 1997, Alén 2000, Carpentier 2001, Hagedorn 2001). Each of the three types of dance-music examined in the case studies, *salsa cubana*, *rumba*, and *abakuá* folklore are central to

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<sup>10</sup> Balbuena mentions the integration of folkloric dance into all graduate and undergraduate dance curriculum (2003). Hagedorn describes the development of the CFNC (2001). Guerra theorized the methods of folklorization widely applicable to national culture at different social levels (1989).

public performances of identity in recent years and to the highly specific contexts of Cuban cultural politics.

Constructions of national culture and their relationship with dance-music inform how each of the case studies presents the agendas and identity negotiations of individual performers. Against a backdrop of social change, the case studies presented here illustrate how three different traditional genres create compelling contexts for identity negotiations in contemporary Havana. Each of the three performers, Isnavi Cardoso Diaz, Miguel “Chino” Martinez, and Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernandez, from the professional folkloric ensemble *Oba Ilú*, here become the subject of ethnographic portraits through analysis of their creative performances. Their interactions in music and dance are demonstrated as revealing their subjectivity and position within a social landscape defined largely by musical practices. Analysis takes the immediate milieu as well as the histories of training and experience as contexts defining the specificity of their communications. Each case speaks to the ways that musical practice, specifically dance-music events, provide a site for individuals to interact in ways that constitute a public self and over time constitute an identity.

After twenty-five years with Cuba’s premier folkloric ensemble, *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (CFNC, the National Folklore Ensemble), and several more years teaching dance at the *Instituto Superior de Arte* in Havana, Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández formed *Oba Ilú* in 1995. According to Hernández, the objectives of the group were “to promote Cuban/Afro-Cuban folkloric music, demonstrating its universal values and importance to national culture” (Hernández, interview 2/17/11). The group worked in tourist venues and on national tours until 2001, when he dissolved the group, citing a lull

in tourism. After several years of touring and teaching in Europe together, Hernández and Isnavi Cardoso Díaz reformed the group in 2005. During this second phase, *Oba Ilú* was awarded a government contract in the new decentralized *empresa* (enterprise) system. While on government contract, the group typically played one weekly show in addition to rotating through a set of venues that hold regular folkloric *peñas* (social clubs). In addition, the group was often called for official events, largely due to Hernández's wide-ranging institutional contacts, as well for his individual gigs.<sup>11</sup>

Hernández was 71 years old when I began my research. He maintained a work schedule that few members of the ensemble could match despite being decades younger than him. Hernández was an enigma in many ways, but his straightforward sense of justice earned my trust, respect and made me want to learn more about him. He could be a man of few words, or could be equally eloquent and contentions expressing his views on folklore and national culture. He had a sense of humor behind a stern demeanor and a distain for petty quarrels. Hernández passed away suddenly in the first week of January 2012 from a stroke. He had been attending an event at National Union of Writers, and Artists of Cuba (*Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*, UNEAC), where he performed and was among his friends and colleagues when he collapsed and was rushed to the hospital; he remained in a coma for a few days before passing away on January 8, 2012. It was an honor to be allowed into his circle of influence and activity, if only for a brief time.

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<sup>11</sup> Named in honor of Jesús Perez, using the master drummer's Yoruba ceremonial name, *Oba Ilú* followed the basic format established by the CFNC. Perez was among the founding generation of the CFNC, and became an important figure in the diffusion of Afro-Cuban music and creation of Cuban modern dance using folklore as a reference. Considerably smaller than the CFNC, *Oba Ilú* consisted of approximately 12 performers: two lead singers, five percussionists and five dancers. There was a steady core of musicians but typically dance personnel were in flux.

His departure has not resulted in a haunting of the ethnographic process. The dissertation, however, otherwise invokes the presence and memories of other important figures in Afro-Cuban history. First, Hernández named his group *Oba Ilú* for Jesus Pérez, a master drummer in the Ocha-Ifá tradition, using his Yoruba religious name. Pérez rose to prominence during the first years of the revolution recording Yoruba repertoire and providing the percussion accompaniment to the development of the modern dance ensemble. Other figures from Cuban history emerge from the distant past into the present day through performance. In a political event for which Hernández was called to perform (analyzed in chapter five) celebrated the memory of Quintín Banderas, a general of the nineteenth-century Liberation Army. Murdered by a government-backed militia during the 1906 August Rebellion, Banderas was honored posthumously (in 1921), by Club Atenas (an important Afro-Cuban association) with a statue in Atrillo Park. That statue was recently restored and celebrated in an official event on August 23, 2011 (see chapter five). The links are not direct or clear but the musicians and members of the audience at the event claimed Banderas as an *abakuá*, one solemnly nodding and affirming, “it had to be... for him... to honor him...” (Anonymous musician, Atrillo Park, August 23, 2011). Thus the memories of ancestors, adoptive and autobiographical, propel our work and inform our responsibilities.

### **Goals and Chapters**

This dissertation has four goals. First, I seek to explain how types of dance-music operate as sites for the negotiation of identities central to everyday life. Second, I examine creative dance-music performance in terms of individual agendas, identity discourses and the lived experience of identity. Third, I explain how the process of dance-

music interaction creates shared embodied significance among participants. Fourth, I propose that dance-music plays a role in the on-going processes of change in contemporary Havana.

A history of music and identity in Cuba follows this introduction, which examines the ways that dance-music reflects historically shifting definitions of ideologies of nation and the identity discourses of race, sex and gender that construct national subjectivities. Each of the next three chapters presents a case study of a member of the professional folkloric ensemble *Oba Ilú* and their creative dance-music performances. Each of the case studies elaborates one of the subject positions in kinetic conversation. The chapters follow a similar structure. Each one begins with a description of one of the three different positions in kinetic conversation: the protagonist, the interactive dyad and the community of interpreters. A description of the dance-music genre follows, sketching a description of performance practice and closing with a section of ethnographic descriptions of how the dance-music organizes identity and social interaction (*habitus*) among contemporary performers. Performance roles are strongly organized around the idea of *concepto* among many professional dancers. The *concepto* describes the role or psychological outlook to be dramatized in performance. Next, the chapters present a performer biography including a description of the agendas and strategies that each performer pursues in their performance. Each chapter closes with a substantial analysis of one or two specific creative performances, which apply the framework of kinetic conversation to a process of identity negotiation. Chapter three presents the case of Isnavi Cardoso Díaz and solo dancing as a mode of heroic self-making. This case illustrates the position of the protagonist in kinetic conversation and explores the gender politics of folklore as national

culture through a woman's performance of the traditionally male-only *columbia*. Chapter four presents the case of Miguel Martínez and his seductive take on *salsa cubana*, a local style of the transnational partner dance. The case illustrates the interactive dyad in kinetic conversation. Chapter five presents the case of Gregorio "El Goyo" Hernández and his creative performances of *abakuá* folklore. The final chapter presents a conclusion in which the role of dance-music in the on-going evolution of identity and social roles is considered.

## Chapter 2

### **Dance-Music and Identity in Cuba: historical and contemporary manifestations**

In order to situate the case studies that follow in a historical context, this chapter presents a review of how dance-music in Cuba reflects ideologies of nationalism through performance roles and the identity discourses that shape them. Nationalism offers a framework from which to examine the intersections of race, gender, and class, which shape notions of the individual in Cuban society. Ideologies of nation have been entwined since the nineteenth century with dance-music styles, which have operated as an important site for public performance of identity. The musical sounds, stylized movements and verbal interpretations of dance-music have contributed to the formation and contestation of the nation as a public site for the performance of identity in different historical periods. Shaped by the intersection of constructions of race, gender, and sexuality, these categories must be understood in terms of their specific historic and cultural constructions, which may be done in part through dance-music and its social uses.

As part of the broader contexts of European colonialism and modernity, individual identity and subjectivity have been defined by constructions of race, sexuality and gender which intersect and operate in the sexual-moral ordering of the nation

(Stolcke 1989, Stoler 1995, Arroyo 2003, Wade 2010). These identities define national subjectivities as well as divisions and exclusionary practices within the nation. That is to say their particular constellations define the inner boundaries and social hierarchies within national communities. As such, scholars have argued that such divisions are often based on notions of how inner moral essences are linked with outer form and not solely on appearance (Stoler 1995). Such identities based on notions of “otherness” are defined in particular social and cultural contexts through cultural practices.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter examines how dance-music practices in Cuba have reflected and constructed national ideologies during different historical eras. I begin with a discussion of *contradanza cubana*, which by the 1840s, was recognized as an emblem of creole society in Cuba. Salon dances evidence the cultivation of gender identities and sexualities that underpinned the colonial order. The ideology of *patria* or “raceless patriotism” developed by the independence movement, maintained and reinforced the gendered division of society by defining the nation in terms of an interracial brotherhood. Next, I examine the Afrocubanist movement during the 1920s and 1930s, first in its popular expression through the couple dance music of *son*, and then in its somewhat later elite expression through the folklore studies of Fernando Ortiz. The popular dance-music, *son*, was the first Afro-Cuban music to become widely accepted without excessive stylization. It was iconic of the “new Cuba” that finally shed the political dominance of colonial era elites in that the music expanded the public presence of Afro-Cubans in sound and in performance. Next, I discuss the role of folklore in revolutionary culture of socialist Cuba

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<sup>12</sup> While the control of sexuality and reproduction has been fundamental to social order and political power, racial identities can be reproduced through “cultural competencies” rather than sexual reproduction (Wade 2010, Stoler 1995).

after the 1959 revolution. Reflecting the secularism and class-based critiques of Marxist-Leninism, as well as the value of “raceless patriotism,” the institutionalization of folkloric performance reflected hierarchies of cultural production as well as the elevation of Afro-Cuban culture as working class artistry. Its production employed many traditional musicians and performers creating sites of struggle over definitions of cultural practices. Then turning to the most recent transformations of the Cuban nation, I examine how dance-music has emerged again as an important site for shaping identity and amplifying the public presence of traditional Afro-Cuban religious communities. During the Special Period (1990-2004) and Recovery (2005-2013) the role of Afro-Cuban religions and transnational dance-music/popular music genres expanded in response to the softening of restrictions on religious practices and other changes. A groundswell of religious practice and its dance-musics have played a role in the transformation of subjectivities within the newly forming public spaces. At the same time, popular music including *salsa* has played an important role in the redefinition of social roles. Finally, histories indicate the lack of consensus in defining the nation and use of dance-music. Nevertheless, dance-music has played key roles in organizing social interaction and shaping identities in the context of national culture by both elite and popular individuals and groups.

### **1. Creole society and the nineteenth-century independence movement**

*Contradanza cubana*, also called the *contradanza criolla*, emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth-century; it became an emblem of creole culture and was recognized as the first expression of Cuban musical nationalism (Carpentier 2001, Balbuena 2003, Manuel 2009). Originally imported from England, France and Spain during the mid-1700s, contra dance (along with the quadrille) became a common cultural

medium in the Caribbean, although its local expressions varied greatly (Manuel 2009). It was performed alongside minuets, rigadoons, lanceros, quadrilles and waltzes (Linares 1970, Balbuena 2003). The *contradanza cubana* gave rise not only to other genres and styles of Creole salon dance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including *danza*, *habanera*, and *danzón*, but ultimately provides the basis for twentieth-century Latin popular social dance, including *son* and *salsa* (Balbuena 2003, Manuel 2009).

As a musical genre, the *contradanza cubana* was remarkably plain and repetitive in contrast to contemporary European Baroque musical styles (Manuel 2009:5). It consisted of two repeated sections composed of 8-bar phrases in an AABB form. It used simple harmonies, major keys, and diatonic melodies. The practice of using rhythmic ostinatos in the accompaniment and the use of what became known as the “habanera” rhythm in the bass lines, distinguished it from European styles and furthermore laid down the groundwork for a system of musical accompaniment for modern popular social dance-music styles. Manuel notes that the habanera rhythm may have been brought to Cuba via contra dance, as it appears in English antecedents notated in *Playford’s Dancing Master* (1710) and may well have coincidentally been found in West African drumming and time line patterns (Manuel 2009:6). This overlapping musical feature seems to have been key in the development of creolized salon dances.<sup>13</sup>

The configuration of the couple and choreographies of the salon dances reflected status, social values and the mores surrounding interaction. In Europe, choral dances had

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<sup>13</sup> The term creolization is traditionally used to refer to Caribbean societies. Manuel notes that it has been criticized, like the concept of hybridity itself in anthropology and *mestizaje* in Latin American studies, due to the implication that it describes a process of mixture predicated on the idea of pure and separate materials. Here, music and dance may be African or neo-African, European or neo-European, which combine and recombine in ways that are shaped by social context and other factors. Manuel’s comparison of contra dance and quadrille in the Caribbean illustrate well how different contexts influenced the development of very different local genres and styles from the same European antecedents.

been associated with the lower classes, while the more complex and formal minuet epitomized courtly refinement (Manuel 2009:3). Contradance rose to popularity across all classes with the emergent middle class, which favored choral dances to the rigidly hierarchical and somewhat antiquated minuet (ibid.). The choreography of *contradanza cubana* used the open position of social dance, in which partners hold hands or do not touch at all, which predominated during the colonial era (Manuel 2009:10). It was, like its European antecedents, a choral or group dance performed in figures and directed by the caller, which in Cuba was called the *bastonero*. It could be performed in two lines (long ways) after the Spanish style, or in squares of two couples after the French style. Minuet eventually evolved into the waltz, which uses the independent couple formation and the closed position or loose embrace now largely associated with social dance. Contradance became marginalized after the waltz ascended to popularity, as it seemed old-fashioned in comparison.

By the 1840s, the *contradanza cubana* had become an emblem of Creole culture and a Cuban national type (Manuel 2009:44). While not synonymous with political nationalism it evidenced the self-awareness of Creole society and growing debates about the viability of the Cuban nation. *Contradanza cubana* was also a means by which people at the time positioned themselves in the politics of the day; expressing preferences for the French or Spanish style of choreography might comment on a dancer's political allegiances (Linares 1970, Manuel 2009). Even the role of the *bastonero*, as the director of the dancing couples, eventually came to be associated with Spain's dictatorial relationship with Cuba. Social politics were also expressed in dance-music preferences as Manuel notes that some negrophobic elites rejected the richly syncopated dance tunes

that highlighted Afro-Cuban musical practices (Manuel 2009). Free blacks could use social dance to demonstrate their superiority to slaves and poor whites. By the 1890s, creole dance-music and particularly the *danza* was explicitly aligned with the

independence movement (Linares 1970, Galán 1983 quoted in Manuel 2009).

*Danza* developed by mid-century from *contradanza cubana*. The style of dance used the independent couple formation and loose embrace of closed position adopted from the *waltz*. At the same time, *danza* maintained the duple meter of *contradanza cubana* along with some of the rhythmic ostinatos. While African and neo-African musical practices influenced the music of *contradanza cubana*, its dance styles and choreography were minimally influenced by African and neo-African dance. The independent couples configuration does not appear in African dance styles, and Manuel points out that many Afro-Cubans and Afro-Caribbeans found it indecent (2009).

The association of creole salon dance with the nation persisted into the twentieth century, evidenced by a political cartoon criticizing US cultural domination (de la Fuente 2001:181) [figure 3]. The cartoon depicts *danzón* as a dancer who has worn out his shoes and collapsed from the brush steps of the Charleston, while the US is depicted as a “Charleston” that couple looks on impassively. Thus from the beginning of the nineteenth



Figure 3. “American dances: The agony of danzón” (de la Fuente 2001:181).

century expressions of the Cuban nation linked dance-music with identity in a variety of ways. Social dance in its elite or salon forms as well as its popular expressions were important ways that individuals situated themselves socially and politically. This tradition persisted as *contradanza cubana* played a role in the development of commercial popular styles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including *danzón*, but also those like *son*, which formed the basis of *salsa* (Manuel 1994 and 2009, Balbuena 2003).

Creole salon dance styles reflected the emergence and reflexivity of a “Cuban type” amid contentious debates about the viability of the nation and the formation of an independence movement. Debates regarding the nation revolved in large part around notions of “race” (Helg 1990, Ferrer 1999, Kuss 2004). The concept of race not only changed throughout the nineteenth-century and was defined variously by voices in the debate (Helg 1990, Appelbaum, Macpherson and Roseblatt 2003). From a generalized concept somewhat similar to culture, to one aligned with biological conceptions of difference among blacks and whites, voices were various and often pragmatic in their rhetoric. Discussions, however, reflect links between politics, race and cultural practices as operative in the debates about the nation.



Figure 4. Cigar box illustration, 1862. From: Santos Garcia and Armas Rigal, *Danzas Populares* (2002).



Figure 5. Cigar box illustration, 1866. From: Santos Garcia and Armas Rigal, *Danzas Populares* (2002).



La danza en una sociedad de Puerto Príncipe, Camagüey. (Grabado publicado en 1885.)

Figure 6. A dance in a social club in Puerto Príncipe, in the province of Camagüey, published in 1885. From: Santos Garcia and Armas Rigal, *Danzas Populares* (2002).

The music and dance, Manuel points out, often developed independently of one another. This may have been related to the separation of social spaces and groups involved in its production. *Contradanza cubana*, which may be taken as a token of the entire genre of creole salon dances, was performed at plantation houses for families and for social occasions. It was also performed, in various sub-styles, in a variety of public venues and urban settings. Urban areas were populated in large part by free black artisans, after the Spanish tradition of a rural aristocracy and urban African populations (ibid.). During the nineteenth-century in Cuba the majority of professional musicians were black and performed European notated musical traditions, having been trained in military ensembles and churches in addition to dance bands (Urfé 1984, Manuel 2009).

Dancing masters worked independently and at *academias de baile* creating new choreographies (Urfé 1984, Chasteen 2004). While *academias de baile* were associated with sex work during the twentieth-century, it was *casas de cuna* that offered dances for male customers who could also pay for sexual relations with their dance partners during the nineteenth-century (Linares 1970, Moore 1997, Manuel 2009). Furthermore, by the 1850s, there were public dances; these became the focus of moral discourses due to their reputation for hosting audiences of mixed social classes and fostering sexual license (Chasteen 2004).<sup>14</sup>

At the center of the moral controversies about social dance and sexual license was the figure of the *mulata*, a sexually attractive and aggressive “mixed-race” woman. Vera M. Kutzinski offers the useful concept of self-effacing masculinity as a main feature of this ideological construct of Cuban nationalism (Kutzinski 1993). She also points out that in the social reality (and literary representations) of colonial society the *mulata* was a product of the rape of black women (Kutzinski 1993:196). The social-sexual politics of colonial society were epitomized in one sense by dance-music events as described in novels and poetry of the times. In the most famous example, much of the plot of Cirilo Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdés o La Loma de Angel* occurs around the social spectacle of dancing (Holland 1992, Kutzinski 1993). The *mulata* reflects the contradictory nature of agency that emerged from social and legal structures that protected elite male privilege and sexual prerogative.

The moral controversies arising from mixture of social classes may be helpfully understood in the context of Verna Stolcke’s description of the dynamic interaction

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<sup>14</sup> Chasteen views the mixed class character of dance events as a democratizing impulse much like the early interpretations of *mestizaje* as “racial democracy.” This reading neglects the social power dynamics at play.

between race and gender in slave society. In her discussion of the “dual marriage system,” in which social equals married and social-racial unequals maintained unmarried relationships and/or matrifocal domestic units, Stolcke seeks to reframe conceptions of sexual practices associated with “whitening” or status marriages (Stolcke 1989).<sup>15</sup> The rise of slave society in Cuba during the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries resulted in the reinforcement of rigid racial and gender hierarchies. The development of the sugar industry was accompanied by new legislation, not only liberalizing commerce but also regulating marriage. In 1806 new laws restricted interracial marriage for the first time on the island. Then, in 1864 it was completely prohibited (Stolcke 1989). This was four years before the official end of slavery. Although, records show that people sought exceptions to the laws, a dual marriage system developed reflecting the social hierarchy of race and gender, and the importance of sex in the maintenance of elite privilege. The dual marriage system underscored the intersection of race and gender in the social practices that surrounded cultural values of honor and shame linked with elite concerns for purity of blood (Stolcke 1989:17). Dual marriage refers to endogamous marriages by elites or social equals and exogamous marriage or unmarried partnerships were sought in some cases as a means of improving class standing (Stolcke 1989). While elites rarely married out of their class, Cuban society was not completely closed and the value of individualism was expressed by free choice in marriage based on love, and social advancement through economic achievement. Thus

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<sup>15</sup> Stolcke points out that Cuba had a “liberal ethos” and that strict regulation of marriage and intensification of gender and racial differences occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the growth of the plantation economy and slave society. That liberal ethos was reflected in the compensation of racial status by economic performance and the role that love played in marriage, both important in Cuban society.

achievement could compensate for lower status, and love could motivate unequal marriages. In this context, however typically marriage was the institution of equals, and unequal partnerships maintained non-married relationships. Evidence suggests that sexual values associated with the colonial era persisted at least through the middle of the twentieth century (de la Torre quoted in Hamilton 2012; Stoner quoted in Hamilton 2012).

In this system elite/white women were ascribed purity and women of color were stigmatized as morally impure. Furthermore, this made women of color practically indefensible against elite male sexual aggression and violence. While interracial marriages did exist, Stolcke observes that resistance to white men's sexual advances by black and mulatto women has been underestimated, however difficult to assess historically.<sup>16</sup> Various sources still agree that there was a desire for "whitening" and women of color may have pursued relationships with white/elite men (Stolcke 1989). At the same time, the practice of seduction as an expression of male virility and social power was part of this social system. Men gained honor by protecting their own families and seducing virgins from other families, thus their roles developed as defenders of women in the family group and aggressors against women outside the family (Stolcke 1989:112). Notions of honor for middle-class and elite families depended on women's virginity and elite women were largely controlled by the men in their families according to the Spanish law *patria potestad* (Hamilton 2012). Legal cases brought against elite men for rape were hard to prosecute leaving women of non-elite status vulnerable. Elite or white women

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<sup>16</sup> Stolcke explains that both elite/white and black populations demonstrated tendencies towards endogamy; for the offspring of interracial relationships and marriages were identified with the lower status parent but aspired to the social class of the higher status parent.

were regarded as pure and honorable, if asexual, while black and mulatto women were regarded as dishonorable and sexual. Elite white women were protected and controlled, while women of color were vulnerable to elite white men, who rarely if ever married outside of their social class.

As a public site for the performance of identity, dance-music became linked with earliest conceptions of the nation and the social politics of identity. As Quintero Rivera argues, social dance was the setting *par excellence* for the performance of gendered interaction and social etiquette (Quintero Rivera 1996). During the late nineteenth-century, a concern for manners associated with urbanity developed in the newly independent Latin American nations. Evidenced by the circulation of etiquette manuals, elite anxieties about social status and interaction in urban space became expressed through the cultivation of body styles, including in social dance (Quintero Rivera 1996). These concern about behavior and public space reflect tensions in the development of modern nations. First, modernity was linked with urbanism and with “Anglo-Saxon civilization.” Second, the Spanish aristocracy was traditionally rural dwelling, with a strong spatial, ideological, and gendered division between public and private space. Manners marked a threshold between public and private spheres of personal intercourse and reproduced structures of male domestic authority in public contexts (Quintero Rivera 1996:157).

Creole elites adopted physical manners to distinguish themselves and to maintain the aristocratic or colonial divisions between public and private spheres (Quintero Rivera 1996:167). Although the most famous of these manuals was addressed to a male audience, its prescriptions for women dwelled in particular on bodily posture and the

cultivation of gentleness, passivity and delicacy in social interaction, further naturalizing gender differences. The public act par excellence of body movement and proximity in social interaction was the expression of dancing as a couple (Quintero Rivera 1996:165). Thus while nation-building discourses engaged issues of race and immigration, corporeal distinctions of gender defined social and cultural politics. The tacit exclusion of women from discussions of the nation reflected the maintenance of a colonial social order in the private realm. The strict separation of public and private realms perpetuated men's authority over women; it created deeper dependency of women on men, and assured the reproduction of the racialized hierarchy.

*Contradanza cubana* and subsequent styles of creole salon dances in Cuba reflect nationalism and its identity discourses in several ways. The predominance of European cultural forms and fashion (both musical and sartorial) that become modified and localized in the context of Creole society and thus made original recurs as a theme in modern Cuban cultural identity (Holland 1992). While the choreographies of European social dances reflected class and gender differences, social dance in Cuba came to reflect racial and gender difference as interrelated aspects of social hierarchy. Finally, the predominance of creolized salon dances as national culture during the nineteenth-century reflects the relative invisibility of Afro-Cuban music and dance styles. During colonial society, Afro-Cuban culture was still largely invisible with regard to public life or spatially separated such that it was hardly considered Cuban.<sup>17</sup> Concentrated in *cabildos*

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<sup>17</sup> Edna M. Rodríguez-Mangual mentions that there was literature during the nineteenth-century that paid attention to the alternative cultural spaces of slaves and that the influence of black writers goes back to the seventeenth-century (Rodríguez-Mangual 2004:16-17).

*de nación*, the name alone indicates the conceptual separation of African and Afro-Cuban cultural practices as belonging to a different nation.

The debates over the formation of an independent Cuban nation revolved largely around shifting notions of race (Helg 1990, Ferrer 1999, Kuss 2004). Although progressive planters began advocating an end to slavery and formation of an independent nation in the 1830s, it took several more decades for the movement to gain strength and momentum. Debates raged about the viability of a nation with a large black population. In 1868, the sugar cane planter, Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves in order to fight for independence from Spain, igniting the Ten Year War (also called the War of '68). Going forward the independence movement sought to foster racial unity and overcome fears about the viability of an independent nation. Black and white intellectuals, recast the contentious discourse of race and nation and defined *patria* (fatherland) in terms of “raceless patriotism” (Ferrer 1999). José Martí (1853-1895), considered the father of the Cuban nation, articulated the idea that national belonging superseded color or racial categories. Along with Juan Gualberto Gómez, Rafael Serra y Montalvo and other intellectuals, Martí and the *independenistas* re-conceptualized nationality, blackness, and the place of people of color in the would-be nation (Ferrer 1999:9). Forged amidst the military campaigns of three wars (1868-1898) the values of *patria* as the heroic actions of brother in arms were reflected in the operation of the Liberation Army (Ferrer 1999).<sup>18</sup> The military organization enacted standards of conduct that sought to silence the divisive issue of race; rebel soldiers addressed one another as “citizen” and abolished the use of racial identifiers in army records (Ferrer 2000).

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<sup>18</sup> The Ten Years' War (1868-78), the Guerra Chiquita, or Little War (1879-80), and the War of Independence (1895-1898).

The rebel army was unique in the history of the West for being integrated and having free black men as officers in positions of authority over whites (Ferrer 1999). While the Liberation army created discursive space for the critique of racism as unpatriotic, it also saw the perpetuation of institutional racism as men of color were stripped of their ranks and leadership positions at the end of the war (Ferrer 2000). Furthermore, the social politics of identity were still strongly in effect in the civilian/private sphere, as indicated by the anecdote of a black Lieutenant who asks a white woman to dance and is rejected; he repudiates her for her racism in terms of her lack of patriotism (Ferrer 2000). The notion of patriotism was paradoxical. It operated overtly as an anti-racist discourse while also perpetuating colonial social politics by silencing talk of race and maintaining gender hierarchies. The ideology of raceless patriotism, which propelled the rebel movement, became a central tenet of Cuban nationalism throughout the twentieth century. It remained problematic in the ways that it was mobilized to silence dissent about racial discrimination and to minimize problems of racial prejudice. The quest for unity over racial justice recurs as a perpetual tension in the narrative of the nation.<sup>19</sup>

In summary, *contradanza cubana* and the creole salon dance that followed it created sites for social interaction that contributed to the emerging Cuban nation. In one way it reflected the unique culture of Cuba as separate and distinct from Europe. At the same time it created sites of social interaction that contributed to the formation and maintenance of social hierarchies as well as the transformation of identity within those

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<sup>19</sup> The idea of *patria* defined the nation as a brotherhood among black, white and mulatto men. Born of the military organization of the Liberation Army and oriented to the politics of citizenship, this conception of nation largely excluded women. Citizenship at this time reflected the strong division between public and private realms, which perpetuated the colonial era social order. Exemplified by the prevailing Spanish law of “*patria potestad*,” which gave men legal control over their wives and children (Hamilton 2012).

hierarchies. Social dance provided the perfect context for the highly stylized gender role performed by aristocratic elites as part of regimes of etiquette. As the independent couple formation became fashionable it facilitated romantic courtship and couplings in socially equal and unequal settings. Public sites of social dance became associated with moral controversies regarding sexual license in public dances. As part of what Stolcke describes as a “dual marriage system” social mores regarding gender roles reinforced gender and racial hierarchies. Creole social dances were could be mobilized for a variety of social and political agendas, raising moral issues that were central to social order and political ideals.

## **2. The Emergence of the modern Nation: Afrocubanism (1920s/1930s)**

Although Spain was defeated, the promises of an independent republic were cut short. Intervention in the Spanish American war by the US led to the occupation of Cuba by US forces from 1898-1901. In addition to assuring that colonial elites gained control of the government, US occupation also promulgated segregationist policies and the constitutional right of the US to intervene in Cuba’s political system on behalf of US-based economic interests (the Platt Amendment). The first republic (1902-1933) became a bloody period of racial terrorism, as the entrenched white political establishment sought to limit black participation in the nation. Among the acts of violent repression was the killing of former General Quintin Banderas during a rebellion against the fraudulent reelection of Estrada Palma (August Rebellion, 1906) (Helg 1995:120). Six years later in 1912, the government massacred over 3, 500 people of color in action against the Independent Party of Color (*Partido Independiente de Color*) organized by Evaristo Estenoz in Oriente Province (Helg 1990, de la Fuente 2001). During these years the

aristocratic elites who gained or continued to control the government at the behest of US occupying forces pursued immigration policies aimed at alleviating the need for workers and simultaneously “whitening” the country (Helg 1990). This put further pressure on recently freed slaves and other Cuban workers creating more of a split among workers along Cuban/immigrant lines rather than colorlines. Traditionally racial categories had been more fluid among the working classes and this solidified over the next decades. De la Fuente observes that the terms “Afro-Cuban” and “worker” were often interchangeable (de la Fuente 2001). It was during the 1920s that a popular movement developed outside the political realm to articulate a more inclusive vision of Cuban society.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the expansion of the Afro-Cuban presence in public space in Havana. Dance-music played a key role in the social and artistic movement referred to as Afrocubanism, which defined *Cubanidad* or Cubanness as a mixture of Hispanic and African cultures. The movement became aligned with liberal politics and created the basis of the modern Cuban nation. Afrocubanism was expressed through many genres of music, art, literature and performance, ranging from popular to elite forms. Robin Moore underscores that different media and musical genres produced representations with varying degrees of stylization and with differing results. He notes that some were more or less racist than others, as in the cases of staged rumba and vernacular theater, which included blackface routines (Moore 1997, Lane 2010). During this time, the couple dance-music known as *son* emerged as the first Afro-Cuban music to be widely accepted in its original form and became considered the most iconic popular

expression of this movement (Moore 1997).<sup>20</sup> Not only because it underwent the least amount of stylization and transformation but because it became nationally and internationally popular, *son* was perhaps the most important popular genre in the Afro-Cubanist re-figuration of the Cuban nation.

Iconic of the “new Cuba,” *son* was performed with a combination of Hispanic stringed instruments and African hand drums and small percussion (bongos). Moore emphasizes the significance of the hand drums because many local ordinances prohibited the use of “African instruments” in public (Moore 1997). Therefore the use of bongos and hand percussion in a style of music that diffused by mass media (radio) was a significant shift from such restrictions on cultural performances. Finally, *son* has been both acknowledged as an important source and inspiration for *salsa* musicians and was also the term by which many Cubans referred to *salsa* until the 2000s (Manuel 1990, Waxer 2002).

As a musical genre, early *son* uses a combination of stringed instruments and hand percussion. The stringed instruments used in *son* include guitars as well as *tres*, a plucked lute with three double courses of strings; some ensembles use *laúd*, which has six double courses of strings (Alén 2000).<sup>21</sup> Percussion instruments commonly used include bongos, claves, and maracas. The bandleader and *tres* player, Arsenio Rodríguez

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<sup>20</sup> Historiography differs. Within Cuba *son* is considered to be more of a folk or popular tradition and is traced to the eastern provinces of Oriente, Guantánamo, etc. where it is attributed to rural and small town Afro-Cuban and mulatto populations (Balbuena 2003, Alén 2000). Manuel argues that there is evidence that it grew out of the *contradanza cubana* tradition in Havana (2009). Other genres that began incorporating Afro-Cuban music and dance tradition, albeit in much more stylized ways included popular theater which presented stylized versions of *rumba*, as well as the reauthorization of Afro-Cuban performing ensembles or *comparsas* during the celebrations of *carnaval*, which had been banned during the preceding decade (Moore 1997).

<sup>21</sup> The *laúd* is from Spain and can be found in both Cuba as well as the Philippines, where it is used in *rondalla*.

added conga drums and trumpets, enlarging the typical ensemble and paving the way for the adaptation of *son* to larger commercial ensembles (García 2006). Originally the bass part was played on the *marimbula*, a large lamellophone. This part was transferred to the double bass or the bass guitar and to the low conga drum. *Son* uses the two-part (AB) song form known as *son-montuno*, which later became standard in *salsa*. *Son-montuno* consists of a verse followed by a call and response section that includes improvisation by the lead singer. Depending on the arrangement, either section can include instrumental breaks.

The most important musical characteristics of *son* are linked with its rhythmic organization. This was reflected in the organization of the bass-part or *tumbao*, the melodic riffs or counter melodies originally played on the *tres*, called *guajeos*, and perhaps most importantly, the use of the *clave* time-line pattern. Although *rumba clave* and *son clave* differ slightly, both imply interlocking polyrhythmic parts phrased around the anticipation of the downbeat. Conceived of as the “anticipated bass figure” the characteristic rhythms *contradanza cubana*, the “Habanera” and the bass drum part of *rumba-guaguancó*, share characteristics that are linked in the *tumbao* (Manuel 1985). In *son* the anticipation of the downbeat is marked with a double hit (“tu-tu”) in the bass part and indicates where the footfalls of the dance step begin. The dance style of *son* is thus syncopated, since it has no footfall on the downbeat but rather on the anticipation of the downbeat and is similar to the musical phrasing in *rumba*.

As a popular couple dance music, *son* reached across all sectors of society from very elite private parties called *encerrados* (shut-ins) to middle class private clubs (*sociedades de color* and *sociedades de ocio*) as well as the working class communities,

where it had originated as a “street music” genre (Moore 1997). Dancers used the closed position and independent couple configuration of *danza* for this new style of popular social dance. *Son* can be danced with legs interlaced or with the dancers maintaining distance between their bodies. Furthermore, body-styling can be performed one of two ways. Some dancers use the upright position as in *danzón*, which Barbara Balbuena refers to as the *son urbano* style of movement (Balbuena 2003). A different style of body movement uses flexion in the torso and movement of the shoulders and arms. Referred to as *sacando agua del pozo* (drawing water from the well), Balbuena associates this style of body-movement with *son montuno* or country style (Balbuena 2003). The designations “urban” (*urbano*) and “country” (*montuno*) reflect the historical narrative that *son* arrived in Havana from the eastern province of Oriente (Alén 2000, Balbuena 2003). This narrative, however, which frames *son* as closer to folklore than to social dance has been challenged in recent years.<sup>22</sup>

Reflecting the different social spaces and possibly class or racial distinctions among dancers, we can understand the differences between body-styles as articulations of “blackness” and “whiteness.” The *montuno* or country style of upper body movement, or *sacando agua del pozo* consists of horizontal movement of the upper torso and deep knee bends. This style corresponds to what dancers understand as the “black” style. It is similar in some ways to the *demi plié* and flexible torso that have been codified in most folkloric styles. The urban style uses an upright and still torso characteristic of *danzón* as well as many styles of ballroom dance. David F. García’s descriptions of the historical

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<sup>22</sup> This narrative was solidified during the revolutionary era emphasizing the music’s roots in rural or regional peasant culture. Peter Manuel offers historical evidence to the contrary that *son* in Havana developed from *contradanza cubana*.

existence of “white” and “black” musical styles which Rodríguez used to distinguish his ensemble from those that performed in middle class and white social clubs seems to corroborate these racial designations (García 2006:57).

The description of Rodríguez’s “black” style of *son* as modern is telling (García 2006).<sup>23</sup> Garcia characterizes the “black” style of Rodríguez as more syncopated (*contratiempo*), slower in tempo, more difficult, progressive or modern, masculine and “sonero” (García 2006:57). These musical qualities sounded in contrast to the “white” style of groups like *La Sonora Matancera*, *Conjunto Casino*, and *Orquesta Casino De la Playa*. The “white” groups played faster tempos, with a small “feminine” sound, in a style that was considered simpler, passé and “*guarachero*” (García 2006:57).

Furthermore, Rodríguez, like Ignacio Piñero, another famous Afro-Cuban *son* bandleader, incorporated rhythms, words and textual quotations from Afro-Cuban religious liturgies and slang (Miller 2000, García 2006). By inserting these into popular recordings, broadcasts and public performances they referenced what Moore refers to as the “clandestine” world of Afro-Cuban religion (Moore 1997). In this way, Rodríguez and Piñero offered a different rendition of Cubanness through their music. It offered a Cuban sound that reflected the cultural identity and everyday life experiences of working class Afro-Cubans and their social spaces.

The Afrocubanist movement, which included elite intellectuals and artists as well as popular mobilizations, sought not only to make visible Afro-Cuban contributions to Cuban society but also to reject US domination. For this reason, it defined Cuban identity

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<sup>23</sup> García notes that Rodríguez experienced much discrimination in professional life and responded by forming a conjunto that was all black musicians and developed a “black” style of playing (2006). He led a group for many years and created many of the innovations that would eventually lead to mambo and later more modern styles that cemented the music’s transnational existence.

in terms of mixture or miscegenation in contrast to US/Anglo notions of a homogenous modernity and racial ideologies of purity and hypodescent or the “one-drop rule” (Kutzinski 1993, Moore 1997, Safa 1998, de la Fuente 2001).<sup>24</sup> The movement celebrated the presence of African cultural influences in Cuba through artistic expressions from popular music to poetry to modernist painting. As the historian Alejandro de la Fuente encapsulates, the reinterpretation of Cubanness in the 1920s and 1930s sought to reconcile the perceived social reality of racial plurality with the need to forge a culturally homogenous, stable and prosperous modern nation (de la Fuente 2001:176). To accomplish this redefinition of the nation, Afrocubanists drew on contemporary Latin American discourses of *mestizaje*, which countered US notions of race mixture as degenerative (de la Fuente 2001). This process of redefinition while ignited by popular mobilizations and articulated through the diffusion of the couple dance-music *son*, was also pursued through elite arts and intellectual discourses.

In Latin America, discourses of racial mixture associated with populist movements were used to legitimate modern nation states during the first decades of the twentieth century (Turino 2003, Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt 2003). Based on categories of identity defined under colonial laws, *mestizo* identity or “mixed” heritage was broadened and applied to society as a whole in order to incorporate previously marginal or excluded populations, especially those of Indigenous and African heritage. While such movements seemed to promise “racial democracy,” the uses of *mestizaje* during this period have been criticized as elite strategies of “whitening,” carried out in locally specific terms (Helg 1990, Safa 1998). While notions of *mestizaje* provided

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<sup>24</sup> Hypodescent is the historically predominant racial ideology in the United States, also known as the “one drop rule” (Winnant quoted in Safa 1998).

elites a means of shaping national projects through hegemonic or assimilationist ideologies of white superiority, these projects in themselves defined previously excluded groups as subjects and created positions of agency, however ambivalent and problematic (de la Fuente 2001, Arroyo 2003). Furthermore, *mestizaje* as a kind of politics of identity played an important role in existing conversations and cultural practices (Arroyo 2003, Stolcke and Coello 2008).

The main author of the modern Cuban nation, Fernando Ortiz originated the use of the term *cubanidad* (Cubanness) defining it in terms of his concept of transculturation (Ortiz 1947, Duany 2000). Transculturation referred to a process of cultural mixture by which a national type or national culture emerged in Cuba from the contact between Hispanic and African cultures. Unlike other formulations of mixture, Ortiz emphasized cultural influences and not intermarriage. His construction of Cuban national culture was couched in a masculinist vision of the nation as social brotherhood and a reformist posture aimed at civilizing processes based on education (Helg 1990, Arroyo 2003). He took up Martí's notion of the raceless nation, rejecting the concept of "races" but rather replacing it with notions of cultural difference. Despite this, Ortiz did not break away from traditional patterns of racialization in Cuban society but rather reframed them in social scientific terms.<sup>25</sup> Ortiz legitimized the Cuban nation through the discourses of culture by drawing comparisons with colonial anthropology and constructing the body of the other along the axis of race, gender and sex (Arroyo 2003:20). In this way, Ortiz positioned himself and by implication other creole elites as subjects of reason in contrast

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<sup>25</sup> Many authors have observed that instead Ortiz racialized culture (Antón Carrillo 2012, Hagedorn 2001, Coronil 1995, Moore 1994, Helg 1990).

with but also in harmonious relation to masculine subjects “of color” described as delinquent, (sexually and emotionally) excessive and atavistic (Arroyo 2003:19).

Dance plays an important role in the ways that Ortiz characterized Afro-Cuban subjects of the nation. Like other creole elites of the late nineteenth-century would have been, Ortiz seems to have been particularly sensitive to the social implications of dance gestures and movement. Through his discussion of dance in Afro-Cuban folklore in his book *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* (The dances and theater of blacks in the folklore of Cuba, Ortiz 1993), Ortiz establishes a series of powerful tropes and principles for the interpretation of Afro-Cuban and black dance. At the time of his writing Afro-Cuban dance and music were central to the popular culture, which pervaded modern Cuban society.<sup>26</sup> Ortiz focused on the gestures of dance as a language and on the physicality of Afro-Cubans as reflective of inner psychological qualities and states.

Many of the tropes he established were focused around the “functional sociality” of African and Afro-Cuban dance and music. For Ortiz, Afro-Cuban, like African dance, was representational and linked with a mimetic language of ritual actions and magic. The fundamentally communicative nature of Afro-Cuban dance and music made it democratic and collective in contrast to European elitism and individualism (León 1993:12). Ortiz

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<sup>26</sup> Although Ortiz had been researching and publishing his writing on Afro-Cuban religions and Cuban culture since 1906, his most influential works emerged during the 1940s and 1950s. His earlier books such as *La Hampa AfroCubana* (The AfroCuban Underworld) were more explicitly framed in terms of reformist ideas about crime and education. As a liberal, Ortiz did believe that education would solve many of the social problems arising from racial/cultural difference. Furthermore, through his training in criminology, which was the impetus of his ethnographic studies, he was interested in understanding Afro-Cuban psychology, as part of a reformist project. Growing out of a reformist project inspired by European criminology, in particular the writing of Cesar Lombroso, Ortiz’s position was entwined with the Liberal notion that education and civilizing processes could produce citizens out of otherwise marginalized and unfit persons (Helg 1990, Hagedorn 2001).

understood dance as both dramatic and pedagogical in its orientation in contrast to the artistic and aesthetic or disinterested orientation of European arts. Its roots in ritual and magic, which defined its communicative nature also made dance “pathogenic” and indicative of primitive qualities of mind.<sup>27</sup> Its use in inducing states of ecstasy led to what Ortiz referred to as the “state of dance:” an intermediary between normal consciousness and the extremes of hysteria (*histeria*), fury (*arrebato*), commotion (*alboroto*), pandemonium (*pandemonium*), and frenzy (*frenesí*) (Ortiz 1993:163). Another characteristic by which Ortiz characterized Afro-Cuban dance were structural equivalences between movement and music, that is to say that what is danced is what is played musically (Ortiz 1993:36). While these notions have some basis in ethnographic evidence, they operate as generalizations and in setting up binaries between primitive and modern societies.

Ortiz described how dance emerged from certain special physical qualities of the black bodies (Ortiz 1993:127). Using anthropological sources for comparison he constructs social difference on the body and responses to music. Without a notion of how musical and choreographic responses are culturally constructed and learned in the individual’s lifetime, these pronouncements seem as though they address cultural uniqueness but what they do is identify the signs and symbols of a racialized society. For example, Ortiz drew on European anthropologists who characterized the contrast between black bodies as flexible and primitive and the white body as stiff and civilized (Ortiz

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<sup>27</sup> Citing Kurt Sachs, Ortiz emphasizes the origin of dance in trance rituals. Dance-music itself, for Ortiz has a quasi-magic power, and all the more powerful is African dance music for its links to religious ritual and magical spells. The essence of African dance must be understood in terms of its origin in religious ritual and magic (Ortiz 1993:139). His anthropological study of dance underscores its use as a mode of inducing “intoxicating ecstasy” in primitive peoples (Ortiz 1993:139).

1993:128). Ortiz pays detailed attention to the movement of bodies as representative of categorical identities: “The lively motor excitation that rhythm provokes in blacks can be seen in the usual movements of all its musicians when they play their instruments, especially drummers (Ortiz 1993:137).” Thus for Ortiz, black bodies responded by muscular reflex to musical sound. Such characteristics contributed to and reflected the primitive psychology of blacks, which might be read on the body but ultimately reflected the mind. Ortiz understood blacks as vulnerable to “autosuggestion” and impulse comparing them with children and linking them with magic and states of trance (Ortiz 1993).

Ortiz, nevertheless, rejected the concept of “race.” He invoked the concept of culture and applied a linguistic approach to dance, like the philological method identified by Fernando Coronil in Ortiz’s *Cuban Counterpoint* (Coronil 1995). This approach had two main features. First, he approached the dance formations and gestures as retentions of African dances that had speech-like functions in ritual practices. He framed Afro-Cuban dance as an extension of African music and dance that were shaped by their social function. Second, he compared gestures and forms of Afro-Cuban and black dances with evidence from ethnographic studies of African cultures, like the study of linguistic etymologies, in order to show that “the complex system of gestures that appear within particular social manifestations of specific African societies” became absorbed into and preserved in Cuban culture (Ortiz 1993). In this way, Ortiz’s theory of transculturation treats dance as an objective structure of culture, which is transmitted to creole Cubans without participation in Afro-Cuban cultural practices.

The linguistic or philological approach furthermore permitted Ortiz not only to trace the retention of features of African cultures but also to describe them as in a state of degradation and loss of meaning. Like folklore in general, the meaning of dance gestures could be shared by anyone in society, especially when framed anthropologically or objectively. The two main interpretative concepts Ortiz applied to dance and to folklore more broadly were metastasis and metalepsis. Metastasis referred to rapid transmission from one point to another, which Ortiz referred to alternately as the “promiscuity” of folklore (Ortiz 1993:23). He finally defined folklore as: “music characteristic of the basic stratum of a given society, by their own creation or by adoption of another’s as familiar and accustomed to it” (Ortiz 1993:24). On the way to this conclusion he assured the reader that folklore is not only the music of marginal and minority groups, it is not always anonymous, or an art of illiterate people, nor is it always vulgar and quotidian. He argued that folklore was pervasive, traveling through society from the bottom up and the top down, linking different social strata, rather than being the sole property of one group (Ortiz 1993:23).

His definition of folklore, seemingly informed by notions of primitivism and the noble savage, offers folklore as a refreshing excursion into the “pure waters” of communal ritual:

Thus as human minds descend from the summits of education into the valleys of community on more or less institutionalized occasions, such as carnivals, festivals, pilgrimages, patriotic celebrations and multitudinous expansions, even orgiastic releases, responding to the primary instincts and impulses of collective life, thus on occasion individuals and groups of higher social and cultural standing plunge into the pure waters of folklore, as they like to submerge themselves in the currents or rivers, that move downwards (Ortiz 1993:22).

Folklore thus endows Cuban society with spaces and access to states of mind that are not fully modern, and from which individuals may take refuge from the alienating aspects of modern life and a resource for cultural production. In this way, Ortiz justifies the appreciation of folklore and delimits it. He drew a line between the vulgar, commercial and corrupted expressions of black dance and the pure, orgiastic, and authentically primitive aspects of folklore as cultural expression. At the same time, he put folklore's purity out of reach for Afro-Cubans noting that the mixture of African ethnic groups had corrupted the practices and put them in state of loss, leaving only the physical attributes of the culture. Ortiz elaborated the idea of semantic decay with the concept of *metalepsis*, a term drawn from rhetoric that refers to the joining of two or more tropes together in the same word.

Ortiz asserted the notion of a kind of semantic decay for those involved in performing and experiencing Afro-Cuban and black dance. Cuban folklore preserved African practices and cultural structures but corrupted its meanings through its contact with white society. He noted that the presence of music without dancing in ritual evidenced the "de-culturation of Africanness" in Cuba (Ortiz 1993:125). For example, this loss of collective life and more individuation was manifest in the disorganization of *congas* and *comparsas* (Ortiz 1993:126). Throughout his books on folklore the problems of meaning and translation and the loss of meaning appear undermining the sense-making power of such traditions, making their reframing as national culture all the more powerful.

While folklore existed as a pure stream for those who visit it occasionally, for Ortiz, folklore was in a process of semantic degradation. He attributed its loss of meaning

to the process of “transculturation” by which white and black societies exchange with and transmute one another. The degraded aspects of folklore blend into its overtly racialized dimensions as the chapter comes to a point with his discussion of the “problem of the undeniable voluptuousness of Afroamerican dances” (Ortiz 1993:168). The perceived eroticism of black dance turns out to be the issue to which the entire chapter builds. He writes:

[U]pon being transculturated to Cuba African dances of an unequivocally erotic character have lost, on the one side the realistic representation of the sexual act or onanism by means of the most crudely lascivious ritual pantomime; and on the other the indifferent consideration, from the ethical point of view, that such evocations of the genetic function deserved in Africa. In America those dances of erotic meaning have been transformed by metalepsis. They are no longer interpreted as simple liturgical acts of religious or magical meaning. The black tradition and the white ethic have melted in a venial transaction... One does not ignore the essential intention of these dances; one appreciates the eroticism of their expressions, with lascivious license, undoubtedly unacceptable within the norms of coexistence; but one adapts them to make them generally tolerable, at least in certain marginal environments and occasions of exception to convention (Ortiz 1993:183-184).

The above quote outlines the issues of meaning and loss of meaning, culture contact and the moral order of Cuban society. His reference to the “norms of coexistence” may be taken as those established by elite Cuban society in contrast to the “marginal environments” where exceptions to convention establishes the norm.

In his discussion of African, Afro-Cuban and black dance, Ortiz distinguished between the relative purity if semantically degraded religious practices, from the marginal and commercial expressions of black dance. Ortiz established a hierarchy of racializing cultural practices. He differentiated between African cultural retentions and those regarded as racialized in negative sense, in the sense of morally problematic and

categorically perilous.<sup>28</sup> The divisions were not entirely clear but are outlined in his discussion of sexual morality and ethnic identity. Ortiz identifies the *mulata* (and *mulato*) as the most problematic figures for social order (Ortiz 1993:167).

In his discussion of sexuality and moral values Ortiz characterized African dance as not erotic in nature but rather natural and spiritual. Ortiz explained: “the sexual impulse is naturally weaker in primitives if compared with the civilized” (Ortiz 1993:169). Thus for Ortiz, the association with African culture redeems religious music and dance as a useful reference for national culture. The problem for moral-sexual ordering of society was rather the result of “race mixture” as a sexual rather than a political act. For Ortiz, *mulatos* were more libidinous than whites or blacks (Ortiz 1993:177). Raising the figure of *la mulata*, he described “the burning female of the torrid world, seated in her sensuality and seen in her erogenic form” at the margins of acceptability (Ortiz 1993: 177). Recalling the self-effacing masculinity of the nineteenth-century national imagining of the *mulata*, Ortiz underscores again the fundamental ordering of society through racial and gender hierarchies.

The discussion follows a buildup of anthropological and ethnographic evidence and comparisons with British and other European sources on African music and dance traditions. Through the comparison with and discussion of other sources on music, Ortiz does build subject positions, as Arroyo argues. One subject position operates from the viewpoint of his position as an elite liberal Cuban. The other position is that of the subjects of dance, build from the observations and characteristics gleaned from the writings of European anthropologists. He builds a liberal, tolerant and rational position,

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<sup>28</sup> Martínez Furé raised the question of good folklore and bad folklore in *Diálogos Imaginarios* (1979) (Martínez Furé cited in Ayorinde 2004).

viewing social practices of dance through a social scientific lens. At one point Ortiz asked: “[b]ut, in reality are there demons in these preternatural dances? ... Science does not believe in devils, at least for now, we will have to investigate other routes” (1993:164). Suggesting social scientific approaches to reform cultural attitudes, Ortiz offers a position from which Cuban elites could interpret and incorporate Afro-Cuban cultural practices into the nation. The subject positions he draws through his discussions of music and dance as folklore entail the production of a series of tropes and inform the study of Afro-Cuban culture and performance of folklore in the coming decades.

The search for a “new Cuba” emerged from the violence and instability of the early years of the first republic, which blocked attempts at political participation by Afro-Cubans. During the 1920s, opposition to the colonial elite began to occur outside the realm of electoral politics (de la Fuente 2001). The Afrocubanist movement arose amidst a wide array of popular mobilizations, including labor and women’s movements. It expanded the public presence of Afro-Cubans through music and art as well as other media. Reflected in popular music and entertainment as well as in elite genres, such as symphonic music and the artistic and literary avant-garde, Afrocubanism defined society in terms of a mixture of Hispanic and African cultures. The movement signaled the increasing significance of Afro-Cuban culture in the broader Cuban society. Afro-Cuban cultural practices were still largely rejected but they were now more visible and legitimized as folklore. In some limited cases, as in the popular dance-music, *son* Afro-Cuban musical contributions were eventually accepted as representative of national culture. In its popular expression, Afrocubanism defined identity around the image of Cuba as a multi or mixed race nation. In the realm of liberal elites Ortiz expanded upon

his initial reformist program to define a body of Afro-Cuban folklore studies. By focusing on the music and dance of Afro-Cuban religions, Ortiz compared and contrasted their practices with the ethnographic record of African, Afro-American and black music and dances. Ortiz at various points distinguishes among these categories and uses what can be considered both ethnic and racial terms. His work defined a place for Afro-Cubans however problematic within in the nation. His work became not only the basis of the modern nation but also a defining force in the cultural infrastructure of the Cuban revolution.

### **3. Revolutionary Cuba: the socialist nation**

Immediately following the Cuban Revolution (1959), Afrocubanism again became an important means of defining the nation. Public performances of Afro-Cuban religious music signaled the radical social change that the new government led by Fidel Castro's July 26 movement, sought to establish (Moore 2006, Hagedorn 2001, Duany 1988). A series of concerts produced by Argeliers León, head of the music department of the newly formed National Theater of Cuba (June 1959), staged Afro-Cuban religious traditions in major concert venues. Moore underscores in his writing on the cultural institutions of the Cuban revolution that prior to 1959 it was unthinkable to present traditional Afro-Cuban drumming, much less religious music on a concert stage (2006). A student of Ortiz, León staged the concerts in a manner seeking to project ethnographic authenticity as well as the purity of the tradition (Hagedorn 2001:141-148). The concerts included performances of Yoruba, Abakuá, and Congo musics by traditional musicians, as well as popular traditions such as *comparsa* (music associated with *carnaval*) and *rumba* (Moore 2006, Hagedorn 2001). The nascent and soon to be powerful Cuban film

industry, ICAIC (1959) made a film documenting one such performance by members of the *abakuá* brotherhood in the Amadeo Roldan Theater (Barnet 1962). Among these performances was also the first TV broadcast of folklore, which was organized by Odilio Urfé; aired on October 10, 1959, it included rumba, comparsa and abakuá music and dance (Moore 2006:176).<sup>29</sup> Part of a larger mobilizing reaching across all sectors of society, the government pursued radical transformation in all sectors. Part of the transformation was to be achieved through the production of revolutionary culture, in which folklore played an important role (Moore 2006, Ayorinde 2004, Hagedorn 2001).

The *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (CFNC, 1962) became central to the incorporation of folklore into revolutionary culture and into institutions of national culture. Founded amidst the intensely creative atmosphere from 1959 to 1968, the CFNC came to set the “gold standard” by developing techniques and methods for staging and teaching folkloric performance as a secular genre of national culture. Their interpretations gained such authority in the domain of folklore that in later years their standards of performance have sometimes influenced religious performances (Ayorinde 2004:114, Hagedorn 2001:149). The founding director of the CFNC was Rogelio Martínez Furé and among the early choreographers was Ramiro Guerra, who founded the National Modern Dance Ensemble of Cuba.<sup>30</sup> His influence was established in the stylization of folklore through its basic posture, theatrical/dramatic orientation and even aspects of

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<sup>29</sup> The date October 10<sup>th</sup> is significance in Cuban history as that of the *Grito de Yara*, which began the wars for independence in 1868.

<sup>30</sup> Martínez Furé and other scholars who went on to become major figures in folklore and Afrocubanist studies studied with León in a series of seminars on folklore and ethnographic research (Moore 2006). Rogelio Martínez Furé founded the ensemble with the Mexican choreographer Rodolfo Reyes, who soon departed. Ramiro Guerra, who founded the Modern Dance Ensemble of Cuba, did some work with the CFNC and was apparently influential in the techniques, but likewise did not remain with the group. Roberto Espinosa Amor and later Manolo Miçler were the main choreographers during the first three decades.

choreography like extensive use of the floor, following his training with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham (Mousouris 2002).<sup>31</sup> The CFNC combined modern dance techniques with strategies from classical training to develop technical exercises for standardizing, stylizing, and teaching different styles of dance. They also incorporated ethnographic methods by hiring traditional musicians, singers and dancers who worked as performer-informants. Referred to as *portadores de la cultura* (culture carriers) the founding-generation of performer-informants played fundamental roles in the development of repertoire and codification of steps and styles of movement for the different types of folklore performed.<sup>32</sup> A large part of the mission of the CFNC was educational in two senses. They trained subsequent generations of performers and presented folklore as a means of educating the public in the history of culture of the nation.

Repertoire was shaped in accord with categories and tropes established largely by Ortiz but also by the ideologies of nation under socialism and contemporary contexts. For example, the African ethnic groups outlined as the main “contributors” to Cuban culture, Yoruba, Congo, and Abakuá were represented in the early development of the core repertoire. Programs and catalogues show a groups of set-pieces each titled a “cycle” based on the ethnic designation (Martínez Furé 1977). The *Ciclo Yoruba* was based on the personification of Yoruba *orishas* (Yoruba deities). The *Ciclo Congo* was based on narratives and dramatizations weaving together ritual, dance and history. The *Ciclo*

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<sup>31</sup> Basic posture: demi plié, inclined torso, relaxed arms, parallel feet

<sup>32</sup> The founding generation includes dancers and musicians who went on to highly productive careers, either recording, directing ensembles, teaching or in many cases a combination of these. They include: Lazaro Ros, Ricardo G. Santacruz, Luís Chacón “Aspirina,” Mario Dreke, Juan de Dios Ramos, among others.

*Abakuá* was based on different parts of the ritual known as the *plante*. The *Abakuá* folklore performance, however, did not become a major part of the repertoire and by the mid 1980s can be seen only in pieces that compiled many folkloric rhythms such as the *Concierto de Percusión* (1986). In addition to representations of Afro-Cuban religious practices, repertoire included presentations that celebrated the quotidian lives of working class people and historical salon dances. The former was presented in choreographies of the *pregón* (street vendor's calls), *rumba*, a festive, recreational genre, as well as popular and social dances, and *comparsas* and *congas* of carnival (Martínez Furé 1963, 1977). While defined as the religious music of Afro-Cubans, in practice folklore encompassed a variety of genres through which history was told and national types were projected. Furthermore, types of folkloric performance were not developed consistently across all categories.

Restrictions on religious practice as well as public portrayals of Afro-Cuban religions as “backwards” created contradictions and tensions in the production of folkloric performance (Moore 2006, Ayorinde 2004, Brown 2003, Hagedorn 2001).<sup>33</sup> Restrictions included a variety of regulations that were instated during the 1970s. These included ordinances against drumming, and regulations that limited the size, time, and location of gatherings (Ayorinde 2004:110,128). Furthermore, Afro-Cuban religions were not allowed to register with the Ministry of Justice, and thus were not recognized as legal entities (Ayorinde 2004:129). During this period *rumba* was transformed by its diffusion as folklore and development through institutions of national culture and through this expansion experienced a “golden age” (Daniel 1991, 2009).

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<sup>33</sup> There had been a strike organized by the *abakuá* that had shut down the ports for one day in 1968, which resulted in retaliation by the government (Perez-Stable 1999).

In the context of secularism and emphasis on classical aesthetic values, *rumba* provided a flexible form that could display vocal as well as choreographic virtuosity and became central to the unifying power of folklore as national culture. Secular and performed with a certain amount of virtuosity for a crowd of on-lookers in a festive atmosphere, *rumba* was disposed to development in the conservatory context as a concert form. In a pamphlet produced by the Council of National Culture (*Consejo Nacional de Cultura*, CNC), Argeliers León explained:

*Rumba* is a genre or type of folklore capable of grouping together all sectors of the population; not like *punto guajiro* [rural Hispanic peasant music] which groups together and sustains only one sector or like ritual music which is supported by specific groups. In contrast, *rumba* moves away from being music of just one sector and becomes music of the collective, even constituting a point of convergence of the modes of expression of the Cuban who defines himself by the *rumbeado* [*rumba* event]. (León n.d.).

Similar to Ortiz's notion of folklore as "promiscuous," *rumba*'s qualities were regarded as more easily shared among all sectors of the population. Developed in the context of the CFNC whose performers were chosen from among traditional Afro-Cuban religious communities, *rumba* would have been familiar to most if not all of the musicians and dancers. It provided a type of performance genre that was not hampered by the possibility of conflict that sometimes arose around the staging of religious music. Furthermore, in an important way, *rumba* reflected the masculinist identity politics of folklore by presenting women in a restricted and sexualized female role. As Yvonne Daniel notes, women were customarily invited by a man to dance in the *rumba* and enacts many of the scripts of traditional gender roles (Daniel 1995). The woman's role was more simple and repetitive than that of the man, and it focused on her avoiding the advances of the male dancer, symbolic of sexual conquest. Its humorous and sensual displays provided enjoyable

entertainment and narratives of history of the Cuban nation. As such, the government upheld rumba as an example of “working class artistry” and evidence of shared African culture through the medium of creolized forms (Daniel 1991).

*Rumba* developed during the mid to late nineteenth century in the western provinces of Havana and Matanzas in the areas around the ports and sugar mills. A secular, festive type of dance-music, *rumba* had four main folkloric sub-styles: *rumbas del tiempo de España*, *guaguancó*, *yambú*, and *columbia*. All of the sub-styles followed similar musical procedures, but were distinguished by the type of dance. *Rumbas del tiempo de España* were also known as mimetic dances and were historical reconstructions. They evoked quotidian activities or whimsical scenes such as a boy flying a kite, in which the kite was a female dancer. *Guaguancó* was a dance in which a man and a woman, dancing independently of one another, enact a game of seduction and sexual conquest. It came to be the most ubiquitous style of the genre. *Yambú* was a slower more sensual couple dance, said to be the dance of older people, it did not use the *vacunao* or pelvic thrust that symbolized sexual conquest in *guaguancó*. Finally, *columbia* was a male solo competitive form that might incorporate acts of daring. If anything like more recent attitudes towards the dances of the *rumba*, the assessment that Ortiz made of men’s dances held true, *columbia* was treated as “something serious” and certainly more weighty than those dances of fun and entertainment that dealt with the subject of heterosexual romance (Ortiz 1993:158).

As a musical genre, *rumba* consisted of a two-part sectional form comprised of an introduction and a verse followed by a call and response section referred to as the *montuno*. The introduction was sung on vocables and was a kind of signature of the

individual vocalist's style. The verse could be improvised or based on existing song texts, sometimes borrowed from popular songs. A variety of poetic forms were used, including Spanish *décima*. The second main section consisted of an improvised series of short songs or couplets performed in a call and response with the chorus. The dancing occurred during the call and response also referred to as the *montuno*. During the call and response section, the singer strings together short responsorial songs or phrases, called *coros* or choruses. Using aural cues to follow along and extract their part, the chorus of singers repeats the second line of the soloist's guide song or *guía*. The increasingly rapid call and response builds energy for the dance spectacle.

A percussion ensemble accompanies the singers and dancers. It consists of three drum parts, a time line pattern, and an elaborated version of the time line referred to as the *guagua*. The *chekere*, a gourd covered with a beaded net, is optional but often included. In *guaguancó*, the thick wooden sticks called *claves* are used to play the *clave* time-line pattern. In *columbia*, the timeline is played on a metal sound source such as a bell or *guataca* (hoe blade) and resembles a 6/8 bell pattern. The three conga drums (high, medium, and low-pitched) form the core of the percussion section. The low drum (*tumbadora*) and middle drum (*tres-dos*) play interlocking parts, while the highest pitch drum, called *quinto* improvises freely between sung phrases. In traditional-style *columbia*, the *quinto* must play the dancer's steps, adding a dimension of competition to the performance. The *tumbadora* and *tres-dos* may also improvise, but in a somewhat restricted manner. Their call and response phrases, called conversations, fit with certain caveats into the two-phrase pattern of *clave*.

Figure 7. Rumba Guaguancó: musical parts, classic-style.

The musical score consists of six staves, each representing a different instrument or part of the ensemble. All staves are in 2/4 time. The parts are:

- Chekere (optional):** A single melodic line with a few notes and rests.
- Rumba Clave:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, characteristic of the clave.
- Guagua/palitos:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often played on a pair of sticks.
- Quinto (ride pattern, quinto solos):** A complex rhythmic pattern with many eighth notes and rests, often featuring a 'ride' pattern.
- Tres-dos (x=slap):** A rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and rests, often featuring a 'slap' sound.
- Tumbadora (bass drum part):** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, often featuring a 'bass drum' sound.

All three of the main sub-genres, *guaguancó*, and *yambú*, and *columbia*, follow the same formal procedures, but were distinguished by the rhythms, tempo, verbal lexicon used to compose the verse and choruses, and in the style of dancing. The sub-genre *yambú* is similar to *guaguancó* both rhythmically and in that it is a couples dance. Considerably slower than *guaguancó*, Havana ensembles rarely perform *yambú* as current styles favor fast tempos and musical virtuosity. *Guaguancó* is moderate to fast in tempo. It is perhaps the most famous of the sub-genres, characterized by the flirtatious couples dance, which symbolically enacts seduction and sexual conquest. While the dance is highly entertaining and often offers many humorous moments, it has an edgy quality at times, reflecting deeply held mores surrounding gender roles, sexuality, and romance. *Columbia* is a solo, competitive dance form. Regarded as a male-only genre, especially in Havana, it reflects the physical strength of the laboring male body emphasizing shoulder and leg movements, as well as angular and powerfully sharp

movements. Some perform it as a drama of self-making, which explores danger and confrontation, exemplifying the glory and the perils of machismo.

The *rumba* reproduces traditional gender norms and circumscribes women's participation in folkloric performance to a narrow range of sexualized roles. Typically women did not play percussion although some have sung in the chorus, few have been lead singers. The performance of seduction and sexual conquest as the focus of the main performance role underscored the central anxiety and focus of moral ordering in traditional society.

Symbolism and imagery of Afro-Cuban culture mobilized in anti-colonial resistance and as anti-modern counterpoints to the capitalist world system were tropes of scholarly and artistic practices in socialist Cuba (Betto 1987, Short 1993, Ayorinde 2004). Folklore played an important role in the production of national culture and constructions of Cuba as an Afro-Latin nation. Folkloric performance educated the population about Afro-Cuban religion and Cuban history. The historical narratives that accompanied the *rumba* described the African ethnic groups from which they were said to descend (Congo), the colonial era settings in which they developed. All of the sub-genres include song, percussion, and "spectacle" dances, which require a high degree of skill and are performed for a crowd of on-lookers (Sachs quoted in Manuel 2009). Particular neighborhoods and areas of employment became associated with the lore that surrounded and was circulated (Urfé n.d.). The spaces most associated with *rumba* sub-genres were urban *solares* (crowded, colonial-era housing structures with common spaces

in the form of alleys or courtyards), port zones and sugar mills.<sup>34</sup> *Rumba* paralleled this history as a cultural product of its environs revealing the lives, even if as a historical imaginary, of Afro-Cubans and working class people who were at the time excluded from the nation under colonialism. A strong association with quotidian life in domestic and industrial spaces has been underscored by frequent reference to use of spoons and packing crates as musical instruments linking *rumba* with the concern for and improvement of housing and living conditions by the socialist government (Urfé n.d., Orovio 1992, León 1984). *Rumba* in these ways signaled the triumph of the working class and Afro-Cubans previously hidden, marginalized and excluded by the persistent structures of colonial society. Finally, during the socialist era, the production and performance of *rumba* as folklore eclipsed its use in commercial entertainment and brought the genre to an international market as roots music (Moore 1994, Pacini-Hernández 1998).

The emphasis placed on non-commercial music certainly benefited folklore and concert genres, while creating lull in the production and distribution of commercial dance music in Cuba (Leymarie 2002, Moore 2006, Vaughn 2011). Popular dance music did not disappear. Rather it became regulated in the sense of presented through government sponsored dance competitions and TV shows. Commercial dance-music styles did not receive the same support and exposure that more “revolutionary” genres, such as the singer-songwriter style of *nueva trova* (new ballad), which often articulated revolutionary values as well as dense poetic texts (Moore 2006). During this period, a polemic emerged over the term “salsa” and its origins as a commercial music in the US (Manuel 1994,

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<sup>34</sup> The sugar mill figured centrally in the new histories of Cuba produced during the socialist era, in particular Manuel Moreno Fraginals landmark publication *El Ingenio* (1976, The Sugarmill).

1991, Berrios-Miranda 2002, Moore 2002). The Cuban press resisted the term “salsa” as it was coined in the US for a music largely comprised of the performance practice of Cuban *son* and *rumba* (Roberts 1979, Boggs 1991, Waxer 2002a). Historical creole social dances were bundled into folkloric performance, perhaps diminishing their relevance for contemporary society while presenting them as representing historical types or histories of the nation. At first this included *danzón*, *habanera*, and *contradanza*, but later come to include *son*, *casino* and *mambo*. Dance was incorporated into school curriculums and neighborhood cultural centers making a wide variety of styles available for amateur classes and accessible performances.

### **Cuban socialism**

The Cuban revolution enjoyed widespread support from its earliest stages. Rather than perpetuating the corrupt politics of the regime it had toppled, Castro and the July 26 movement focused immediate efforts on improving conditions for the majority of Cubans, while reassuring the moneyed classes that private and personal space would be protected (Farber 2011).<sup>35</sup> The new government created jobs, expanded health care, extended education and sought to create new public *conciencia* about politics and morality (Pérez-Stable 2012:78). In this sense the movement sought to unify the population around the values of social justice and national sovereignty (ibid.). Along with these goals the government pursued policies of “cultural advancement” through the prioritization of arts education and the creation of infrastructure to support the production

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<sup>35</sup> In recent years, criticisms of the revolution have underscored that by focusing on the public realm in terms of access to jobs and reorganization of the economy after nationalization, the new government neglected the types of inequality and discrimination that were reproduced in the private or domestic sphere, namely those of racism, gender discrimination and sexual inequality (Hamilton 2012, de la Fuente quoted in Antón Carrillo 2012).

of national culture (Moore 2006). These were taken together under the rubric of creating a new society with revolutionary culture, an implicit program of modernization.

In 1961, when Fidel Castro declared the revolution to be socialist, he reinforced an urgent call for national unity and defined it in political terms. The government continued to seek solutions to poverty and injustice, but ideology and policies became more explicitly linked with Marxist economic analysis and the tasks of nationalizing the economy. While Castro had explicitly addressed the urgency of ending racial inequality in an early speech, he dialed back this position when strong responses from some elite sectors threatened to withdraw support (Farber 2011, Anton Carrillo 2012). Instead, the discourse of class equality replaced issues of racial discrimination, and the government took action in the sphere of employment and housing, areas historians point out, that could be objectively controlled. Equalizing or homogenizing social experiences and the standard of living became part of the reorganization of the economy and society. This was done through diminishing barriers to education and limiting income disparities, so that most Cubans experienced a similar standard of living. The concept of the “raceless” nation was once again invoked and the government declared racism over (Antón Carrillo 2012, Farber 2011). Furthermore, intellectuals who sought to organize study and interest groups on Afro-Cuban issues were discouraged and prevented from doing so (C. Moore 1988, Moore 2006, Farber 2011). Finally, among discourses of Marxist-Leninism that shaped the modernizing projects of the revolution, atheism became broadly integrated into government policies. While the Catholic Church had not been historically particularly strong in Cuba, the government enacted strict regulations on its ability to function (Ayorinde 2004). Afro-Cuban religions were treated somewhat differently but

no less restricted; framed in official discourse as anachronisms or vestigial cultural practices that would fade away as the revolutionary culture took root, in some cases, such as the *abakuá* they were actively and harshly repressed (Hagedorn 2001, Moore 2006, Farber 2011). It was in this context that the government offered support to the staging of secular and stylized performances of folklore and promoted *rumba* (a festive and secular genre) as emblematic of working class artistry (Daniel 1995, 1991, Moore 2006).

Support for the government's revolutionary nationalist project came to define belonging in the ensuing years. Between 1965 and 1968, the government made very clear the boundaries of belonging by interning enemies of the revolution in rural detention camps (Unidades Militares para la Ayuda a la Producción UMAP). Among those held in the camps were artists and writers accused of being homosexuals, members of the *abakuá* community and other Afro-Cuban religious practitioners, as well as political dissidents (Ayorinde 2004, Moore 2006, Farber 2011). The experiences around the UMAP camps were traumatizing to individuals and chilling for that generation (Moore 2006). While the use of detention camps was curtailed, the process of institutionalizing the revolution intensified after 1970. For the next two decades, political involvement became the central expression of national community.

In socialist Cuba, the aims of women's rights were defined in terms of employment and participation in the public sphere. In the early months of the revolution, Castro decried discrimination against women and called for the enforcement of provisions in the 1940 Constitution regarding labor practices (Pérez-Stable 2012). The Ministry of Labor began enforcement and the number of complaints filed increased, marking what would be the main focus of women rights over the next decades (ibid.).

Soon after in August 1960, the Federation of Cuban Women (*Federación de Mujeres Cubanas*, FMC) was formed, headed by Vilma Espín (wife of Raúl Castro). In other areas of women's health and quality of life policies were uneven but abortion was legalized and other progressive steps supported women's presence and participation in employment and education (Hamilton 2012).

In summary, the first three decades of the revolution saw enormous change as the government became involved in almost all areas of public life. The most important frequently cited accomplishments of the Cuban government during these years are education, health care and housing. Music, dance, literature and arts were also important domains of activity and accomplishment. Among these folklore played an important role and the CFNC developed a repertoire of pieces and methods for staging and teaching folkloric performance. Folkloric performance became integrated into the public sphere through institutions of national culture, education, and major performance venues.

Starting in 1986, Cuba entered a process aimed at "rectifying errors of the past," in which some of the overreaches of the Soviet era were officially criticized and a variety of reforms were undertaken (Pérez-Stable 2012). Reforms responded in part to economic problems, corruption and political excesses (Pérez-Stable 2012). During this time the sense of opening created momentum and the basis for social changes that would develop over the next decades. Among these were talks between the government and religious leaders, and new approaches to sex education, among others (Hamilton 2012, Ayorinde 2004). Negotiations with leaders of Afro-Cuban religious communities of Osha-Ifa (Yoruba religions in Cuba) began during this period as well as renewed interest in research on religion and the formation of an Office of Religious Affairs (Ayorinde 2004).

New organizations such as the National center for Sex Education (CENESEX, 1989; formerly National Working Group on Sex Education, 1977) and later the short lived feminist association Magín (1994) formed by female communication workers, journalists, academics and intellectuals, introduced gender analysis into debates and created more space for sexual plurality (Hamilton 2012).<sup>36</sup> By the end of the 1980s, Cuban society as a whole began to abandon traditional ideals of female chastity and sexual ignorance (Hamilton 2012:37). Soon however, the government began to prepare for the end of the Soviet Union and the inevitable withdrawal of subsidies. Anticipating the coming economic crisis, Cuban leaders announced the start of the Special Period by distributing bicycles and urging the youth not to lose faith (Carmona Báez 2004).<sup>37</sup>

#### **4. The Special Period and Recovery (1990 – 2013)**

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 catalyzed a period of profound crisis in Cuba, which lasted from 1990 to 2004 with a period of recovery lasting another decade (Mesa Lago 2005). From 1989 to 1993, Cuba's economy contracted by fifty percent and further again in 1994 (Centeno and Font 1997, Pérez-Lopez 1997: 171). The country lost eighty-five percent of its foreign markets and for the first time since the 1959 revolution

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<sup>36</sup> Hamilton writes that by the end of the 1980s, traditional ideals of female chastity and sexual ignorance were being abandoned (Hamilton 2012:37). ALSO: underscores homosexuality as “one of the most persistently controversial issues of the revolution” must be understood in the context of institutionalized homophobia throughout Latin America, focus on outside criticism in Cuba, source of divisiveness among supporters of the revolution (Hamilton 2012:38). “In terms of heterosexual relations and family life 1990 marked less a break than a continuation in trends developing in Cuba since at least the 1970s: a low birthrate; widespread use of contraception and abortion; an increase in extended as opposed to nuclear family; and high levels of sexual autonomy among young Cubans...” (Hamilton 2012:45).

<sup>37</sup> The term *El Periodo Especial en Tiempo de Paz* [the Special Period During Peace Time, peace-time referring to the end of the Cold War] was coined in 1991 at the PCC fourth congress (Carmona Báez 2004:87). Some scholars refer to *el periodo especial* as the years from 1991-1996 (Carmona Báez 2004:37), others have dated it from 1989-2004, citing the date when the economy was projected to again reach its pre-crisis levels. “The crisis that Cuba faced can never be exaggerated. Due to the break-up of the socialist bloc and the consequent fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost between 80 and 85 percent of its external trade and more than 50 percent of its purchasing power (Domínguez 1995: 23; Mesa-Lago, 1992: 4 in Carmona Báez 2004: 86).

the population experienced malnutrition and extreme shortages that cut basic services like electricity and transportation (Centeno and Font 1997). The crisis reached its worst in 1994 with severe shortages and growing political disaffection (Mesa-Lago 2005, Pedraza 2007). It catalyzed abrupt and stark changes across all sectors, disrupting social and cultural life at all levels. Still, the crisis affected some sectors of the population worse than others and catalyzed inequalities that had not been experienced on a wide scale since before the revolution.<sup>38</sup> The government responded with a variety of reforms and experiments, at times reversing course or rolling back previous adjustments (Morris 2008, Hearn and Alfonso 2012).

Among the reforms taken during the early 1990s there were both economic and social measures. On the one hand, the government focused on developing a tourism sector, decentralizing certain industries, of which music was among the first and allowing individuals to earn money from certain kinds of small businesses (Centeno and Font 1997, Fairley 2004). On the other hand, following on the heels of the period of rectifications, the government authorized new organizations. Among the most notable were those representing Afro-Cuban religions, in particular the Yoruba Cultural Association of Cuba (1991), and Magín, a feminist organization (1994) (Ayorinde 2004, Hamilton 2012). While the organization Magín was closed down, the decade saw an increase in awareness around gender issues and a move away from institutionalized homophobia (Hamilton 2012:48). There was a widespread renaissance of religious

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<sup>38</sup> Hamilton explains how the Special Period was especially hard on homosexuals (2012:48). Blue, de la Fuente and others note the rise of racial discrimination and economic inequality (de la Fuente 2007, Blue 2007).

practice corresponding to the softening of Soviet era restrictions. The 1990s would bring new plurality as well as new levels of social inequality.

During the 1990s, dance music came to dominate the Cuban music industry at the expense of more revolutionary genres such as the singer-songwriter genre of *nueva trova* known for its poetic lyrics (Moore 2006:243). Transnational styles of popular music became prominent on the island in contrast to an intense focus on developing national genres during the socialist era. New music scenes produced Cuban hip-hop, *reggaetón*, and *salsa* among others (Fernandes 2003, Perna 2005, Baker 2009, Marshall et. al. 2009). Researchers demonstrated new interest in historical genres of social and salon dances (González 2007, Balbuena 2003, Reyes 2009). Leading to the relaxation of restrictions on religious practice research expanded on religion (Ayorinde 2004, e.g. Calzadilla et. al. 2006, Orozco 1998, Mederos and Limonta 1991). Cuban researchers turned to catalogue regional styles and popular traditions (Giro 1995, Eli Rodríguez et. al. 1997, Feliu 2003). Many of the basic assumptions of nationalist musicology were challenged and revised, among these the five genre-complex model of Cuban music ceased to be paradigmatic for some musicologists (e.g. Acosta date, Esquenazi 2001). Overall, music research reflected growing plurality, multiculturalism, and various aspects of Cuba's re-positioning in the global economy.

One type of dance-music that played a role in the reshaping of public space and identity during the 1990s was the style of *salsa* that some authors have referred to as *timba* (Perna 2005, Vaughn 2011). While *timba* encompassed a wide variety of music and dance practices and for that reason has been referred to more generally as *música bailable*, it can be understood as a local elaboration of *salsa* (Waxer 2002, Perna 2005).

*Timba* used the basic *son-montuno* song-form consisting of a verse and a call and response section, and as in other styles of *salsa* arrangers elaborated the basic structure and incorporated musical elements from other types of popular music (Washburn 2002, Perna 2005). Using local rhythms and instrumentation, Cuban popular music bands created a fusion-style of *salsa* that drew significantly on *rumba guaguancó* as well as contemporary styles such as *reggaetón*, hip-hop, and Afro-Cuban religious music (Perna 2005, Vaughn 2011). Some bands favored fusion styles that drew on jazz and funk. *Salsa* provided a basic structure of interlocking polyrhythmic parts into which other layers could be added. Like *contradanza cubana* and *guaguancó*, *salsa* uses an anticipated bass figure closely related to dance-music styles including *rumba* (Manuel 1985).

*Timba* musicians borrowed several key musical elements from *rumba* including replacing the *son clave* with the *rumba clave*, accelerating the tempo during the *montuno* section, and making arrangements similar to the call and response section of *rumba*. Furthermore, singers quoted from familiar Cuban and Afro-Cuban song materials including contemporary slang, characteristic expressions from *rumba* and songs from the Yoruba *Regla de Ocha (Ocha-Ifá)*, also known as *Santería*. In this way, familiar elements of national music genres were reconfigured alongside transnational popular music.

Audiences who participated in live concerts contributed considerably to shaping the style through their dancing and uses of the dance. New styles of dance emerged with some of the new uses of social dance and *timba* music. Specifically, *timba* became known for a kind of unfettered eroticism and associations with casual sex work known as *jineterismo*. In this style of dance, the couple performed traditional *casino* or *son* during the first section or verse. It should be noted that dance-music terminology often has

multiple and overlapping meanings and what was called *son* or *casino* may be referred to as *salsa* in other places (Perna 2005, Manuel 2009). Rather than completing the traditional couple dance, women would break away from their dance partner during the *montuno* (Perna 2005). The women would form a line on the dance floor and their partners would stand behind them while they performed a series of eroticized solo dance moves, which was referred to as *el despelote* (Sp. chaos, also: to strip) (Perna 2005: 152-153). During the *montuno* the tempo often increased and built the energy for the dancers to a frenzied pitch. A related dance practice called “*la subasta de las cinturas*” (lit. the auction of the waists) developed along with *despelote*. In *la subasta* bandleaders would invite solo female dancers on stage for competitions in which they performed sequences of eroticized and frenetic dance movements for the audiences to “judge” (Perna 2005: 201).<sup>39</sup> These moves had names such as *el tembleque* (coconut pudding) and *la batidora* (the blender). The choreographies of *despelote* were incorporated into the dance practices of *reggaetón* and into the routines of the singers and backup singers of *timba* bands such as *La Charanga Habanera*. These new choreographies contributed to what Perna referred to as the “carnavalesque” atmosphere of *timba* events. I offer an alternate interpretation of this as a normalization of changing sexual mores and gender roles (Roach 1996). Rather than subverting the existing social order, *timba* events may be viewed as part of popular movements redefining identity and nation during the 1990s.

The music and dance became part of social controversies and public discussions on morality, in particular those surrounding sexual mores and consumerism. Discussions

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<sup>39</sup> This video shows a local band playing, and the lead singer encouraging women to get up on stage in order to hold such a competition. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2Lt-QBvZTE> In the following example, from a performance of the famous band La Charanga Habanera, a group of women can be seen on stage waiting to take turns. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKdY4782pb8>

of sex work stigmatized women of color (García 2010, Hamilton 2012). The use of racialized terms, particularly the term *la mulata* (but others as well) to categorize sex workers as presumptively female and either black or of “mixed race” reflecting what Hamilton explains were the use of cultural stereotypes in addition to moral criticism (Hamilton 2012:47). The era saw men becoming involved in sex work, which at least for heterosexuals was not regarded as equally problematic.

At the time, public discussions on morality referred to such spaces as “zones of contamination” where foreigners and Cubans could mix freely (Perna 2005). One of the terms coined in the Cuban media at this time denoted this space, which contained social mixture between foreigners and Cubans as the “socially contaminated zone.” The term represents the contentious practices of the newly liberalized economy, global tourism and the conflict with the old order of the Cuban state. The lyrics often promoted consumerism and this was accompanied by the outrageous antics of some of the bands that were among the new economic elite. Sex work was also linked with the controversial practice of marrying foreign tourists as a means of leaving the country. In short, the crisis of the 1990s encompassed profound ruptures and pervasive changes in Cuban society. Sexual mores and notions of gender roles changed.

*Timba* and the new dance styles developed by its audiences reflected the state of flux and transformation of the Cuban nation. The incorporation of elements from *rumba* and in some instances *son* referred back to the classically Cuban national culture of the Revolutionary era. At the same time, *timba* musicians incorporated new transnational styles of music as the Cuban nation was being reintegrated into the global economy.

*Timba* and other popular dance-musics made a stark break with the musical sounds of the

revolutionary era. *Timba* encompassed not only the aesthetic and sexual transformations of the Special Period but also economic ones.

In conclusion, this chapter has made a preliminary examination of how dance-music has reflected shifting definitions of the Cuban nation through identities of race, gender and class. Dance-music has played an important role in public performances of identity since the nineteenth-century and reflects an important domain of cultural politics. The different cases reflect what historians have noted are shifts between popular mobilization and top-down definitions of race and nation, the opportunities for agency (however problematic) produced by discourses of *mestizaje*, and the dynamic of racialization as a feature of times of crisis (del la Fuente 2001, Appelbaum, Macpherson and Roseblatt 2003, Arroyo 2003). While Cuban history and musicology have focused on constructions of race, class and nation, discussions have been less consistently oriented to gender and sexuality as critical dimensions of those discourses. The construction of the nation as a brotherhood has tended to naturalize and minimize analysis of gender and sexuality in national culture. Such frameworks offer critical perspectives that seem worthy of further development.

## Chapter 3

### Dancing Solo as Heroic Self-making:

#### Isnavi Cardoso Díaz and Choreographic Transvestism in *la columbia*

*Yo, realmente bailo columbia desafiando al hombre. Me gusta hacerlo porque yo quiero que pongan a la mujer en el lugar que se merece .... en ese aspecto siempre he estado en contra del hombre.*

In reality, I dance *columbia* in defiance of men. I like doing it because I want to put women in the place they deserve. ... In this respect, I have always been against men.

– Isnavi Cardoso Díaz, (2/4/11) on dancing *la columbia* in public

Isnavi Cardoso Díaz negotiates her identity as a professional dancer and *rumbera*, a (female) member of the traditional *rumba* community, through her creative performances of *la columbia* in Havana (henceforth referred to as simply *columbia*). Lacking the conservatory training that defined professional status in the performing arts in Cuba from 1968 through the mid 90s, and not belonging to a family of musicians or religious practitioners, Cardoso entered folkloric performance of her own accord after high school. She establishes herself as a legitimate interpreter of *rumba* through her rousing performances of *columbia*, which require powerful displays of emotion and physicality, as well as a network of personal and professional relationships. Drawing on her background in sports, Cardoso appropriates the male-solo style of dance as an expression of gender equality that breaks conventional associations between gender, sex and sexuality. At the same time, her dancing invokes a pre-institutional approach to

*rumba*, and links her with traditional communities of Afro-Cuban musicians, thus challenging the hegemony of institutions of national culture such as the CFNC. Exciting, if not controversial for audiences, her performances of *columbia* open up space for other non-standard interpretations, including but not limited to those by other women, and have established her as a figure in the contemporary *rumba* scene.

Using ethnographic evidence, including videotaped performances, interviews, and dance classes with Cardoso, I analyze her performances as kinetic conversations, and show how she alters the standard performance practice of *columbia* as she pursues agendas linked with the lived experience of identity. By tracing the alterations and interactions by which Cardoso shapes her performances, I show how those performances conserve and transform her individual identity while opening discursive space for other non-standard performances. Taking alterations of standard performance practice as evidence of counter discourses about Afro-Cuban identity, her creative performances of *columbia* reveal intersections and slippages between performance roles and individual identity. Through these performances Cardoso positions herself in public conversations on ethnicity and national culture in contemporary Cuba that reflect unspoken intersections of race and gender.

In the context of changes including the decentralization of the music industry, intensified racial inequality, and a backlash against women in the public sphere, Cardoso's identity negotiations allow her to establish an independent career. The public spaces of these negotiations offered opportunity and danger, as they became flashpoints for moral debates. While the Cuban government initiated reforms aimed at decentralizing the music industry and stimulated the growth of a tourism industry during the mid 1990s,

it also withdrew from the economic activity of daily life (Hernández-Reguant 2009). This put public space into flux. Relatively unregulated, the informal sector (*lo informal*) flourished and new associational spaces emerged (Chaguaceda-Noriega 2008, Fernández n.d.). Many of these spaces were linked with dance-music performance and some were referred to as “socially contaminated zones” (Perna 2005). Referring to the mixed audiences of Cubans and tourists, social contamination also referred to the unofficial tourism industry or practices of *jineterismo* by which some Cubans earned hard currency. Musicians and dancers participate in a variety of ways in the informal economy, for one, supplementing their incomes by offering lessons to foreign students. These conditions contributed to the environment in which performers developed independent careers and livelihoods linked more and less with both official and unofficial tourism industries.

*Jineterismo* entailed a range of services from cigar sales to sex work aimed at foreign tourists during the 1990s and 2000s (Stout 2008, Fernández n.d.). Public discussions focused on *jineterismo* as a form of prostitution carried on by women of color, using explicitly racial terms to describe women engaged in sex work, regardless of their racial self-identification (García 2010, Stout 2008). Women’s liaisons with foreigners were deemed anti-social and grounds for necessary rehabilitation; the central problem identified by official discourses was pathology of social conscience, and moral bankruptcy placing the women out of the bounds of citizenship (Cabezas 1998, Stout 2008, García 2010). In this sense, the conversations surrounding *jineterismo* reproduce traditional conceptions of sexual honor and dishonor that stigmatize women of color in Cuba, especially dark skinned Afro-Cubans (Stolcke 1989, Kutzinski 1993). At the same time, such conversations reinforced the interconnections between honor, masculine

privilege, and race, as heterosexual men engaging in the same behavior were not stigmatized. *Jineterismo* may be usefully thought of as a racializing discourse that was used to draw a line around national community, and which catalyzed a backlash against the presence of women in public space. Accompanying the accelerated rise of social inequality, changing sexual mores became one significant flash point for public discussions of shifting morality and the anxiety surrounding the disintegration of the social fabric of the revolutionary era (Stout 2008, Hernández-Reguant 2009).

Cardoso established herself within this political landscape of economic reform and social change. She carved out a space for herself as a professional dancer and teacher of foreign students, thus making an important distinction between herself and women who earn money from sex work. From her own account, Cardoso claimed that she would do whatever was necessary to support herself and her daughter, but she also made it clear that she did not “go out with white men” (Cardoso, personal communication). Her comments perhaps reflect the social acceptability of *jineterismo*, as well as the identity politics underlying sexual liaisons. It is useful to consider how Cardoso’s performances, on-stage and off-stage, operate as a way of positioning herself in public space and in the world of folkloric performance as an honorable woman and a professional.

Central to the expressivity and efficaciousness of Cardoso’s creative performances are the interrelated strategies of choreographic transvestism and orthopraxy.<sup>40</sup> First, through a kind of drag performance, Cardoso uses the traditionally male-only dance to claim qualities such as strength and honor, while rupturing traditional intersections of gender, sex, and sexuality. Her performances not only are affective for

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<sup>40</sup> While she does not use men’s clothing, her performances use a kind of body styling that many understand as masculine.

spectators, but also create ground for how she operates in public space, resisting the sexualization of women and the dishonorable status ascribed to women of color through public discourse on sex work (Cabezas 1998, Garcia 2010). At the same time she makes a claim to the legitimacy of her performance, not on the basis of conservatory training, but rather by appealing to pre-institutional styles of *rumba* performance. Linked with a traditional community of Afro-Cuban performers, Gregorio Hernández (see Chapter 2) among them, Cardoso positions herself as a traditional performer, who nevertheless respects and conforms to standard performance practice. While the explicit theme of her dancing focuses on gender, its hidden transcripts resist institutional definitions of national culture linked with racial and ethnic identities.

This chapter begins with an explanation of how Cardoso's performances illustrate the position of the protagonist in kinetic conversations. I explore how creative performance entails a reflexive process in which Cardoso shapes her kinetic performances of identity in terms of her past training in sports. She adapts her existing skills and abilities to a new performance discipline and social landscape. This results in her cultivation of "strong" styles of dance, by which she shapes her unique style and place in the contemporary scene. Her kinetic performances of identity intensify the arousal of aesthetic experience and provoke responses from audiences and other performers. This process of kinetic conversation catalyzes critical reflections on identity and performance roles and creates the ground for Cardoso's public persona. Next, I describe the context of the performances, starting with Cardoso's autobiography and the somewhat ambivalent relationship she has with official institutions as an independent but officially evaluated and salaried performer. I describe the *rumba* genre with particular

focus on the sub-genre of *columbia* as defined by the performance style of the CFNC. The second half of the chapter examines Cardoso's performances of *columbia* and the identity negotiations that shape them. The conclusions reflect on how *columbia* in general, and Cardoso's performances in particular, operate as a language-like domain of reflexive practice which conserves and transforms identity in the context of lived experience.

### **Kinetic Conversation: the Protagonist**

In this chapter, Isnavi Cardoso's creative performances of *columbia* illustrate the protagonist position in kinetic conversation. First, as a solo style of dance, *columbia* provides a paradigm for how we tend to think of individuals as independent entities. The concept of kinetic conversation underscores how the identity negotiations of creative performance rely on both individual experience, as in life history and training, as well as mutual interaction, in the immediate sense on-stage, and in the broader range of professional and social networks. My analysis illuminates the role of interaction in constituting the identity of the protagonist. This case study thus reveals how social roles and identities intersect with the arousal of what is commonly referred to as aesthetic experience.

Key to understanding how dance-music performance allows individuals to negotiate identity are the processes underlying the experience of self. Since an essential and static "self" has not been found to exist, physiologically or cognitively, the self is best understood as an on-going process intimately linked with environment, interaction, and most fundamentally, bodily habits and experiences, including thought (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991:79). To summarize, it can be said that the self arises through

bodily experiences and is conserved in language, a process more accurately described as “linguaging,” or the act of knowing (Maturana and Varela 1987:234). It is the history of interactions that result in an observable identity or location in social space. Thus the coordination of social interaction, in this case achieved through dance-music, has implications for the bodily and cultural dimensions of adaptation.

Often referred to as aesthetic experience, emotional arousal is central to dance-music events. Participation in such events centers on the experience of emotions together with movement, that are catalyzed by musical sound, and their verbal interpretation appropriate to particular styles of musical and emotional expression (Becker 2010). Arousal reflects learned responses, a history of social interaction that has led to a “forestructure of understanding” regarding particular styles of musical listening (Becker 2010). Scholars of music argue that by altering the expected succession of musical events, performers and composers intensify arousal (Meyer 1956).<sup>41</sup> This process is central to kinetic conversations, and by tracing alterations we can see how performers situate themselves in the social world of performance. Furthermore, these negotiations accomplished by altering standard performance practice elicit a critical reflection on the intersections between performance roles and individual identity. In other words, identity and social roles of performers play a part in the arousal central to musical experience. Their identity negotiations inform the observer about gaps and confluences between official identity discourses and identity as lived experience.

Mutuality is another important concept for understanding the effectiveness of identity negotiations. Identity and the experience of self arise only in part from first

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<sup>41</sup> Feld (1984) reviews a number of commentaries and criticisms of Meyer’s initial articulation of this principle.

person experience; interaction constitutes a crucial component of each. The reflexivity of performance does not result in a productive process without the mutual interactions of others, including audiences and other performers. Evidence of this dynamic was gleaned from interviews with drag king performers in the United States. Members of DBT (Disposable Boy Toys), a Santa Barbara-based feminist performance collective, reported an effect on their off-stage gender identities after some time of participating in the performance collective (Shapiro 2007). Identity effects did not occur for all members of the troupe – indeed women of color left the group because their performances of gender identity were not sufficiently supported by rest of the collective (Shapiro 2007). Linked with the experiences of performing, and the support found in the collectivity for their transformations, such evidence supports the idea that performance processes have effects on individual identity, especially where there is an intention of the performer to modify, negotiate, or explore the limits of social roles such as gender.

In summary, dance-music provides a site for the negotiation of identities central to everyday life because it catalyzes a culturally valuable experience of self and coordinates interaction with other individuals by which identity is established. The process of performance can locate an individual in a social landscape defined in terms of dance-music practice on the basis of embodied features such as body-styling, and emotional responses based on a shared forestructure of understanding. Among the expectations knowledgeable participants share is a tacit understanding about the personal identity of performers and the relationship between performance roles and individual identity. Performance affords individual dancers and musicians an opportunity to experience self in culturally valuable terms, enacted and experienced through stylized

patterns of movement and emotion linked with particular styles of dance-music. Creative performance presents a chance to assert the uniqueness of individual experience and to modify standard performance practice.

### ***La Columbia: Origins, Music and dance processes, habitus***

The secular and festive dance-music broadly referred to as *rumba* officially consists of three different styles. *Guaguancó* and *yambú* are both couples dances, while *columbia* is a men's solo dance. All three emerged in the western provinces of Havana and Matanzas in the late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-centuries among working class, largely Afro-Cuban communities. All three styles consist of "spectacle dances," requiring a high degree of skill, which are performed for a crowd of on-lookers and accompanied by song and percussion (Sachs quoted in Manuel 2009). In *rumba*, a percussion ensemble plays interlocking polyrhythms, which are coordinated by a time-line pattern. Beginning with an introduction and then presenting a verse, a solo singer leads the ensemble. After finishing the verse, the soloist improvises an extended call and response with a chorus of singers, which may include participation from the audience. The dancing occurs during the call and response. With origins in African musical cultures and its cultivation in Cuba throughout the twentieth century, *rumba* has operated as an important site for the performance of both diasporic and Cuban cultural identities.

After the 1959 revolution, the government upheld *rumba* as a symbol of working class artistry and promoted it as national culture (Daniel 1991). Part of a broader Afro-Cubanist revival, which was led in part by the musicologist/composer Argeliers León (a student of Fernando Ortiz), folklore became central to the creation of revolutionary culture. In this context, the CFNC not only created a repertoire and method of folkloric

performance, but also created and enforced its gold standard of performance practice. Drawing at first on the research of Fernando Ortiz, as well as the contributions of the performer-informants, the CFNC established standard performance practice. The repertoire, methods, and interpretations given to folklore and popular traditions were disseminated through the government's system of cultural institutions organized eventually as an extensive national system of arts education (CENCEA). The educational system provided primary, secondary, and advanced studies in academic settings. Improvement Centers (*Centros de Superación*) offered professionalization courses in music and dance. Performing ensembles were overseen by a centralized system of management. And finally, music and dance education included amateur classes and ensembles based in municipal cultural centers (*Casas de Cultura*).

*Rumba* was performed by the CFNC as a Cuban popular tradition, along with traditional dances such as *conga/comparsa*, *danzón*, *mambo* and others. As an Afro-Cuban tradition, it was developed in the CFNC by the same performer-informants in the founding generation who shaped the development of the folkloric repertoire based on Afro-Cuban religious traditions. Among the founding generation, a small group of dancers became the central arbiters of *columbia* dance style in Havana. This group includes Luis Chacón "Aspirina," "Santacruz" (Ricardo Gómez Santacruz, 1932-2010), Orlando "el Bailarín" Alonso, and Juan de Dios Ramos. Later key figures in *columbia* include the conservatory-trained dancers Domingo Pau and his student Dionisio Valdés. Through the stylization of dances by the CFNC, *columbia*, which had been renowned for physical violence as well as choreographic competition, was rendered into what some professional dancers describe as a "friendly brotherhood" (Martínez interview 4/5/11).

Furthermore, *columbia* became an important way that male folkloric dancers created a domain of competition, honor, and even a gateway to professional prestige. Iván Valdespino who trained with the CFNC explains that *columbia* is “serious” because it is “something between men,” while *guaguancó*, a male-female couple’s dance is “just for fun, a kind of entertainment” (Valdespino, interview 8/22/09).

With fierce competition among folkloric dancers, *columbia* served as an informal gateway to participation and recognition in the Havana folklore scene. One dancer explained to me how he taught himself *columbia* through a painstaking process of observing and practicing at home. He began to break into the world of folkloric dance-music during the 1980s at *Sábado de la Rumba*. This famous weekly event hosted by the CFNC often included an invitation to participation by members of the audience. The dancer described people as very shy at that time and few ever joined. He prepared a routine and eventually gathered the courage to join the CFNC onstage and dance (Anonymous dancer, interview 5/4/11). He did well by all accounts, and little by little his participation grew into a career. But his success was hard won, since he came “from the street.” He explained,

Aspirina and Juan de Dios [leading dancer/instructors from the CFNC] criticized me harshly. Juan de Dios told me that I did not dance *columbia* that I danced “breaking.” But if *columbia* does not have a fixed pattern? You can make any kind of movement in *columbia*, then why not? One day, I want them to say hey there was a guy ... who danced like that! But they have authority in this world of dance – in the rumba they are the authorities. They knew the originals, Malanga, Andreas Baró... And from there they learned and preserved the essence of the *rumba*. I’m from another generation and I, too, want to create my own style. I am not a disciple of any of them – I learned by myself. I formed my style little by little. I took some from here and some from there (Anonymous dancer, interview 4/5/11).

He recalled how his alteration of the CFNC’s basic lexicon with steps like the moonwalk, borrowed from Michael Jackson, met with outright hostility in the 1980s. The dancer,

however, eventually achieved an A-level categorization and earned the top-level salary in the *planilla* (payroll) system (approximately 520 Cuban pesos, or 21 US dollars per month in 2011). It took him years to gain acceptance, and he readily admits that he changed his style for the purposes of professional performances (Anonymous dancer, interview 4/5/11).

As part of national culture, *rumba* and other forms of folklore have been included in the curriculum of professional dance training at the ISA-University of the Arts and other schools (Balbuena, interview 2011). Unlike, *abakuá* folklore, women as well as men learn *columbia* in technical classes. Official ensembles like the CFNC however do not include women in performances of *columbia*. Although women learn *columbia* as part of technical training and literacy in Cuban folklore and popular traditions, they do not perform *columbia* as part of standard public performances in Havana.

With cultivation in conservatory settings and diffusion through official channels, *rumba* eventually went through a “golden age” during the 1980s and early 1990s, dominated by the style of performance practice established by the CFNC (Daniel 1991, 2009). Since the mid 1990s and 2000s, *rumba* has been a focus of cultural tourism, and part of the processes shaping the Cuban diaspora (Knauer 2005, Jottar 2005, Bodenheimer 2010). Its music and dance styles have evolved, reflecting changes in daily life, including tastes in popular music, an increase pace of life in Havana, as well as the legalization of religious practice. One example of this is the newer style of percussion accompaniment called *guarapachangueo*, characterized by a denser, more polyrhythmic feel, after the traditional music of the *batá* drums. In 2011, the establishment of the first radio program dedicated to *rumba*, hosted by Armando “El Loquillo” Valdés and titled

*La Rumba no es como ayer* (The rumba is not like it was), indicates renewed support from the government. In its latest revival, *rumba* has taken on a distinctly transnational character, evidenced by the new *Timbalaye* festival, a joint project between Cuba and Italy.

Members of Hernández's ensemble described differences between the "old" style of *columbia* that existed prior to the CFNC and contemporary performance practice defined by the CFNC. They often reiterated Hernández's maxim that "rumba can include everything, but done over a base" (*la rumba admite todo pero sobre una base*) (Hernández, personal communication). The new style accommodates the requirements of theatrical staging; it takes place on a large stage, and, as a soloist, the dancer must consider how to use the entire space. By contrast, the old style had a constricted sense of space, as it was danced in casual but festive social settings. Furthermore, the repertoire of steps performed by the CFNC has been standardized and refined using modern dance techniques. The "old style" provides room for idiosyncratic movements and gestures, while the "new" style emphasizes technique and uniformity of steps. Dancers also commented that the basic posture of *columbia* must be upright and proud, but complained that sometimes its performance becomes influenced by the inclined torso and *demi plié* used in other parts of the folkloric repertoire. Finally, certain customs, such as requesting a turn by raising a finger and requesting the conversation with the *quinto* player, are used infrequently if at all, because staged performances do not have exactly the same formal procedures as the more casual and extemporized events.

The *rumba* ensemble consists of a lead singer or soloist, a choir, dancers, and a percussion section. A time-line pattern, called *clave*, provides a point of reference for

individual parts and coordinates the singing and dancing with the percussion accompaniment. In *columbia*, the time-line resembles a 6/8-bell pattern, and some ensembles play it on a metal sound source such as a bell or hoe blade (*guataca*). According to Hernández, metal is more traditional; this links *columbia* with its rural origins and underscores its shared characteristics with *bembé*, a religious celebration using non-batá percussion, also rural. The classic *rumba* percussion section consists of three barrel drums, *claves*, and a piece of bamboo or a woodblock played with sticks (*la guagua*). The *chekere*, a gourd covered with a beaded net, is optional but often included.

Figure 8. Three types of *rumba* ensembles. (A) Contemporary *rumba* ensemble from Cienfuegos, July 2012. Note expanded instrumentation, percussion section, and dancer (far left). (B) Soloist and choir. (C) CFNC, May 2011. Exemplifies “classic” *rumba* style. (D) Obá Ilú, August 2011. They show an intermediate style between strictly “classic” and the more popular-music influenced contemporary style. They use the *guarapachangueo* style, which has an expanded timbral palette and a more constant flow of improvisation, while maintaining a folkloric orientation.



The drummers play basic fixed parts that they ornament in accord with principles of rhythmic organization and stylistic conventions. The lowest-pitched drum (called *tumbador*, or in *columbia* referred to as the *caja*) and middle drum (*tres-dos*) have interlocking parts. The highest-pitched drum (*quinto*) improvises between the sung phrases or plays what the solo dancer does. The lowest-pitched drum drives the tempo and signals increases with a temporary change in rhythm. The middle drum maintains the basic feel for the dancer and may switch to a more syncopated part when the tempo has increased sufficiently. Ensembles playing in the *guarapachangueo* (pronounced: wä-rä-pä-chän-gā-o) style may include a closing section of improvisation between the *quinto* and the low drum; at this climactic point the music is referred to as closed (*cerrado*), presumably because it admits no further dancing.

All three of the *rumba* sub-types follow similar basic procedures and use a two-part (AB) song form. The first section (A), referred to as the song or *canto*, features a verse composed or improvised by the soloist. The second section (B), referred to as the *mambo* or *montuno*, consists of an improvised call and response led by the soloist. The tempo accelerates across the form, in *columbia* more typically during the dancing. Performers indicate tempo, section, and other changes with aural cues.

The lead singer or soloist builds and sustains the energy of the event for the dancing. The soloist accomplishes this through the idiosyncratic and characteristic expressive quality of their voice and singing, called *ibiono*. The singer draws on a repertoire of composed and traditional song texts, as well as improvisational skill, both lyrical and rhythmic. The call and response, however repetitive, plays an important role in this; having a good repertoire of choruses (*coros*) helps by animating the crowd and

drawing participation. The verbal lexicon and themes of the verse and the repertoire of choruses in the call and response distinguishes *columbia* from the other styles of *rumba*. In *columbia*, the introduction of the verse or *llanto* (cry) uses the exclamation “¡ay dios!” (Oh God!), and vocalize on the vowel ‘o,’ such as *ororo*, *bomboro*, *imborro* etc. It typically includes series of short phrases and a descending melodic motif. The *llanto* sets the mood of intense emotion and feeling (*sentimiento*) that characterizes the singing and dancing. Performers refer to the feeling necessary for good performances in *rumba* as *sentimiento manana* (true feeling). The phrase refers to the feel for the style that makes a great performance. It also makes it authentic. This phrase may derive from the phrase *sentimiento más nada* or “feeling, nothing else.” [Figure 9. *Llanto* the sung introduction.]

Figure 9. *Columbia*, CFNC, May 26, 2011, *El Palenque*. Introduction or *llanto*. It is characterized by the phrase “ay, dios!,” descending melodic phrases, and vocalise with the vowel ‘o.’ Other tropes of *columbia* vocal improvisation include naming famous *columbianos*, and using characteristic expletives. In the example below, the singer names Roncona and uses the expletive “güiro!,” which literally refers to a gourd, but in the *rumba* lexicon means “music.”

Soloist: *Güiro! Güiro! Aa Eee*  
*Rocona!*  
*Güiro, güiro, mama!*  
*Ay dios!*  
*Pero, güiro*  
*Güiro a e*  
*Pero, güiro, güio, mama!*  
*Bomboro ro ro.*

The standard lyric content of *columbia* includes memorializing famous *columbianos*, (performers of *columbia*), in particular, figures such as Roncona, Andreas Baró, and the legendary Malanga, among others. Singers also boast, recount autobiographical or current events, and may criticize social actions or occurrences. There are even *columbias* quoting José Martí, joining folkloric performance with patriotic texts (Tata Güines, *Aniversario*

EGREM 1996). Lyrics improvised and composed draw on a lexicon of phrases, vocabulary and a repertoire of traditional verses and choruses.

Figure 10. *Columbia*, CFNC, May 26, 2011, *El Palenque*. Verse. A traditional *columbia* text. [ ] Brackets indicate extemporized exchange between the singer and another singer in the audience. Spanish text on the left; English translation on the right. Note that another singer, named Ariel, walks into the venue during the *llanto* and calls to the singer on stage, who responds by calling out his name. The verses are traditional rather than an original composition.

*Señores! Quiero pedirle disculpa a  
los que me están escuchando. Güiro!  
Quiero pedirle disculpa  
a los que me están escuchando.  
Yo no se cantar columbia  
'pa mi madre estoy cantando.*

Gentlemen! I wish to beg the pardon of  
those who are listening to me. Güiro!  
I wish to beg the pardon of those who  
are listening to me.  
I do not know how to sing *columbia*  
It is for my mother that I am singing.

*Timberos! A mí siempre me gustó cantar  
donde hayan cantadores  
[Ariel: Habla Niño!]  
Ariel! A mí siempre ha gustado cantar  
donde hayan cantadores  
poetas y trovadores  
para poderme inspirar  
Orororo*

Musicians! I always liked to sing where  
there were singers.  
[Ariel: Speak, Niño!]  
Ariel! I have always liked to sing  
where there are singers,  
poets and troubadours.  
in order to be able to improvise  
Orororo

During the B section, or *montuno*, the lead singer improvises a call and response with the choir. The singer's part is referred to as the *guía* or guide, and the choir's part is referred to as the *coro* or chorus. In this section the singer demonstrates rhythmic skill, lyric invention, as well as artful manipulation of a repertoire of responsorial songs appropriate to the style. *Columbia* has a traditional repertoire of songs, phrases, and expressions related to *Palo/Congo*, but not necessarily identical with its liturgy or language. As the tempo increases, the length of the responsorial songs gets shorter.

Figure 11. *Columbia*, CFNC, May 26, 2011 *El Palenque*. *Montuno*: guides and choruses. Typical chorus or *coro* used in *columbia*. Illustrates process by which chorus extracts their part. Soloist improvises, and indicates change with an introductory call (*diana*). (a) Illustrates the way that the choir extracts its part from the *guía* or guide part sung by the soloist. (b) Contrasting font illustrates improvisations in the text and rhythm in

subsequent iterations by soloist. (c) Bold indicates how soloist signals a change of the chorus (need not always be the word “güiro”). The words “*Congo Reales*” refers to a branch of the religion *Regla de Palo*.

**(a) Guide:** Awa osi con me congo  
con mi Congo, Congo Reales  
**Chorus:** Awa osi con mi Congo

**(b) Guide:** *ta rumba me llama*, Congo Reales  
Coro: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: *con mi congo*, Congo Reales  
Coro: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: *sentimiento me lleva*, Congo Reales  
Coro: Awa osi con mi congo

**(c) Guide:** **Güiro!** Cuidado con cuidado,  
celo tiene espinas.  
Coro: cuidado con cuidado

Since, *columbia* is understood to have a relationship with *congo* folklore and religious repertoire, the guides and choruses of the call and response section can be embellished with more or less quotation of religious repertoire, depending on the knowledge of the singer. In such cases, songs might cue movements or invoke particular deities, and imagery. Similar to *abakuá* and *Yoruba* music, the aesthetic of correspondence between lyric and/or rhythm, and/or movement pervades Afro-Cuban folklore, with each particular style deploying it in specific terms.

The *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (CFNC) presents *columbia* in terms of a highly codified and well-defined set of steps. Shaped in terms of technical exercises and broken into the standard 8-count of many types of US and European dance, the CFNC abstracted and regularized the dance, delimiting its lexicon. These include a basic step, a cross step, a pivot and twist on one leg combined with arm movements, as well as a shoulder shakes, a galloping step, and heel-toe footwork, among others (see chapter

appendix). Characteristic movements focus on the shoulders and legs, along with angular and slashing arm gestures, thus emphasizing the musculature and movements of men's laboring bodies. Body styling tends to be segmented, and the quality of movement is sharp, strong and even explosive. Dancers cultivate the visual effect of force with stylized rebounds of head and limbs. In standard performance practice, only men dance *columbia*, although it is part of the curriculum for all professional dancers at the University of the Arts (previously known as the *Instituto Superior de las Artes*, now known as *ISA-Universidad de las Artes*).

The CFNC abandoned the use of idiosyncratic and quotidian gestures and have all but eliminated the competitive spirit of the dance from their official presentation of the dance. This legendary aspect of the dance is largely confined to a comparison of the different dancers' rendition of the repertoire of steps. This also means that the traditional conversation between the solo dancer and the *quinto* is less prominent in recent years, the singer is not apt to include *puyos* (challenges or insults) in their verses, and performers' interactions between turns are minimal. Also, because it is staged, performers need not request turns, as was traditional. Finally, the CFNC have made it standard to close their performances of *columbia* with a unison choreographic phrase.

Narrative structures are commonly used in dance pedagogy in Cuba. Drawing evidence from the writing of Ramiro Guerra, one of the early choreographers of the CFNC and founder of *Danza Contemporánea*, the methods and techniques for stylizing and staging folklore that were developed drew on dramatic techniques (Guerra 1989). These techniques served to cultivate a kind of emotional and kinesthetic realism, which forms the cornerstone of Cuban folkloric and modern dance aesthetics. One way that this

method manifests among dancers was in the shared vocabulary and standards of evaluation. A number of the dancers interviewed invoked the term *concepto*, referring to a mental concept behind how one dances a particular role. Francisco Graviel Calmuse, a dancer from *Oba Ilú*, explains, “if you don’t have *concepto*, you dance empty. And empty? No, no, no.” (Calmuse, interview 8/25/11). Numerous times dancers insisted, “one must not dance just to dance,” (Cardoso, personal communication, Pérez, personal communication). There was a strong sense of adhering to a particular narrative, and expressive intention in performing the roles. Martínez invoked *concepto* to criticize dance partners who failed to involve themselves completely or properly in their roles as partners (see Chapter 4). Invoking *concepto*, dancers explained that without a narrative structure, you were apt to just going through the motions, and that such dancing lacked correct expression and emotional energy.

Graviel Calmuse described the *concepto* behind his *rumba* dancing, revealing a sense of character as well as social setting:

*A rumbero* is a person who is marginal but is an elegant person. He is cocky. A *rumbero* interacts with the ladies a lot. The *columbiano* is a dynamic person who says what he feels. The feeling from this dance, that inspires me to dance. When I dance a *rumba* I am seducing a woman. *Guaguancó*. I do it through my movements. That is the *concepto* of *rumba*. *Columbia* is a dispute. War. Competition. So, when I go out there to dance *columbia*, I am on the floor saying ‘no one does this better than me.’ That inspires me. That is the *concepto*... *Columbia* is a popular Cuban dance... that is why it cries. The singer sings ‘*Ay Dios! Ay Dios!*’ because it was hard. He was from marginal people from the *solares*, so he expressed feelings through his song, and the dancer through his dance. (Calmuse, interview 8/25/11).

In another description of *columbia* performance practice, Amauri Fernández, a member of the group who had worked as an accompanist and percussion teacher at the ISA (University of the Arts) provides yet another narrative. He describes how one might

approach *columbia* as a night out. He described, how the dancer begins slowly, arranging his clothing, perhaps brushing some dust off his pant leg. He makes himself tall, upright, and elegant. He goes out into the street and at a certain point he encounters an unknown danger, he takes evasive and aggressive action. A confrontation with an invisible enemy ensues, and crescendos in a sequence of daring actions. Perhaps at some point he might lose his balance, but he recovers! And so on until the dancer conquers the threat (Fernández, personal communication, 2011). The performer locates himself in a narrative structure and plays a character role.

While the dance-music entails historical connotations and character roles, there is a personal component that artists demonstrate through their enactment of the roles. The experience of self that a performer has in learning and performing, wrapped up with feelings of emotion, stylized movements and cultural values, is central to creativity, expressivity, and excitement in each new performance. In the case of *columbia*, dancers emphasized two aspects: that *columbia* revealed an inner landscape of feeling, and that is first and foremost linked with their own sense of masculinity. Calmuse explains how he might approach teaching someone to dance *columbia*:

To dance *columbia* first, before all else, we have to have feeling to dance *columbia*, because you have to feel it. *Columbia* is something that... in the *rumba* [genre] complex it is the most difficult. You demonstrate your grace, your speed, you... what you feel, in this moment if you are well dressed, and perfumed, you move your shoulders with more elegance – you show that you are in a war – you show what you have inside (Calmuse, interview 8/26/11).

*Columbia* reveals an interior landscape that is not entirely visible from the outside.

Linked with traditional values of masculine honor and couched in terms of elegance, competition, and bravery, the dance reveals an essence that makes competitors worthy opponents and respectable figures.

Dancers also specified that *columbia* evokes their personal sense of masculinity, as opposed to the portrayal of a role from which they separated themselves. A site of both competition and male bonding, *columbia* underscores the importance of homosocial relationships in the context of everyday life, and specifically within the world of folkloric performance. So central to the experience and expression of masculinity, performers of *columbia* often referred to the *feeling* of being a man when describing *columbia*. Calmuse describes *columbia* in terms that are solemn, emphasizing the gentlemanly aspects.

I feel that it is very serious... It is an expression of respect, of feeling, to express through this dance that you are a man. A gentleman of respect. This makes the *columbiano* a man of respect... of feeling. (Calmuse, interview 8/22/11).

Pedro Menocal, an older *rumbero*, gives a contrasting characterization of masculinity when he describes the attitude he feels when dancing *columbia*.

The man always declares 'I'm a man' because every movement it is an expression that 'I'm a man, I'm bad! Think what you want! Bring it on!! ...because I'm bad! (Menocal, interview 2/14/11).

The dance-music thus evokes the feelings and postures of masculinity, which may vary in its individual expression, but may be broadly conceived of as organized by competition and notions of masculine honor and reputation gained through homosocial interaction.

The mood is intense, allowing the surfacing of true, deep, and even troublesome emotions. Perhaps the term *sentimiento manana*, or true feeling, refers not only to the true feel needed for authentic performance, but also in the sense of an overflowing of intense, even painful feelings that have no other appropriate venue. There is not only competition among the dancers and between dancer and musician, but also the conquest of fear (within one's self) and danger (risk of dishonor). *Columbia* allows the self-making of an independent masculinity. An outsider in many ways, the *columbiano* stands in

contrast to the initiate, such as the *abakuá*. The initiate is an approved man who has been brought into the organizational structure of the *abakuá* hierarchy. The *columbiano* is alone in his struggle against fear and danger. His dance is an apparent soliloquy, but relies on the relationships with the musicians and even the other dancers to become heard. Individual dancers address other dancers, musicians and the audience through their dance.

### **Performer Bio: Isnavi Cardoso Díaz**

Born on January 22, 1973, Isnavi Cardoso Díaz spent the early years of her life in the suburban neighborhood of Santos Suárez, Havana. Cardoso describes her childhood as very good, recalling that she attended excellent schools. She also recounts that her mother learned to read and write as part of the

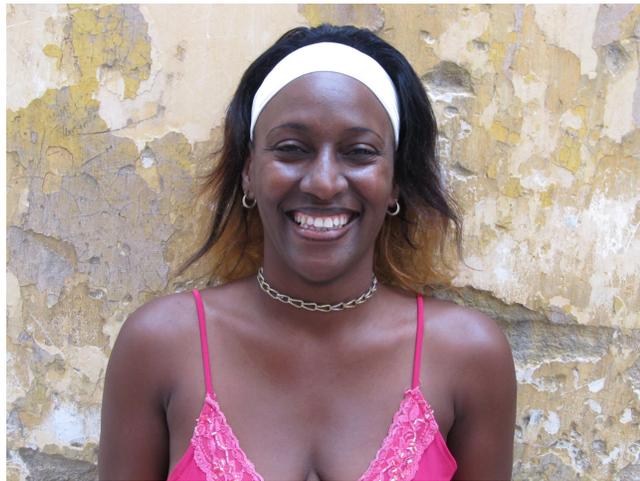


Figure 12. Isnavi Cardoso Díaz, Havana, Cuba (2011).

Literacy Campaign that followed the Revolution, and worked in a music

school. Cardoso's interest in sports began at the *Ciudad Deportiva* (Sports City, built in 1957), a coliseum/sports complex where her mother took her for swimming classes, which she subsequently pursued as a hobby. By the time she was in secondary school (*Politécnico Emilio Núñez*), Cardoso's own education became focused on athletic training.

When I started in the *politécnico* I began to get sports training ... because in reality, my mom got me into swimming because of my fear of the water. But, when she moved to a new house and I switched schools to Emilio Núñez, then I

had to take up sports because the school was sports focused. I ran track and I did pretty well. I placed second in national competitions, and won some other competitions... I was there until 9th grade. (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11).

Showing promise as an athlete, Cardoso was sent for further training in high school to another polytechnic institute where she played volleyball.

During the 80s, women's volleyball in Cuba was rising to become one of the country's most successful sports in international competition.<sup>42</sup> Today the top medal holders in women's Olympic volleyball are Cubans of Cardoso's generation.

From there I went to the EPA, but because of personal problems I didn't finish. There, I was put into volleyball. I was the principal hitter (*rematadora*)<sup>43</sup> and that was the last sport I played ... after that, I earned my degree in railroad switching. I never caught a train in Cuba, but I graduated. I never liked the major, but I did it because I was told that I had to graduate. (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11)

After high school, dispossessed of a career in sports and with no interest in pursuing one in railroad technology, Cardoso began attending dance classes and events at the local Cultural Center (*Casa de Cultura*). Cardoso explains, "I was 18 or 19, I couldn't stay at home so I had to do something. Since I always liked dance, I started at the Cultural Center. There was a *rumba* every Saturday, with *Grupo Guasamba*" (ibid.). Cardoso expresses more than youthful frustration with domestic life. Her ambition for something more than the typical life of part-time work, housekeeping, and children articulates a tacit rejection of the strongly gendered mode of organization of traditional Cuban society. Expressed in the opposition of *casa/calle*, contrasting domesticity with public life, many women's lives during the 1990s became once again circumscribed by domestic chores

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<sup>42</sup> At this time and through the 2000s, the Cuban women's volleyball team has been a leader in world competition. To date, the top three women's Olympic medalists are from Cuba.

<sup>43</sup> The "hitter" returns the ball, playing either in the front row in the position ahead of the server, or in the back row two places over from the server (<http://www.strength-and-power-for-volleyball.com/volleyball-positions-terms.html>).

due to the complications created by shortages of all kinds (Pertiera 2008). Cardoso's aspirations reflect both the ideal of access and participation in the labor market as a central tenet of women's empowerment in Cuba, and a rejection of traditional gender ideologies, which continue to require women to satisfy themselves "with the goals of reproduction," "at the cost of her own social potential" (Caram 2000, Díaz quoted in Abreu and Jiménez 2011, Hamilton 2012).

Despite her lack of experience, Cardoso excelled in the amateur (*aficionado*) classes and was quickly invited to participate in various groups. Until that point, she had regarded dance "as something personal rather than a profession" (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11). Her only dance experience had been learning *rueda de casino* (a style of social dance) in grade school, which she later did with friends at the beach during summer vacation (ibid.). She recounts the point at which a young man, recently graduated from the school for variety shows, was putting together a company and invited her to join. "It was in this group," she explains, "that I really began to learn folkloric dance" (ibid.). Commenting on what would become the hallmark of her style, Cardoso acknowledges the foundation that sports training gave to her career in dance. "I was happy to join because I really didn't know very much. It was there that I took my first steps. I danced a lot of Congo. He said that I had the strength for dancing Congo. Since I came from sports, I was strong" (ibid.). Her training in sports gave her not only the physical strength that characterizes her dance style, but also a way of being-in-the-world in which physical

strength was part of her own sense of identity.<sup>44</sup> Through dance training, she learned to cultivate this strength as part of her individual style and public persona.

It took persistence to learn the full folkloric repertoire as an amateur. Cardoso pursued learning opportunities around her Old Havana neighborhood. In one instance, she approached Felix “Pupy” Insua (d. 2011, NYC), a well-known dancer and former member of CFNC, who rehearsed a group in the nearby *Casa de Africa* (Africa House). Although he was not seeking dancers, Insua allowed her to rehearse with the company. It was there that Cardoso learned the Yoruba dances that are central to the folkloric repertoire and which led to her first job as a dancer.

Cardoso describes the point at which she entered the professional world of folkloric performance and began to confront the official distinction between dancers who were conservatory-trained (*de la escuela*) and those “from the street” (*de la calle*):

At that point, I left the Cultural Center because I was professional. I had started to work at the Antonio Maceo Theater. They were looking for dancers. I worked with a *cabildo* that participated in carnival. I danced in the Yoruba part and the *muñecones* [giant doll puppets]. There I started as a professional and I finally got into *J.J.* But THAT was another level. I was a bit nervous because everyone was evaluated and it was a much bigger company. (ibid.)

*J.J.* (pronounced: *hōtō hōtō*) was an important folkloric dance company, started by Johanes García, who had trained at the CFNC. The official separation between amateurs and conservatory-trained performers resides in an evaluation that categorizes the latter,

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<sup>44</sup> Studies of attitudes about gender, sport, and muscularity found that grade-school children had well formed attitudes about gender and muscularity. While it was acceptable for women in elite sports, most found it to contrast notions of standard gender identity (Gorley et. al. 2003). It is interesting to consider how sports training, as a modifying influence on gender habitus affects Cardoso’s case. Gorley et. al. suggest that sports creates a different habitus of femininity, one in which it is acceptable for women to express a physicality usually associated with masculinity. What is creative about Cardoso’s performances, in one sense, is that she adapts this gender habitus to her career as a professional dancer, where it becomes a professional asset. What she does not have in conservatory training, she compensates for, and successfully pursues an independent career. Young (1980) also writes about the stylization of gender in movement.

and pegs them to a corresponding salary level. Some US scholars have noted that the so-called *planilla* system, while assuring support for artists, favors conservatory-trained performers, and regulates the repertoire associated with institutions of national culture (Moore 2006:91, Manuel 1990). During the early 2000s, evidenced by Cardoso's own rise from amateur classes to a status as an independent artist represented by *La Agencia D'Arte* (a division of ARTEX in 2002), the centralized system management in the music industry began to change (Fairley 2004, Moore 2006).

Cardoso stayed with *J.J.* for at least two years, much of the time working as an understudy. She left the group to give birth to her daughter in 1996 but returned to dancing soon after. Now, however she joined a newly formed *rumba* group, *Agüiri Yo*.

*J.J.* was full, so I joined a *rumba* group and I stopped dancing Yoruba, Congo, Arará, and all that. At that time, folklore was Yoruba and all that, you didn't see too much *rumba*. More recently it has developed into this furor that you see today. Before, there was only *Yoruba Andabo*, and *Clave y Guaguancó*. The rest were companies like *J.J.*, *Raíces Profundas*, *el Conjunto* [CFNC], *Baile folklórico*. So, after I had the baby, I joined *Agüiri Yo*. They were newly forming; maybe they had been around for a year or two years. We played at the Lincoln [Hotel] (Cardoso, interview, 2/4/11).

She notes that they had a steady gig in one of the tourist hotels in Old Havana. At the same time that *Agüiri Yo* got their start in 1995, a number of today's prominent *rumba* groups were formed. These included Hernández's group *Oba Ilú*, the very important *Rumberos de Cuba* led by Luis Chacón "Aspirina," as well as *Los Nanis*, and *Encila Mundo*, to name a few. While the system of evaluation and ranking remained in place (and does to this day), ensembles were no longer centrally managed and could contract directly with venues, especially those geared to the new influx of tourism, as well as hire independent artists. Managed by semi-independent *empresas* or agencies, the newly

created ensembles were supposed to operate as “islands of capitalism in the sea of socialism” (Fidel Castro, quoted in Henken 2000).

Cardoso spent the next few years specializing in *rumba* and ended up working with *Yoruba Andabo*, one of the top-line *rumba* groups in Havana.

At that time one of the dancers from *Yoruba Andabo* married a foreigner and left and they were looking for a dancer. I was walking down Obispo [Street] and one of the members of *Yoruba Andabo* asked me what I was doing, I said ‘nothing,’ I was in a group but we weren't doing anything. He said ‘come to *Las Vegas* [a venue] on Saturday because we need a girl.’ There were three dance couples and one girl was missing. They had a trip planned and they needed to fill the place quickly. I went, but was afraid because I always saw *Yoruba Andabo* as one of the best *rumba* groups and that I couldn't ... Well, go on! That my way of dancing would not appeal to them, because I'm from the street [*de la calle*]. I was afraid ... I saw them as the best ...(Cardoso, interview, 2/4/11).

Cardoso describes her awareness of the social politics of folkloric performance, describing how professionals and those with conservatory training differentiated themselves from performers who entered the scene as amateurs. Such distinctions are often asserted in a language of formal qualities and aesthetic principles.

What she goes on to recognize is another side of the social politics of performance, which consists of social relationships among many of the traditional musicians, as well as her own professional network.

When I got there, I saw a lot of musicians that I knew because the father of my daughter is a musician and I had gone to a lot of *tambores* [*fiestas de Santo*], and I knew people through my daughter's father and also from the groups I had been in. The director, Giovanni [del Pino] said to me ‘Come to the rehearsal on Wednesday and we'll audition you there.’ I went Wednesday and they took me. They said ‘you'll start Saturday,’ and it was done. The audition was right on the spot. They were totally happy and fifteen days later a promoter came to the show, a Mexican. We had the Congo choreographed, the Yoruba part, and then after came the *rumba* part. The Mexican said, ‘I'll take them.’ Less than a month later, I was in Mexico. That was in 2001. It was the first trip I took out of the country. ...*Yoruba Andabo* was my school of *rumba* (ibid.).

It is hard to overestimate how significant Cardoso's tour to Mexico and subsequent trips to Europe were. Scholars have noted that groups like *Yoruba Andabo* traveled abroad to earn hard currency, and even became a vanguard of the new economy (Fairley 2004, Hernández-Reguant 2009). Most folkloric groups traveled less and later than the big dance bands such as Los Van Van. Nevertheless, the ability to travel and earn hard currency were privileges of a small cultural and political elite.<sup>45</sup>

Cardoso traveled for five years as a performer and instructor in Mexico and Europe. She was still just one of many dancers and musicians competing to create an independent career as a performer amid Cuba's recovery from the Special Period. While on a short trip with *Clave Y Guaguanco*, she met Hernández, who gave her an opportunity to teach abroad (Ibid.). Subsequently, he included her in



Figure 13. Cardoso posed in the corridor running alongside her apartment in Havana. February 2011.

his program and she toured with him for three years. Back in Cuba, with Hernández's backing and her penchant for the intense and frenetic styles of dance, such as *Palo/Congo*

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<sup>45</sup> Visa restrictions were changed in 2012, and now more Cubans have the right to travel, however arrangements still require access to more money than most people have.

and the *orisha Oyá*, Cardoso began dancing *columbia* at public folklore events, such as Ambia's Peña at UNEAC, and Saturdays at the CFNC.

When I started with *el Maestro* [Hernández], he told me 'Go on! Do it! Get out there.' And I developed more confidence in myself. What happened, I had the support of *el Maestro*... today I do not have any support but everyone knows me. It's different. People look at you differently. I wasn't in a group back then. But funny thing, people clash with you more now (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11). Despite the fact that Hernández supported her, Cardoso still faced strong opposition. She recalls, "lots of people have criticized me and I've had many problems with men for dancing *columbia*. In the beginning I would get up to take a turn and they would stop the music" (ibid.).<sup>46</sup>

Presented with a lull in travel in 2005, Cardoso and Hernández discussed the possibility of reforming his folkloric ensemble, *Oba Ilú*, which he had disbanded prior to their tour. In 2005 an opportunity arose for the group to be placed under contract with the Cuban Institute of Popular Music and Hernández re-started the group. Cardoso joined in 2008. She describes how *Oba Ilú* came to expand the standard folkloric format under Hernández's direction and authority.

What happens, since time has passed you have to enrich the dance. At that time, several *rumba* groups came out... and I understand from *el Maestro* [Hernández], one, because he lived it, two, because to me he knows more today about the *rumba* than anyone, and three, he has researched and investigated it. He is the one who can say ... it is different to live something than it is to read a book ... he has helped me to express my art to my students. (ibid.)

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<sup>46</sup> Cardoso was not the only female performer to face strong opposition to her participation in what has been regarded as the male domains of folkloric performance. Eva Despaigne, the director of the women's ensemble *Obini Batá*, recounted in a public forum on *rumba* at Africa House (*Casa de Africa*) the challenges and obstacles her group faced in establishing themselves. Among the litany of obstacles the group faced, she recounted vandalism to their drums and regularly being locked out of their rehearsal space (*Timbalaye Festival*, September 2011). A small number of ensembles feature women performing percussion and roles outside of traditional gender-stereotypes; these include the amateur group *Rumba Morena*. Nevertheless, folkloric performance continues to be largely male-dominated.

Cardoso eventually left *Oba Ilú* in 2010 after ending her relationship of five years with Hernández. She continues to make a living giving dance classes to foreign students and working with groups in Havana, and remains a figure in the Havana *rumba* scene.

Cardoso negotiates her identity as a professional folkloric dancer and figure in the *rumba* scene through her performance of *columbia*. When asked what she is seeking to express through her dance, Cardoso at first simply says: “*la fuerza* (strength)” (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11). She then explains:

To show that women are capable. I am against men in many ways because they have shut women out of so many things, as if we can't do anything. In reality, I dance in defiance of men. I enjoy doing it because I want them to put women in the place they deserve. In this sense, I have always been against men. ... Men don't understand that women can dance just the same as them (Ibid.)

Couched in terms of competition and conflict between men and women, Cardoso seeks to demonstrate her competence and equality as a dancer. This kind of claim, with its rhetoric of equal access, speaks to her assertion of professional status. She seeks not merely to be equal to men, but also cultural authority and legitimacy in the world of folklore on the basis of her ability. Without conservatory training, Cardoso developed her penchant for strong styles into the controversial performances of *columbia*, which have given her a name in the contemporary scene.

While her choice of the spatial metaphor “shut out” underscores issues of equality as access to the public sphere and integration into the workforce, Cardoso's performances reinforce a traditional style of dance steeped in the social values of *machismo*.<sup>47</sup> While the

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<sup>47</sup> These were themes typical of women's organizations and mobilization campaigns during the first decades of the revolution (Hamilton 2011). Cardoso thus identifies one of her main challenges to be the gendered nature of folkloric space, which is a particular case within the broader issue of male-dominated public space. While she features gender equality in her rhetoric, simple gender equality does not encompass or explain her individual agenda or identity negotiation.

alterations she makes challenge dominant gender discourses, this is only one aspect of her kinetic conversations. In a sense, she uses the rhetoric of gender equality to assert the legitimacy of a pre-institutional Afro-Cuban tradition of dance. Another dimension of her identity negotiation can be observed in the interactions with musicians and other performers that refer back to a pre-institutional style of *columbia*. In this way, Cardoso locates herself among communities of traditional Afro-Cuban performers. She draws cultural authority not from conservatory training, but rather from the construction of a tradition that counters the hegemony of national culture.

When Cardoso began her career as a folkloric performer and *rumba* dancer in the mid 1990s, the profession, which had been largely reserved for conservatory trained musicians and dancers, was just starting to change (Manuel 1990, Moore 2006:91). To claim legitimacy in the domain of national culture without institutional pedigree, Cardoso draws on her strength to create unusual performances, as well as her associations with traditional communities of Afro-Cuban musicians and dancers. She refers to a tradition of women dancing *columbia* in Matanzas, a city often regarded as “the cradle of Afro-Cuban culture” and more traditional than Havana (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11, Bodenheimer 2010). Furthermore, her work with Hernández, whom she refers to as “*El Maestro*,” creates a link between her and past styles. She explains, “he lived it” and taught her much about how to pass along the tradition (ibid.).

### **Performance Analysis**

The following analysis shows how Cardoso negotiates her identity as a professional folkloric dancer and a figure in the Havana *rumba* scene through creative performances of *columbia*. By examining how she alters standard performance practice

and interacts with her audience and other performers, analysis reveals kinetic conversations that provoke critical reflection on gender, ethnicity, and national culture. In the context of everyday life, Cardoso uses the performances as grounds for her off-stage persona as a professional dancer and authoritative interpreter of *rumba*. To achieve her individual goals of establishing her professional status and cultural authority, Cardoso employs two strategies in her creative performance. The first strategy I refer to as choreographic transvestism. Borrowing from Jossianna Arroyo's concept of cultural transvestism, I examine Cardoso's dancing as a kind of drag performance linked with the social and sexual politics of national culture and public space (Arroyo 2003). By appropriating a traditionally male dance-music tradition, she positions herself in public space, tacitly resisting the sexualized and dishonored roles ascribed to women of color. Instead, Cardoso claims equality, and thus honor and legitimacy, positioning herself as a figure in a conversation about ethnicity and national culture.

Seeking professional status as a dancer under the banner of gender equality, Cardoso conforms to the standard performance practice established by the CFNC. Her dancing, however, subtly invokes a pre-institutional tradition of *rumba*, which may be understood as a hidden transcript contradicting the public record made by the dominant practice (Scott 1990:24). Her second strategy thus reflects the dynamics of orthopraxy and hidden transcripts, such that her performances give the outward impression of conformity and allow her to openly express a hidden transcript, or critique of the dominant discourses of national culture. Using the CFNC as a reference point, she draws from their repertoire of steps and conforms to the established guidelines of performance practice. At the same time, she distinguishes her highly expressive style from the

techniques of institutional style with a few subtle but telling details. Among these are key interactions with other performers, and the ways the singers locate her in Afro-Cuban traditions using songs for the Yoruba *oricha* and warrior goddess, Oyá. Cardoso's performances link her, through personal and professional relationships, with a traditional community of Afro-Cuban musicians from which she draws affirmation for her identity negotiation and cultural authority. Her performance thus reveals a plurality of styles and resists the hegemony of the CFNC in defining national culture. As Cardoso establishes grounds for her public persona, her dancing simultaneously opens up space for other non-standard performances of *columbia*.

The example of Cardoso's dancing that I will analyze comes from the folkloric show (*espectáculo folklórico*) with *Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Cultural Association on August 13, 2009. Here she performs with the ensemble to which she belongs at a venue where they have a weekly gig. The show follows a standard format used by many contemporary ensembles. The group presents a program in two halves, first presenting the stylized dances based on Afro-Cuban religious practices, and then presenting *rumba* (see Chapter appendix: *Oba Ilú* program). A jury can be seen seated at the front of the audience; they were evaluating the group to renew their authorization and some of its members for official categorization. Their presence makes the show all the more remarkable and evidence of shifting standards and notions of national culture. I compare this particular performance with other contemporary performances of *columbia* by Cardoso and other contemporary performers.

Cardoso dances last in a line-up of three dancers in the *columbia* segment of the program. The first to take a turn is Miguel Martínez, an older dancer and long-time

member of the group; he dances for just over two minutes. Next, Wili performs; he studies with the CFNC (National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba) and was brought in just for this performance. He incorporates some steps from transnational popular dance-music (e.g. the moon walk), which are unacceptable even today in the context of the CFNC's performances. After approximately one minute, Cardoso interrupts Wili, requesting a turn with the traditional hand signal. She walks slowly forward from her position at the back of the stage. This gesture references the "old" and more extemporized style of *columbia*. In standard performance practice, as in the case of the CFNC, the hand signal is not used because turns are assigned an order in advance (CFNC @ *El Palenque* 5-26-11). Taking a wide stance and keeping her hand raised, she waits for him to finish. Her entrance appears spontaneous, and dramatizes the moment, making it appear as if the ensemble dancers have forgotten to give her a turn [6:48].

Her dramatic entrance and unexpected participation quickly gives way to a highly charged performance, which violates the audience's expectations of this type of dance-music, as well as Cardoso's identity as a woman. While Cardoso alters standard performance practice simply as a woman performing *columbia*, it is her body styling and manner of projecting physical strength that provokes the most response and commentary from observers. Combining an emotional attitude of intensity and abandon, with strong, segmented and even explosive movements, Cardoso's body styling violates traditional notions of gender, which collapse gender, sex, and sexuality, and proves to be the most affective and expressive aspect of her performance. Shaking her shoulders and wearing a halter-top dress without a bra [7:05, 7:14-16], Cardoso's movements announce her

disregard for the social conventions that would constrain her female body to sinuous, gentle movements and sexualized roles in most other styles of dance-music.

She begins slowly, then in sudden bursts [7:17-7:21, 7:36-7:43], her arms slash and her head recoils from the force of her limbs. Her legs pump furiously. The movements are sharp and violent, her body movement segmented rather than sinuous. Uncharacteristic of female roles, both in dance-music and society, these physically powerful movements defy expectations of Cardoso's identity as a woman. They project an individual identity at odds with traditional conceptions of women's bodies and social roles. Traditionally defined in sexualized terms, women's gender, sex, and sexuality produce expectations that restrict the performer. Quoting Elena Díaz, professor of social sciences at the University of Havana, in an article on images of women Cuban hip-hop, Abreu and Jiménez describe the norms of female sexuality (*la sexualidad femenina*) in Cuban society as:

- Adult and heterosexual,
- Always linked with love (in contrast with the norms that govern male sexuality),
- Finds fulfillment in the goal of procreation,
- Inferior to masculinity,
- To be greatly ignorant about one's own body
- To have a reinforced sense of modesty (Abreu and Jiménez 2011:369).

Cardoso literally moves carefully among these norms in executing her performances. She maintains her modesty by taking care to not expose her body inappropriately, while wearing a dress to fulfill and maintain normative dimensions of her gender/sexual identity, but still moving vigorously and including daring movements such as a summersault and a jump.

Gender and body-styling form part of the expectation of *columbia* in particular, but also part of broader kinetic paradigms of gendered behavior operating in other styles

of dance-music. A folkloric dancer who trained at the CFNC explained to me, “those are masculine movements, it just doesn’t look right on a woman’s body” (Valdespino, interview 8/22/09). In describing the differences between men and women’s styles of movement in *salsa* dancing, Martínez describes broadly held notions of gender identity. He begins by describing men’s dancing as emphasizing leg movement and footwork, having a wider stance (“men open their legs more”), while women’s emphasizes the waist and hips (Martínez, interview 4/26/11c). He continues:

In general men’s movements are less refined. The movement of the arms is not so delicate. They show strength. . . . The man is more reckless and more nonchalant. The woman has a different goal. She makes the movements less harsh and more delicate (ibid.).

Martínez’s description reflects how he perceives movement as linked not only with gender but with different social goals and orientations to the social world. He characterizes men as “reckless” and “nonchalant” underscoring a contrast with women’s need to appear modest, reserved, and delicate. For example in the erotically charged and playful, *guaguancó*, which enacts seduction and sexual possession, women’s body styling exhibits “*suelta*” (looseness), displaying sinuous, fluid motion, especially in the hips and torso, but also in the arms. In performance, the woman’s role is less varied and dynamic than the man’s. In *guaguancó*, the woman’s goal is to “protect herself” (*cuidarse*) from the man’s sexually suggestive and aggressive movement, the *vacuna* (literally: vaccination). She must “cover herself” (*taparse*) or make a gesture that will “cast [him] out” (*sacuda*). Reinforcing the notion that a woman must protect her honor by averting men’s sexual aggression, this dance underscores how women’s honor has been traditionally linked with sexual identity. Not limited to dance-music roles, such notions of gender, sex, and sexual identity are enacted in quotidian habits, from opening doors, to

carrying packages, in which men take on what is physically demanding or even painful, and also physically dominate their (female) partners and public space. In their kinetic dimension, public performances of gender identity revolve around expressions of physical power and freedom versus delicacy and restraint. These kinetic modes of behavior and interaction underlie ideas about bodies, essences, and abilities, which are verbalized and acted upon in many ways.

Cardoso's performances of *columbia* challenge many assumptions about individual identity, performance roles, and how the quality of movement reflects character or inner essence. The "masculine" qualities of her bodily movement seem to erupt uncontrollably from her person, revealing an inner landscape of feeling. Appropriate to the way that *columbia* reveals the dancer's inner essence or psychological landscape, Cardoso presents herself as physically powerful, even potentially violent, and free in her self-expression and movement in a way that contradicts expectations of her social role as a woman. She endures the pain/discomfort of walking on her knees [8:15] and performs the outrageous/audacious move of a summersault [8:28]. In contrast to the objections of her detractors, who regard *columbia* as the province of men, Cardoso explains that she feels no contradiction between her expression of self through the harsh and reckless movements of *columbia* and her identity as a woman:

Sometimes they say I'm not feminine, but I'm a woman like any other. I like to dance but I also like to dance with a lot of strength. Sports figures are strong but they are also feminine (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11).

Cardoso creates a compelling performance that is both personally satisfying and aesthetically arousing. In terms of her sense of self, performing in a strong style

conserves her identity as physically strong and vigorous, a physically capable and moral equal to men.

At the same time, Cardoso seems aware of the rub that her performance creates with traditional notions of gender identity. She distinguishes her performance from that of other women who have performed *columbia* in Havana. One such historical example is that of Librada Quesada, a founding member of the CFNC and one of the performer-informants who shaped the ensemble's Yoruba and *rumba* repertoires. Asking her how she compares with Quesada, Cardoso responds: "Yes, but I am not an invert, I am a feminine woman" (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11). Her comment suggests that Quesada was a lesbian, or that Cardoso stands out because the strength of her performance arises not from a sexual deviation, but from an otherwise "normal" femininity. Other commentators explain that Quesada never performed *columbia* on a public stage (Hernández, personal communication). Like many of the women who have been known as *rumberas*, Quesada learned and performed the dance in the context of her family, who were traditional musicians and religious practitioners (Menocal 6/25/12, Mestas 2014). Cardoso, who does not come from such a family, links her own performance with the pre-institutional tradition said to exist in Matanzas. Perhaps observing a backlash against women, she explains: "now we're in a time like before ... that women can't do this and that. Well, women have always danced *columbia* in Matanzas and *columbia* comes from Matanzas" (ibid).

Objecting directly to Cardoso's line of reasoning, Pedro Menocal, an avid *rumbero*, participant in Afro-Cuban religion, and one of her most stringent and eloquent detractors, explained:

In the old days, women danced, and even this I can tell you is a little uncertain, because a woman danced something like this in her family for fun. But on the corner? In a *solar*? No. Because neither would her husband allow it, but there is also the prejudice that people would think that the woman that danced like that was a lesbian. Get it? Because of the movement it has. (Menocal 6/25/12).

His comment highlights the gendered nature of public spaces and the importance of public performances of identity through dance-music. Like Cardoso's comment about Quesada, Menocal underscores a stereotypical collapse of gender and sexuality. Menocal goes on to emphasize the performance of *columbia* as a matter of male honor:

Indeed women should not dance *columbia*. Sure, a woman can dance in a group, but where men are taking turns to dance, it is taken as a violation of respect [*falta de respeto*] if a woman were to take a turn. Precisely because of the movements that a man makes, which are strong, one understands that a woman shouldn't do it. Therefore, everyone says no! (Menocal, interview 6/25/2012a).

For many observers, Cardoso's performances provoke controversy as well as aesthetic arousal. In this case, the incongruence between the performer's identity as a woman and the role she plays contributes to the excitement of the event, but elicits both critical and laudatory reactions. Some men find it "unnatural," dissonant, and even a threat to male honor. Acknowledging that professional folkloric shows do not reflect the complete practice, most detractors reserve the worst of their objections and tolerate her dancing in the context of an otherwise satisfying event. A folkloric percussionist from the ENA (National Art Schools) echoed Menocal's gloss on Cardoso's performance, explaining that she could do that in her group, but assured me she would not be allowed to perform in a social setting among men (Ferbst, personal communication).

Thus norms about social roles and identities – here gender in particular – anchor how observers experience performance. In the context of kinetic conversations, the shift of performance practice from a male dancing subject to a female dancing subject

resonates throughout the set of relationships that the performance practice establishes. Why men take offense and regard her performance as a threat to their honor may be linked with how dance-music produces subjective significance. Interacting through the performance practice, both performer and spectator experience a sense of self organized by musical sound, the emotions it evokes, and the movements used to respond to it. That experience of self depends on those with whom one interacts and their position in the discursive system.

Kinetic conversation traces a set of embodied – that is to say, biologically constituted – relationships through the medium of a discursive system. Here, the discursive or interactive system is *columbia*. The positions in discursive interaction include the protagonist, the interactive dyad, and the community of interpreters. Analyzing Cardoso's performance, she is the protagonist. While performing, there are various moments when she is in a dyadic relationship with other performers, either a singer, such as when Hernández takes the microphone to sing choruses naming the Yoruba deity Oyá for her when she dances, or an instrumentalist, such as when Ángel interprets her steps on the drum. The community of interpreters may include professional folkloric performers who critique her performances for the ways they fall short of standard performance practice, or they may include members of the traditional Afro-Cuban community of musicians and dancers, who like Fernández appreciate the over-the-top quality of emotional displays, or like Menocal who rejects her performances as a violation of male honor.

The experience of spectatorship, as illustrated in the previous chapter, has powerfully affective consequences occurring at the level of the body as a physical

structure, as well as at the level of the social organism. Dancers described the sensations of their heart beating faster when they heard the music of their *abakuá* lodge, or the feeling of their blood boiling at the sound of a catchy tune (See Reyes and Menocal, Chapter 2). Observation of dance-music events contributes to the collective process of arousal, which manifests in individuals as kinetic experiences and feelings of emotion. Common sense might say that such experiences are catalyzed by visual stimuli, which is how we understand the role of the audience or spectator. Understood in terms of how kinetic conversations operate, however, dance-music observation must be understood as a complex sense experience. Catalyzed and organized by musical sound, the identity discourses of dance-music interaction create shared significance among participants through motor experience in both performer and audience.

### **Mirror Neurons and Observation**

Research has revealed that there are neurons in the brains of humans and other primates that activate in both the execution and observation of particular kinds of actions linked with emotion and communication (Rizzolatti, Fogassi, and Gallese 2001, Kandel et. al. 2013, Cook et.al. 2014). Scientists explain that “observation causes the motor system of the observer to ‘resonate’” (Rizzolatti, Fogassi, and Gallese 2001). These neurons have been dubbed “mirror neurons” because they link action understanding with the motor knowledge or existing motor plans of the observer (Rizzolatti et. al. 2001, Iacoboni 2009). Research on the mirror neuron system in humans (MNS) describes linkages between mirror neurons in motor areas and visual, auditory, and language processing centers in the brain, as well as links between the MNS and emotion processing centers (Kilner et.al. 2007, Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006). The MNS provides a

common substrate for music, language and motor function (Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006, 2009).

Furthermore, evidence from brain scans administered to observers of dance performances reveal that, while mirror neurons in the motor cortex were involved in making and observing similar movements, the individual repertoire of motor actions made a significant difference in the intensity and specificity of neuron activation (Calvo-Merino et. al. 2005). Evidence that similar neurons discharge during the observation and execution of dance provides answers to two separate but related questions. First, it confirms the ‘direct-matching hypothesis’ of human action understanding and the ‘ideomotor framework of imitation,’ which state that we map observations onto the motor neurons in our brains/bodies which accomplish the same tasks via familiar neural maps (Rizzolatti, Fogassi, and Gallese 2001, Iacoboni 2009). Next, the more specific questions about individual repertoires of motor knowledge were addressed, and it was observed: “experts had greater activation when observing the specific movement of the style that they could perform” (Calvo-Merino et. al. 2005:1245). This suggests that mirror neurons are recruited to the extent that the action is present in the subject’s personal motor repertoire. This would explain why some individuals may respond more strongly and with more understanding to certain performances. While human action understanding may be quite general and accurate with regard to activities like eating, or with certain basic facial expressions shared experiences that entail very specific learned behaviors, like a dance style with specific repertoires of movement, seem to require a certain level of expertise in order to experience the full “matching” of neural activation. Thus familiarity

with the movement processes, in addition to the expectation that is understood to be part of the listener's competence, contributes to the arousal of dance-music experience.

Indeed, researchers recognize the experience of motion as one of the fundamental dimensions of musical experience (Barucha 2006). Furthermore, some have argued that the experience of motion in musical listening is perceptually real and linked with motor experience (Bailey 1985, Clarke 2001,). The connection between music and motor activity is evident in all aspects of musical activity, and is likely to be a part of human action understanding linked with how meaning and intention are grasped by observers of human biological action (Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006). Thus identity negotiation occurring through dance-music performance can produce shared significance between participants in an event on the basis of shared representation of human movement as neural maps that are activated in the process of performance. Such maps are activated through observation and direct performance interaction but they operate most acutely and effectively between those individuals who share a repertoire of movements.

If we understand perception as motor experience in this way, the rejection of Cardoso's performances reflects an experience of dissonance that is created in some observers. Like the expectations of sound and emotion that organize the listener's experience, dance-music performance entails expectations regarding kinetic performances of identity. By understanding how dance-music performance links individuals in a discursive system that structures subject positions, we can see how disruptions of expectation create affective responses based on identity. During a performance, participants take on different subject positions in relationship to one another; these are defined by the performance and performance roles. The relationships

are experienced in terms of the embodied aspects of musical meaning: the emotions, kinesis, and interpretations given to the experience of the performance.

As the mirror neuron system resonates in the expert observer, he or she responds to the kinetic performances of identity in the protagonist's performance. A creative performance – that is, one which alters the standard or traditional interpretation of a type of dance-music – has the effect of shifting the organization of subject positions and identification. In this case, it places a critical frame on constructions of gender roles and presents the possibility of some other social ordering. The disruption of gender identity and sexuality are the most affective qualities of Cardoso's performances, especially for male participants, evidenced by the many comments and strong reactions to this aspect of her dancing. If dance observation can be understood as a motor event for the knowledgeable observer, such performances create dissonance. Such a performance shifts the way the dance-music organizes subject positions in social space. The male observer experiences his own gender and sexual identity differently, which paradoxically demonstrates how dependent normative masculinity may be on normative femininity.

Although it is extremely rare, women besides Cardoso perform *columbia*. During my research, however, I never witnessed another woman perform *columbia* that was not linked in some way with Cardoso. While, women learn the dance as part of professional dance training, they are unlikely to perform it in public. One other woman did dance *columbia* however, in the August 13, 2009 performance analyzed above. In that video, a professionally trained folkloric dancer, Irma Castillo, can be seen approaching the stage

as Cardoso finishes.<sup>48</sup> Cardoso gestures to the woman to stay put and the dancers on stage finish their performance. Cardoso urges the musicians to continue playing; she then graciously offers the stage to Castillo who gives a technically clean and well-conceived performance. In her performance of *columbia*, Castillo demonstrates more facility with intricate footwork and agility at rapid tempos than Cardoso; her dancing is light and elegant in its body-styling. Castillo dances barefoot, likely having shed a pair of high heels at her table. Her dancing bears the marks of professional training but also occurs here in the wake of Cardoso's efforts.

As Castillo's extemporized display attests, Cardoso's dancing opens space for other non-standard performances of *columbia*, including (but not limited to) those by other women. Recently the women's folkloric ensemble, *Obini Batá* (Lucumí: Women of the Batá) has added *columbia* to their repertoire. As conservatory trained dancers and musicians, the women of *Obini Batá* learn the dance in technical classes and then choreograph it according to their ensemble's style. In contrast to Cardoso's body styling, they perform *columbia* with traditional female body styling (see Chapter appendix). Indeed, Eva Despaigne Trujillo, the group's director, emphasizes that their group demonstrates that "it is possible to perform folklore without ceasing to be women" (Despaigne, interview 8/11). Not only do they perform *columbia* "as women," but they also alter other aspects of performance in order to underscore their femininity, including sitting sideways while playing conga drums to observe conventions of feminine modesty.

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<sup>48</sup> Irma Castillo is a professionally trained folkloric performer from Cuba who lives in Italy. She and her partner Ulysses (seen in the *abakuá* segment wearing a purple shirt) runs the Timbalaye Festival, a joint venture between Italy and Cuba.



Figure 14 *Obini Batá* performing on July 2, 2012 at *Callejón de Hamel*.

Similarly they play the *batá* drums (also traditionally restricted to men only) standing up in a gesture differentiating their performance practice from that of men who play sitting down.<sup>49</sup> *Obini Batá* dance

*columbia* with smiles and fans (commonly carried by women in Havana during the

hottest months), as opposed to expressions of intense concentration and handkerchiefs used by male performers. Their costumes, presumably selected for the TV appearance, also underscore an emphasis on their appeal as *women*. They perform not as soloists but in an obviously choreographed and coordinated duo routine. They present themselves as women performing folklore art, rather than individuals engaging in a competition that may affect their social status. For their TV appearance, Despaigne invited Cardoso to take part, perhaps linking them with the contemporary *rumba* scene in a way that they otherwise would not have.

Cardoso draws on the idea that “you can dance with technique and it still doesn’t reach the audience,” and so her dancing is emotionally rather than technically driven, underscored by facial expressions and dramatic gestures (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11). Cardoso demonstrates her physical strength, honor, and sense of equality with men, revealing an inner landscape of feeling reflected outwardly in her kinetic performances of identity on- and off-stage. Doing this through the performance practice of *columbia* as

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<sup>49</sup> The group *Obini Batá*, known for playing *batá* drums has existed for just over 20 years. Despaigne, the director recounted the challenges of establishing the ensemble in the male-dominated world of folkloric performance. They struggled for years, enduring the destruction of their instruments, vandalism of their rehearsal space and other aggression.

established by the CFNC locates her within the world of professional folkloric performance in Havana. Her performances produce affective responses among those knowledgeable of the styles of dance-music to the degree of familiarity and individual experience possessed by participants. While her identity effects of her performance, her physical strength, her appearance, and even her enactment of her public persona concentrate focus on Cardoso as an individual. Nonetheless, her identity negotiations rely on mutual interactions to produce their effects across time.

A second dimension of Cardoso's identity negotiations can be thought of as a kind of orthopraxy and hidden transcript (Scott 1990, Blommaert 2005). Orthopraxy, according to James Scott, gives the outward impression of conformity (Scott 1990:24). In some contexts the standard discourse conceals hidden transcripts, which contradict the established public record, and in this case consist of the interpretations of *rumba* constructed by institutions of national culture. On the surface, Cardoso conforms to the standard performance of *columbia*, constituted by what some call the "gold standard" established by the CFNC. Although her performance emphasizes the emotional expression over the exposition of a lexicon of codified steps, Cardoso demonstrates her awareness of the aesthetic values of the CFNC's performance practice. She does this in several ways. In this performance, Cardoso begins slowly, respecting the dramatic arc of the *concepto* (concept or character role) behind the dance, which begins moderately and crescendos with the enactment of a struggle or displays of daring and audacious acts. Moving with tense calculation, Cardoso sequences the movements in a dramatic build-up, and acknowledges the value placed on the "cleanness" of technique (*limpieza*), which characterizes the CFNC steps (Cardoso interview 6/22/12). Cardoso also draws on the

standard lexicon of movements, including the moving step, the shoulder shakes, the back cross step, the kick, the characteristic moving step with arms bent at the elbows, walking on her knees, and pretending to slip and recover before falling. Each of these can be compared with the steps and gestures performed by the CFNC (Chapter appendix: screen shots of Isnavi's *columbia*). In this regard, her performance makes her conversant with other professional folkloric performers. Here, she demonstrates this knowledge to assert her status as a professional, despite the fact that her technique and style mark her as entering the world of folkloric dance "from the street" (*de la calle*), which she acknowledges as a liability (Cardoso interview 2/4/11).

Yet, she does not rely entirely on the lexicon of steps and procedures defined by the CFNC to compose any one performance. Indeed, Cardoso shapes her performances according to an understanding shared with other members of *Oba Ilú* (and others) of how pre-institutional forms of *rumba* differ from contemporary standard performance practice. Performers noted that in the earlier style, dancing occurred in a smaller more constricted area, and included quotidian gestures and actions (Martínez interview 4/5/11, Madden 6/28/11). Cardoso also includes idiosyncratic and quotidian gestures, such as crossing herself, which are absent from the CFNC performance practice since such overtly religious gestures would be inappropriate in the institutional context (Tata Güines, Jr., performance 4/2/11). In some performances, Cardoso can be seen engaging in dramatized (and real) conflicts with the singer at *Sábado de la rumba*, engaging the spirit of competition and conflict that originally animated this style of dance-music (Tata Güines, Jr., performance 4/2/11; *Oba Ilú*, performance 8/20/11). Such barbed interactions emerge more in open performance among men as well, but are typically invisible in performances

by the CFNC (CFNC, performance 5/26/11). As Martínez observes, *columbia* has been transformed into a kind of “friendly brotherhood” in contrast to the storied violence of earlier eras (Martínez, interview 4/5/11). In summary, Cardoso demonstrates her grasp of standard performance practice, while she includes subtle alterations that refer to an earlier tradition.

An understanding of this tradition also informs the ways Cardoso interacts with other performers. The details of this practice include requesting a turn by holding up a finger, greeting the *quintero*, and requesting the “conversation with the *quinto*,” which Cardoso notes “is hardly done any more” (Cardoso, feedback interview 6/22/12). For

example, when Cardoso requests the conversation with the *quinto* at a performance at *Sábado de la Rumba*, some percussionists will understand that she locates



herself with respect to an “old-school” approach to performance practice [Figure 15:

Ángel el Chivo following Cardoso’s dancing with his drumming.]. When the

Figure 15. Ángel el Chivo, playing *quinto*, follows Cardoso's dancing with his drumming. She is in the foreground. *Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Cultural Association August 13, 2009

*quintero* of *Oba Ilú*, Ángel el Chivo, emphasizes Cardoso’s shoulder shakes and hand gestures with his playing [7:15 etc., 7:43 etc.], he joins her in a performance practice which constitutes a world of shared significance to which not all *rumberos* and *rumberas*

belong. Such interactions underscore how the hidden transcript operates as a discourse among a segment of the broader folkloric world.

Yet, it is not simply the invocation of a “more traditional” performance practice that gains Cardoso legitimacy as a professional and cultural authority as an interpreter of *rumba*. As she herself explained, early in her career musicians and other performers were less than willing to be supportive of her performances; in fact, on numerous occasions in the beginning they stopped playing if she got up to take a turn (Cardoso, interview 2/4/11). Certainly without some cooperation from musicians and other performers, Cardoso’s identity negotiations would not take effect. Over time, and with the support of Hernández and others, Cardoso was able to assert her presence in the scene, and must continue to negotiate her identity as a *rumbera* and professional dancer up through the present day. As is the case with some observers who reject her performances, not all of the members of *Oba Ilú* agree with Cardoso’s performances when she dances *columbia* with the group. This was made evident at the end of the August 2009 performance at the Yoruba Cultural Association. Martínez and Wili coordinate the closing phrase with such abrupt timing that Cardoso misses the cue [8:40] [See chapter appendix. Screen shots of closing phrase out of sync]. In other performances, male dancers go to great lengths to mark her performances (e.g. Tata Güines, Jr. @ *El Palenque* 4/2/11, *Oba Ilú* @ *El Palenque* 8/20/11). Such behaviors reveal the lack of agreement or mutuality, despite the space that she has eventually won for her performance.

Recalling that structural coupling only occurs through mutual interaction (Maturana and Varela 1992), the identity negotiations Cardoso pursues can only take effect if other performers rejoin her through the “old-style” performance practice.

Interactions with other performers exemplify an interpretative stance and community that regards *columbia* as an Afro-Cuban expressive tradition prior to its current institutional style. Interactions also reveal how members meet Cardoso's negotiations with mutuality and thus affirmation. For one, Hernández, who was instrumental in the process of Cardoso establishing herself in *columbia*, can be seen taking the microphone to sing the guides (*guías*), the part of the soloist when she dances (*Oba Ilú*, performance 8/13/09, *Oba Ilú*, performance 8/20/11). It should be noted that he was so supportive of her performances that Hernández continued to do this even when the two no longer spoke with one another.

In the 2009 performance, Hernández takes the microphone during Wili's dancing and finishes the section without changing the *coro* (chorus). This downplays his entrance as the lead vocalist. Hernández sings typical *columbia* choruses, which incorporate lexical items from *Palo/Congo*. In Figure 16 below, the word *tata* refers to the priest-like figure who controls the *nganga* (ritual cauldron). The word *maluanda* refers to a Congo person, although it is unclear if that refers to a specific ethnic identity or an initiate, which might be considered ethnicity as defined by the religion.

Figure 16. *Columbia, Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009. *Montuno*: guides and choruses. Note: no call or change when Hernández enters [see chapter appendix for full vocal transcription].

**Fernández:** Guide: como tata moilé  
Chorus: moilé moilé

[5:50] **Hernández:** Guide: Como tata moilé  
Chorus: moilé moilé

Guide: moilé moilé  
Chorus: moilé moilé

Etc.

When, Wili finishes his dance, Hernández is in position to underscore Cardoso's entrance and accompany her dancing as he has done in other performances (*Oba Ilu*, performance 8/20/11).

When Cardoso begins dancing, Hernández gives a call to change the chorus, underscoring her entrance [6:57]. It is not required by any performance practice to change the chorus for each dancer, as can be noted from the previous dancer's entrance (see full transcription in chapter appendix). He reinforces her entrance not only by calling a change, but also by changing the chorus from a standard *coro* typically used in *columbia* (*e maluanda e*) to a Yoruba song (*bembé chango oyá*) celebrating the *orisha* Oyá. This first one is used in *bembé*, a rural expression of Yoruba origin. Recalling the association of *columbia* with the countryside and with the rural Yoruba form of celebration *bembé*, this is an aesthetically skillful choice. Hernández is a master. He repeats the song twelve times and switches to another song for Oyá (*oya oyancoro*), which refers to a sacrificial ceremony to Oyá. After the ensemble dancers finish and take a bow, Cardoso invites Castillo who waits at the edge of the stage to take her turn. Fernández takes over singing again and changes to the chorus, again related to Oyá, naming one of her paths (*oyansa oloya*).

Figure 17. *Columbia, Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009. *Montuno*: guides and choruses. Songs for the Yoruba *orisha* Oyá, used as choruses in a *columbia* by *Oba Ilú*. [See chapter appendix for full transcription of words]

[7:04] Guide: Eee bembé chango oya, chango oya  
Coro: bembé chango oya

[7:44] Guide: E! oya oyancoro  
Coro: oya oyancoro

[8:52\*]  
Guide: Güiro! oya oloya

Chorus: oya oloya

\* Fernández starts singing again and changes the chorus for Irma Castillo's entrance. This chorus names one of the paths or alternate manifestations of Oyá.

For *Oba Ilú*'s shows, Hernández typically sings choruses based on Yoruba songs to the warrior goddess Oyá when Cardoso dances *columbia*. Such an embedding of the language, songs, and imagery of *Regla de Ocha* liturgy frames Cardoso within the textual references of Afro-Cuban religion and, quite literally, speaks to the practitioners of that religion. Elaborating on this theme, Hernández requested the ensemble's other singer, Fernández, to compose a *columbia* on the theme of Oyá. Using this opportunity to display both his command of Yoruba liturgy and his excellence as *rumba* singer, Fernández invokes images of female strength through prayers and devotional songs and encourages her dancing. *Columbia* however has been officially associated uniquely with *Palo/Congo* origins since the mid-century descriptions by Ortiz. Breaking the standard folkloric association, Fernández creates a compelling accompaniment to Cardoso's dancing.

The performance with *Oba Ilú* is extraordinary in more ways than the immediate and intense disruption by Cardoso's body styling of the gender norms of performance. In this case, where the details of performance can be controlled, Hernández orchestrates a creative performance that conforms to traditional Afro-Cuba aesthetics by following the principle of correspondence between verbal semantic content and dance. A ritual expert and song leader initiated in all three major traditions (Yoruba, Abakuá, and Palo/Congo), Fernández uses songs of praise and prayer to Oyá to compose the main verse. He prides himself on having studied with elders in Matanzas, which is regarded as more traditional than Havana, and has an ample repertoire replete with older more elaborate songs that many in Havana have abandoned (Fernández, interview, 3/21/12).

Fernández begins the *columbia* using the characteristic expression “ay! Dios!” and words and phrases borrowed from lexicon of *Palo/Congo* religion (also called *Regla de Palo/Congo*) [Figure 13]. The first lyric theme presented is that of bragging, when the singer declares, “my name is fire!” He next shifts to an expression of religiosity appropriate to the conventional association of *columbia* with *Palo/Congo*. The singer exclaims that he is under the protection of God, referred to as “*Simbi*” in the *Regla de Palo/Congo* religion. Nevertheless such expressions of devotion however idiomatic were not part of *columbia* performances until the more recent popular revival of religious practice.

Figure 18. *Columbia, Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009. Introduction or *llanto* and verse 1. The vocalise and expletives including *ororo*, *Ay Dios*, and the expression *piango*, are characteristic of *columbia* and have even been borrowed into popular music as evocative expressions. Some of the words in the verse are in the dialect of *Palo/Congo*, related to *Bozal*, a nineteenth-century dialect that mixes Spanish and African languages.

**Fernández: [introduction]**  
 Orororo! Awe mama aa.  
 Ay Dios, ay Dios, ay Dios!

**[verse 1]**  
 Montero, el güiro se ha puesto bueno.  
 Caballero! que dilema, güiro!  
 Cuando llego yo a la tierra, candela me llamo yo  
 Montero, vengo piango piango piango,  
 piango piango piango, ocalambo.

Línea de tren ya no me enreda  
 Güiro! Pa’ que el mismo Sambí  
 Ampungo  
 Ya por siempre me acutare Orororooo  
 Oro mi yare  
 Güiro!

**[introduction]**  
 Orororo! Awe mama aa  
 Oh! God, oh God, oh God!

**[verse 1]**  
 Hunter, the music has gotten good.  
 Sir! What a dilemma, güiro!  
 When I arrive on earth, my name is fire!  
 Hunter, I’m coming crying, crying,  
 crying, crying, crying, crying, old.

The train tracks no longer tangle me up  
 Güiro! Because Sambí Ampungo  
 himself  
 Now forever protects me Orororooo  
 Oro mi yare  
 Güiro!

Transcription: Fernández and Batiuk  
 (5/31/12, Havana)

In the second verse however, the singer shifts to the lexical palette of Yoruba, invoking Oyá, the Yoruba goddess of the cemetery and of storms. This reference can be understood as a double reference to the goddess and to the dancer, who portrayed her earlier in the show that evening. Oyá is known as a fierce warrior-like goddess who rules over the cemetery as well as tornados and other destructive storms. Fernández invokes her in the first line of the second verse, “Oyá Oyá Oyansa, pay attention, lord of the cemetery” and in the second line, “I dedicate my song to you blessed and beautiful woman.” He mixes original lyric poetry with Yoruba prayer songs.

Figure 19. *Columbia, Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009. Verse two closes with a Yoruba prayer, giving reverence to Oyá (in italics).

**Verse 2:** Ay Oya Oya oyansa, pentón!  
 dueña de lo campo santo, Güiro!  
 A ti dedico mi canto mujer bendecida y  
 bella.  
 de lírico sus colores, guerrera entre los  
 guerreros,  
 todos te rinden honores.  
*Oyá Oyá ambero, Oyá morere la oyansa  
 acama laroye, güiro aa bembé nuco nuco  
 nuco guaye guaye  
 odun tererema  
 su odun, suyo, suyan  
 osicreta confoya la meta acara irawo eke  
 Oyá  
 Oyá oromi yare  
 Güiro!*

Ay! Oya, Oya oyansa, pay attention!  
 The owner of the cemetery! Güiro!  
 To you I dedicate my song, blessed and  
 beautiful woman.  
 Her musical colors, (female) warrior among  
 (male) warriors,  
 Everyone pays honor to you.  
*Oyá Oyá ambero, Oyá morere la oyansa  
 acama laroye, güiro aa bembé nuco nuco  
 nuco guaye guaye  
 odun tererema  
 su odun, suyo, suyan  
 osicreta confoya la meta acara irawo eke  
 Oyá  
 Oyá oromi yare  
 Güiro!*

Fernández’s lyrics parallel the shift in performance practice that is part of Cardoso’s performance with his own shift to the Yoruba liturgy. While it has been mentioned that *rumba* is in principle an open form in which all expressions can be incorporated, Fernández makes this shift artfully. He follows the general aesthetic principle of correspondences between song and dance performance characteristics of much religious

dance-music, referring to Cardoso *as* her role Oyá. He thus offers an alternative interpretation to those that reject her performance as unnatural and inappropriate to her gendered and sexed body. In another sense, he underscores the shift by marking it linguistically in that he borrows from Yoruba repertoire, which is less common in *columbia*. Note that he refers to himself in the first verse in *Palo/Congo* idioms, which are typical of the song style.

In fact, Fernández does regard Cardoso's performances in a positive light. When asked, the singer explained that she does a good job because she captures what he considers to be the spirit or feeling of *columbia*, which is over the top, intense, and emotionally effusive (Fernandez, interview 3/21/11). He actually made sounds and gestures rather than specify all of his comments with words. He continued to say that some dancers can perform technically well, but do not capture the feeling of *columbia*. Rather, he explained, they dance "too beautifully" (Fernández 2011, personal communication).

In the call and response section of the song, Fernández uses a mixture of standard *Palo/Congo* and *Yoruba* songs. At the end of the third verse, which again uses a Yoruba song to Oyá, the singer give the signal to the chorus in the form of the word "guiro" inserted at the penultimate line. From this, the chorus derives their part, "Oyá Oyá O."

Figure 20. *Columbia, Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009. Verse 3. Yoruba song honoring Oyá as third verse of *columbia*.

**Verse 3:**

**Soloist:** *Ay Dios! Ido un elese mi balla*

*ota mi omoballa*

*bima owensa soro*

*son tiya tiya*

*aina elekoto adañe curuñe*

*Echu olosun sara acama laroye*

**Güiro!** \* *Oyá Oyá O*

*elekoto obio yare*

**Chorus:** *Oyá Oyá O*

\*signals the Guide (*guía*)

This begins the call and response that accompanies the dancers. The chorus continues to repeat their line exactly until the lead singer signals another change and gives them a new song. Interwoven with the chorus's steady repetitions, the lead singer improvises and substitutes different lyric and rhythmic phrases. His improvisations are often alterations rather than new material. He may follow general guidelines, such as not to repeat an ornament more than three times in a row. He may alter the basic phrase each time, or he may repeat the basic phrase many times. Like the song leaders in religious rituals and *rumba*, his job is to maintain and build the energy and momentum for the dancers.

The performance encompasses and affords a variety of interactions within the dance-music conversation. Fernández's composition therefore constitutes an important interaction with Cardoso. He refers to the *orisha* Oyá, one of Cardoso's preferred roles and one that enacts strength as a female trait. He pays tribute to a woman in the lyric also pointing to Cardoso. Likewise, Hernández intervenes and lends support to Cardoso's performance by leading the call and response during her dancing. The mutuality of their interactions reinforces Cardoso's experience of self and affirms her identity negotiation.

Despite a variety of personal opinions within the group, rehearsals and performances allowed Cardoso to build up her routine and its affective power.

In spite of Hernández's support for Cardoso's performances, some members of the group do not agree with the legitimacy of her interpretation. Although her performances evoke some criticism and even exclusion, however, she succeeds in creating a sufficiently compelling performance that audiences and other performers find arousing and satisfying. Her performances allow her to claim a place within the community of traditional Afro-Cuban performers, evoking and referencing pre-revolutionary and non-institutional styles of *rumba*. They create an honorable footing for her in public space that resists the sexualized roles and charges of *jineterismo*. Finally, her performances open up discursive space for other non-standard performance evidenced by her invitation to perform with *Obini Batá*, the composition by Fernández, and the request for a turn from the professionally trained folkloric dancer, Castillo. Cardoso's performances catalyze critical discourses on gender and dance-music interpretation, and they reveal the intersections between social roles and processes of aesthetic arousal.

In summary, Cardoso's creative performances can be understood as a way that she negotiates her identity as a professional performer and traditional *rumbera*. By taking her alterations of *columbia* as evidence of identity discourses, her strategies can be understood as modes of choreographic transvestism and orthopraxy/hidden transcripts. In the first case, Cardoso uses a common rhetorical strategy found in discourses of national culture, that of embodying the other. To participate in the redefinition of national culture, she takes on a masculine performance role, fracturing traditional correspondences between gender, sex, and sexuality in an act of drag performance. Her drag, however, is

not simply about gender, although this remains a central issue. Instead, her performance further incorporates subtle alterations that invoke an earlier, pre-institutional style of dance that draws legitimacy from a traditional community of Afro-Cuban performers, rather than institutions of national culture.

In shaping her public persona, Cardoso links “acts of gender insubordination,” to invoke Judith Butler’s definition of drag, with acts of loyalty to her racial/ethnic identity by interpreting *rumba* as an Afro-Cuban tradition distinguishable from its presentation as national culture. Her performances respond to particular lived experiences of identity, reflecting Paul Gilroy’s statement that “gender is the modality by which race is lived,” (Gilroy 1991:117). Drawing on her background in sports and ideologies of gender equality, Cardoso crafts a mode of being in public that positions her strategically vis-à-vis the racialized stereotyping of non-professional female dancers during the 90s and 00s as sex-workers. Without conservatory training, Cardoso has achieved both a degree of cultural authority rare for women, and status as an independent artist. Through her creative performances she engages in a heroic process of self-making, and achieves what linguists refer to as “voice,” the ability to assert self-understanding in particular discursive contexts (Blommaert 2005).

By approaching Cardoso’s creative performance as kinetic conversation, analysis reveals how her performances reflect not only her individual agendas, but also show identity as a supra-individual process informed by dance-music performance. Her performances demonstrate that the expectations of performers’ social roles, such as those concerning gender, play an important part in aesthetic arousal. Effects that can be understood, in part, through the resonance of the mirror neuron system show how musical

sound organizes identity in public space. Resonating both through the relationships organized by performance practice and the immediate effect of sound and sight to link participants in the event, her creative performances and identity negotiations depend on audiences and other performers to achieve their effects. Interactions with key figures, such as Hernández, whom she regards as a link to the old-style *rumba*, and Fernández as a soloist who brings knowledge of Afro-Cuban religious repertoire to bear on her performance, affirm and frame her identity negotiations. In this way, Cardoso's performances open up space for other non-standard interpretations of the dance-music, including Fernández, a non-conservatory trained man, as well as *Obini Batá* and other professionally trained women. Cardoso's kinetic conversations play a role in the on-going processes of social and cultural change in contemporary Havana.

Oba Ilú 8/13/09, Asociación Yoruba, La Habana, Cuba

Folkloric Show / Espectáculo Folklórico  
Order of performance

- |                                                  |                                                    |                               |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Congo/Bantú                                   | “Congo chana longo wey”                            | Makuta, Yuka<br>Baile de maní |
| 2. Congo - Yuka: played with sticks              | “Que ta sawa congo que te vianna”                  |                               |
| 3. Congo                                         | “Oki mayombe saura”<br>“Endo qui mayombe saura”    | Makuta                        |
| 4. Congo -<br>[pause: applause,<br>resume congo] | “A wada l’oya”                                     |                               |
| 5. Arará                                         | “Aara go de mon”<br>“A wonito daba o”<br>“O sigba” | Ogun                          |
| 6. Bembé: Ogun                                   | “Ado chachakora”                                   |                               |
| 7. Guiro                                         |                                                    |                               |
| 8. Yoruba/Batá: Obatalá                          |                                                    | Obatalá                       |
| 9. Yoruba/Batá: Oyá                              |                                                    | Oyá                           |
| 10. Yoruba/Batá:<br>Changó                       |                                                    | Changó                        |
| 11. Finale: all Orichas<br>dance                 |                                                    |                               |

PART II

12. Coros de clave

13. Rumba: Guaguancó

14. Rumba: Yambú  
[3:17]

15. Rumba: Guaguancó  
w/ Abakuá [3:29 – 6:20

[6:30 –

Goyo sings, when call  
and response begins  
dancers can join in.  
First dancer approaches.

[7:08 –

[7:27 –

A man joins who is not  
dancing Abakuá.  
Menocal get up to  
dance.

[9:36 –

[10:00 –

Menocal is replaced by  
Fernández.

[10:53 –

A professional dancer  
replaces the singer.  
He is replaced by Wili.  
The song ends.  
[“Africa!”]

[12:46 –

15. Columbia  
[12:48 –

Fernández sings.

[16:32 –

1<sup>st</sup> dancer: Martínez

[18:37 –

2<sup>nd</sup> dancer: Wili (CFNC)

[19:38 –

Isnavi signals with index  
finger.  
Isnavi dances.

[19:50 –

The Group bows.

[21:36 –

Irma Castillo dances.

[21:48 –  
22:42]

16. Conga/comparsa  
Conga w/ canto  
yoruba

*Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (CFNC, National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba).  
May 2011  
Rumba, columbia. Basic steps.



Figure 21 CFNC. Classic *rumba* ensemble. From left to right: *claves*, *guagua*, *tres-dos* (middle drum), *quinto* (high-pitched solo drum), *tumbador* (bass drum). May 2011.



Figure 22 CFNC. Classic *rumba* ensemble with lead singer and dancers, back left, waiting for the *montuno*.



Figure 23 CFNC. Classic *rumba* ensemble, chorus and dancers, May 2011.



Figure 24. Basic step, feet parallel.



Figure 25. Corss step, in front.



Figure 26. Cross step, behind.



Figure 27. Shoulder shake, horizontal.



Figure 28 (a) & (b). Traveling step (diagonal, l. horizontal, r.) accented beat when the feet are brought together.



Figure 29 “Patea y coma” Kick and a comma. (Term for this step from Miliano 2007).



Figure 30 (a) –(c). Heel-toe footwork

Figure 30(b)



Figure 30(c). Heel-toe footwork



Figure 31. One leg hop (similar to palo/congo step).



Figure 32. (a) & (b). Pivot step on one leg.



Figure 33. Characteristic traveling steps with alternating arms.



Figure 34. Special effects: jump.



Figure 35. Special effects: split.



Figure 36. Galloping step.



Figure 37. CFNC unison closing phrase.

*Obini Batá, columbia, Callejón de Hamel, July 2, 2012*



Figure 38. (a)-(f) *Obini Batá, columbia, TV taping July 2012.*



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Isnavi Cardoso Díaz, *columbia*, with *Oba Ilú*, The Yoruba Association, August 13, 2009



Figure 39. Cardoso requesting a turn and dramatizing her participating in *la columbia*.



Figure 40. Cardoso begins with a shoulder shake.



Figure 41.(a) & (b) Characteristic traveling step. Compare with CFNC figure 34.

(b)



Figure 42. Cross step behind, compare with CFNC figure 27



Figure 43. Traveling step, compare with CFNC figure 29 (a) & (b).



Figure 44 (a)–(c). Special steps, *columbia* uses special steps to express daring, extreme emotions, special skills or talents. This aspect of *columbia* developed into a sub-style referred to as *la jiribilla* which incorporates spectacular actions and is also a source of debate regarding the nature and boundaries of the genre.



Figure 44 (c). Cardoso walks on her knees.

Figure 45 (a)–(f). *Columbia Oba Ilú* Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009. Closing unison phrase – not in unison. In the first still, Willi (left) signals to Martínez (right) behind Cardoso’s head. In the next frame notice that the two men are in sync, stepping forward with the right foot; Cardoso could not see the cue and steps forward with the left foot. Third frame wardrobe malfunction. Cardoso recovers by the end.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Columbia  
Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba, May 2011

### **Introduction or Llanto**

Soloist: Güiro! Güiro! A E  
Roncona!  
Güiro Güiro mama!  
Ay dios!  
Pero güiro  
Güiro a e  
Pero Güiro guio mama  
Bomboro ro ro

Ay dios

Señores quiero pedirle disculpa  
Lo que me están escuchando

Güiro!  
Quiero pedirle disculpa a lo que están escuchando  
Yo no se cantar columbia  
'pa mi madre estoy cantando

Timbero! a mi siempre me gusto cantar  
donde hayan cantadores  
[Ariel: Habla Niño!!]  
[Ariel!] me siempre ha gustado cantar donde hayan cantadores  
poetas y trovadores  
para poderme inspirar  
Orororo

Chorus: Ay

### **Montuno:**

**Guide:** Awa osi con me congo  
con mi congo, Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: la rumba me llamo Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: con mi congo, Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: sentimiento me lleva, Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: con mi congo, Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: con mi congo, Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

Guide: [xxxx] sentimiento, Congo Reales  
Chorus: Awa osi con mi congo

[2:42] Guide: Güiro! Cuidado con cuidado, celo tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: Cuidado con cuidado, celo tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: Cuidado con cuidado, celo tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: pero dicen que te ibas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: [xxxx] pero tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: [xxxx] pero tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: Ay dios! pero tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: pero dicen que te ibas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: [xxxx] pero tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: Ay dios! pero tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

Guide: pero celo tiene espinas  
Chorus: cuidado con cuidado

[3:23] Guide: Güiro! Cana una rumbo yo canaya  
y yo una rumbo canaya  
Chorus: caya una rumbo canaya

Guide: Ay dios una rumbo yo canaya  
Chorus: caya una rumbo canaya

Guide: [xxxx]  
Chorus: caya una rumbo canaya

Guide: Ay dios una rumbo yo canaya  
Chorus: caya una rumbo canaya

Guide: rumbero! Una rumbo canaya  
Chorus: caya una rumbo canaya

[3:54] Guide: Ay-y dio-o-o-os a wanana loya [11x]  
Chorus: a wana wana gobia

Guide: A wana wana loya  
Chorus: A wana wana loya

[4:31] Guide: Nana sawey nana sawey  
Chorus: Nana sawey nana sawey

Guide: Ana moile moile  
Chorus: Ana moile moile

Guide: Ahora tu veras cosa buena  
Chorus: Ahora tu veras

Güiro: Ay dios se cerró la columbia  
Chorus: se cerró

Etc.

**Columbia – Oba Ilú 8/13/09**  
**Yoruba Association of Cuba, La Habana, Cuba**

Soloist: Amauri Fernandez  
Song lyric: Amauri Fernandez  
Transcription: Amauri Fernández and Elizabeth Batiuk (6/15/12)

**Soloist:** orororo awe mama aa  
ay dios, ay dios, ay, dios

montero el guiro se ha puesto bueno  
caballero qué dilema, guiro  
cuando llego yo a la tierra candela me llamo yo  
montero vengo piango piango piango, pingo piango piango ocalambo  
línea de tren ya no me enreda  
guiro pa que el mismo sambi ampungo  
ya por siempre me acutare orororooo  
oro mi yare  
Guiro!  
**Chorus:** aaaa

**Soloist:** ay Oyá Oyá Oyánsa penton dueña de lo campo santo, guiro  
a ti dedico mi canto mujer bendecida y bella.  
de lírico sus colores, guerrera entre los guerreros  
todos te rinden honores.  
oya oya ambero, oya morere la oyansa  
acama laroye, guiro aa bembe nuco nuco nuco guaye guaye  
odun tererema  
su odun, suyo, suyan  
osicreta confoya la meta acara irawo eke  
oya oyaaa oromi yare  
Güiro  
**Chorus:** aaaa

**Soloist:** ay dio ido un elese mi balla  
ota mi omoballa  
bima owensa soro  
son tiya tiya  
aina elekoto adañe curuñe echu olosun sara acama laroye  
güiro! oya oya o  
elekoto obio yare  
**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** e obio yare  
**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obio yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** muchacho obio yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obi o yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obio yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obi o yare

**Chorus:** oya oyao

**Soloist:** elekoto obi oyare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** ido un elese obi o yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obi o yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obi o yare

**Chorus:** oyaoya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obi o yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Soloist:** elekoto obi o yare

**Chorus:** oya oya o

**Guide:** guiro! awa osi con mi congo [Here the soloist begins using guides and chorsuses  
con mi congo congo real e typical of *columbia*.]

**Chorus:** awa osi con mi congo

**Guide:** con mi congo manana con mi congo real e

**Chorus:** awaosi con mi congo

**Guide:** con mi congo con mi congo hay dio

**Chorus:** awa osi con mi congo

**Guide:** con mi congo manana con mi congo reale

**Chorus:** con mi congo congo real e

**Guide:** timbero mi congo manana congo real congo

**Chorus:** awaosi con mi congo

**Guide:** con mi congo columbia congo hay dio

**Chorus:** awaosi con mi congo

**Guide:** con mi congo congo real e manana

**Chorus:** awa osi con mi congo

**Guide:** timbero con mi congo congo real e congo

**Chorus:** awa osi con mi congo

**Guide:** con mi congo congo real e congo

**Chorus:** awa osi con mi congo

**Guide:** eee moilie moile como tata moile

**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata ahora

**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata moile

**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** congo tata moile

**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata moile  
**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata moile  
**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata moile timbero  
**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata moile  
**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** como tata moile  
**Chorus:** moilemoile

**Guide:** como tata moile  
**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** goyo-cómo tata moile  
**Chorus:** moile moile

**Guide:** moile moile  
**Chorus:** moilemoile

**Guide:** como tata moile  
**Chorus:** moilemoile

**Guide:** e maluanda e maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** e maluanda e maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** e maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** o maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** e maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda metangala  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** intraducible-  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** o la timba buena  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** o caballero  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** timbero  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** caballero  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** timbero maluanda  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** o la timba buena  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** o timbero bueno  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** maluanda  
**Chorus** e maluanda e

**Guide:** e caballero  
**Chorus:** e maluanda e

**Guide:** eee bembe Changó  
Oyá Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** timbero Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** ororo Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** gongorito mi loya  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** timbero Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** gongorito mi loya  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** gongorito mi loya  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** timbero Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** Changó Oyá  
**Chorus:** bembe Changó Oyá

**Guide:** [Hernández:] e Oyá Oyáncoro  
**Chorus:** Oyá Oyáncoro

**Guide:** intraducible  
**Chorus:** Oyá Oyáncoro

After this there are 18 guides and Choruses that are undecipherable, but they maintain the same **Chorus:** Oyá Oyáncoro

**Guide:** [Fernández:] a bobo kuañale

**Chorus:** Oyánsa oloya

**Guide:** guiro oya oloya

**Chorus:** Oyánsa oloya

[the last guide and Chorus are repeated 24 times to the end]

## Chapter 4

### Empathy and othering:

#### Miguel “Chino” Martínez and the art of seduction in *salsa cubana*

*This is free. Folkloric peñas have their limits. But this is free.  
You can do whatever you want here.*

Teresa,  
professional folkloric dancer with *Oba Ilú*, 5/29/11  
on the dance floor at *La Tropical*

*Many of the people who know rumba ... we try to enrich it ourselves, perhaps not with so many variations and figures but with the body movement. There is always something that we bring to it, a little more flavor. ... the body movement – there we bring a little, we are a little ahead.*

Iván Valdespino, professional folkloric dancer, 3/24/11  
on quoting Cuban folklore in *salsa* dancing

Miguel “Chino” Martínez negotiates his identity as a powerfully desirable partner and folkloric dancer through his creative performances of *salsa cubana*. Bringing his professional expertise to a nightclub dance-floor, Martínez creates a dramatic performance that blurs the lines between techniques of dance and seduction. He performs *salsa cubana* in a way that is both romantically and aesthetically satisfying, allowing him to garner both social stature and a degree of artistic freedom. Here Martínez reinterprets

*rumba*, in a way not possible in a professional folkloric performance, linking it with black popular music from the US. Dancing at a venue that often hosts largely white foreign *salsa* dance students, Martínez distinguishes himself as Cuban and black by embedding *rumba* quotations into his *salsa*, creating a hybridized and virtuoso style. At the same time, his masterful and provocative orchestration of the couple's dance climaxes with his equally skillful Cuban partner's performance of *despelote* (chaos, stripping off), an eroticized idiom of popular dance. Her dancing responds to his arousing provocations and affirms his identity as a pleasing, if not powerfully attractive, partner. In this way, Martínez uses couple's dancing to position himself at the confluence of transnational and national currents, negotiating his identity through his interactions with an extraordinary female partner.

Using ethnographic evidence, including videotaped performances, interviews, and dance classes with Martínez, I analyze his performance as a kinetic conversation and show how he alters standard performance practice while pursuing agendas central to his lived experience of identity. By tracing the ways he alters standard performance practice and interacts with his partner, I explore how Martínez conserves and transforms his identity through the intersections between partner dancing and romantic/sexual roles. At the same time the performance reveals a variety of modes of couple's interaction or kinetic paradigms of interaction, which become stretched and even eroded in the final phase of their dancing. For Martínez *salsa* dancing provides him with a domain in which he may shape performances and interpret music in accord with his personal aesthetic and social goals, unlike professional settings, which tend to be more regulated in terms of style and repertoire. Priding himself on his refined technique as a dancer and passion for

popular dance music, Martínez combines a highly refined dance style with a variety of popular styles. He underscores his identification with transnational styles such as hip-hop, but reframes them within the familiar idiom of the Cuban social and popular dance. Dancing with a well-matched female partner, who like Martínez is a professional dancer and *salsa* instructor, he is both challenged and liberated in the pursuit of the dance. While relying on traditional cultural values and conventional scripts, their dancing ultimately destabilizes their basic roles.

The contemporary *salsa* in Cuba and the particular venue where the performance takes place has a transnational dimension. Not only in the recorded music played for dancers, but also in that since the 1990s *salsa* has been part of the tourism industry in Cuba. During the crisis of the 1990s, Cuban society saw the erosion of the existing economic, political, and social order. Starting with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cuban economy contracted by 50 percent in the first four years (1989-1993), and further again in 1994 (Centeno and Font 1997, Pérez-Lopez 1997:171).<sup>50</sup> Among the measures taken to reform the economy and generate revenue, the government focused on developing the tourism industry, decentralizing certain industries including popular music, and allowing individuals to earn money from small businesses (Centeno and Font 1997, Fairley 2004). These reforms reflected major changes in the government's ideological stances and economic policies. As Susan Eckstein explains, tourism had been

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<sup>50</sup> The term *El Periodo Especial en Tiempo de Paz* [the Special Period During Peace Time, peace-time referring to the end of the Cold War] was coined in 1991 at the PCC fourth congress (Carmona Báez 2004:87). Some scholars refer to *el periodo especial* as the years from 1991-1996 (Carmona Báez 2004:37), others have dated it from 1989-2004, perhaps citing the date when the economy was projected to again reach its pre-crisis levels (Mesa-Lago 2005). "The crisis that Cuba faced can never be exaggerated. Due to the break-up of the socialist bloc and the consequent fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost between 80 and 85 percent of its external trade and more than 50 percent of its purchasing power (Domínguez, 1995: 23; Mesa-Lago, 1992: 4 in Carmona Báez 2004: 86).

reined in after the revolution to put an end to the decadence of the old order, but it became a priority in the 1990s (Eckstein 1997).<sup>51</sup> Dance-music not only dominated the music industry, it also became a major part of the new tourism economy (Fairley 2004, Moore 2006, Hernández-Reguant 2009).

Not only part of the new tourism industry, dance-music events became a medium of contact and exchange among musical entrepreneurs (bandleaders, musicians, and managers), foreign tourists, and Cuban audiences. In this context, musicians developed a style of dance-music based on *salsa* and traditional popular dances such as *son* and *casino*, but also drew on national musical styles such as *rumba*, as well as transnational styles such as hip-hop and reggaetón (Perna 2005). Referred to by some authors as *timba*, the new style of *salsa* accompanied some highly eroticized dance practices. Among these, a female solo dance, called *despelote* emerged and was associated with casual sex work (*jineterismo*) and dance-music venues that were considered “zones of contamination.” In these locations foreigners and Cubans intermingled freely, and *despelote* potentially expressed the availability of some women to foreign partners. Subsequently, the dance style was integrated into popular styles of dance including *reggaetón* and *salsa*, and became performed by both men and women, however retaining its risqué and controversial profile.

Salsa dance has been part of the tourist industry in Cuba since the 1990s. In addition to dance bands and audiences at nightclubs, the cultivation of cultural tourism has drawn foreign students to Cuba for music and dance classes. Among these are officially and commercially organized classes in folklore as well as social and popular

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<sup>51</sup> According to Eckstein, tourism grossed \$200 million in 1989, and an estimated \$700 million in 1993, \$850 million in 1994 (*Cuba Business*, September 1994, p.2, EIU 1995, p.13, quoted in Eckstein 1997).

dance styles. Teachers and accompanists for these jobs have been drawn from among the professional dancers and musicians, including folkloric performers (Valdespino, Martínez, personal communication). In addition to officially organized classes, musicians and dancers have also made themselves available to foreigners for individual lessons. Some of the dancers' contact with foreign students and transnational music has inspired them to develop styles of dance that reflect their identity as Cubans and also Afro-Cubans. In doing so, male folkloric dancers have drawn on the solo style of *columbia* as a way of ornamenting their dancing and distinguishing themselves from the variety of foreign styles of *salsa* dancing that can be seen among tourists.

It was in these contexts that Martínez developed his professional life. Having trained prior to the crisis of the 1990s, his style is heavily informed by the refined techniques and artistic aspirations of the height of socialist Cuba. Like the musicians in some of the so-called *timba* bands, who trained in classical conservatory programs and switched to popular music as the opportunities opened up during the 1990s, Martínez is among a generation that is somewhat unique in its artistic outlook. Having studied technique classes with the National Ensemble of Modern Dance (now: *Danza Contemporánea*), Martínez approaches folklore with a technical refinement unlike many of his peers in folklore. In addition to his formal training, Martínez developed his own system of self-teaching and rehearsing. Striving to create his own style of performance, he experienced considerable rejection in the world of folklore. Nevertheless, his sheer talent and persistence gained him recognition and a solid place among the professional ensembles.

The chapter begins with a discussion of how this case study illustrates the interactive dyad in kinetic conversations. It focuses on the interactive dyad as the site of structural coupling, a process that logically relies on the mirror neuron system. I explore three ways that the mirror neuron system facilitates shared significance within the dancing couple formation. Next, I present a description of *salsa cubana* as a particularly Cuban articulation of the transnational phenomenon of *salsa*, as well as an extension of the Cuban tradition of popular social dances. In the discussion of the dance-music, I present evidence from interviews with recreational dancers at *La Tropical* and professional dancers describing the way that styles of dance and dance interaction reflect identity and social values for participants. Next, I present a biography of Martínez as a professional dancer based upon interviews. The last part of the biography presents his agendas regarding the performance analyzed, based on a feedback interview in which he describes and comments on video of the dancing. The remainder of the chapter presents an analysis of an extraordinary performance captured on video at an outdoor nightclub venue called “1830,” in which Martínez dances with a professional female dancer who is well matched to his level of expertise.

### **Kinetic Conversation: the interactive dyad**

In this chapter, Martínez’s dancing with a well matched, expert partner illustrates the interactive dyad in kinetic conversation. The interactions of the dancing couple create shared significance for the partners and also play a crucial role in the discursive system. Fundamental to the discursive system, the phenomena of structural coupling links

individuals into a community of interpreters.<sup>52</sup> Recall that structural coupling refers to organizational congruence between two systems and reflects a history of mutual interaction (Maturana and Varela 1992:75). Interactions of a dyad in the discursive system operate as a prime site of structural coupling. Their interactions are acts of knowing or behavioral coordination that conserve and/or transform each individual's identity in relation to that idiom. With regard to dance-music events, structural coupling entrains perception, contributing to the perceptual habits and dispositions associated with particular types of dance-music. The process of interaction contributes to forming congruent cognitive structures that inform how individuals interpret and enact the sound and movements of dance-music. While the interactions of the dancers produce micro-transformations at the level of the individual, when shared and repeated throughout the network, transformations contribute to the evolutionary processes of natural drift that define a shared ontology or way of being-in-the-world (Maturana and Varela 1992).

The case of couple's dancing presents an interesting case study for structural coupling. The performance roles are strikingly different and unequal, based on gender differences and sex differences. At the same time, the performance of couple's dancing based on social dance position seeks to create an experience and appearance of concerted movement and even seamless natural union. Performers cultivate this aspect of performance through the ways that they attend to one another and perform their roles as leader and follower. Close attention allows performers to enact similar recurring sensorimotor patterns that enable perception to be guided and from which cognitive structures arise (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1992:173). An explanation can be

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<sup>52</sup> It occurs through domains of learned behavioral coordination and is considered to be "third order" or social coupling (Maturana and Varela 1992:181).

developed from recent research on the human Mirror Neuron System (MNS) to understand how the couple's interactions facilitate the development of similar motor repertoires, transformation of motor repertoires, and generally contribute to shared embodied significance in the discursive system of a particular style of dance-music.

The Mirror Neuron System (MNS) is a system of audio-visual and visuomotor neurons that are activated during both the execution and observation of certain types of actions and activities (Rizzolatti, Gallese, and Fogassi 2001, Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004). The actions that stimulate mirror neurons are called "biological action" and include goal directed hand movements and facial expressions, as well as walking, turning the head, bending the torso, and moving the arms (Rizzolatti, Gallese, and Fogassi 2001, Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004, Iacoboni and Dapretto 2006, Ocampo and Kritikos 2011). Evidence suggests that the MNS activates not only during direct observation of action but also during sounds associated with certain actions, reflecting a multimodal quality in the types of observations that engage the MNS (Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004, Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006). Due to the types of actions that engage mirror neurons, neuroscientists have hypothesized that the MNS plays a fundamental role in the understanding of human action. It also plays a role in experiential learning and in providing an empathic basis for social interaction (Rizzolatti, Gallese and Fogassi 2001, Iacoboni 2009). Referred to as the ideomotor framework of imitation and the direct-matching hypothesis, research on the MNS challenges the notion that observation entails a simple visual representation of the world and in this way supports the enactive theory of cognition (ibid.). Rather than a visual representation, scientists have argued that action understanding relies on a variety of motor experiences and the feelings they trigger.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that familiar actions and predictive behaviors play central roles in how individuals understand the actions of others.

The MNS plays a particularly important role in musical experience by facilitating the efficient coordination of individuals in time and linking movement with sound and emotion centers (Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006, Overy and Molnar-Szakacs 2009). Some researchers have argued that the “MNS allows for co-representation of musical experience” arising out of the shared and temporally synchronous recruitment of similar neural mechanisms in the performer and observer” (Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006). In fact, it has been found that dancers observing familiar styles of dance experienced more intense neural activation than when observing a non-familiar style of dance (Calvo-Merino et. al. 2005). So it is the action of the mirror neuron system in understanding human action that facilitates both generalized human (and primate) gestures and culturally specific modes of agentive action to become shared at the level of motor neuron image maps.

Evidence from research on mirror neurons and the MNS contributes to understanding how dance-interaction produces shared significance for the interactive dyad and over time produces the similar neural structures described by structural coupling. The way that partners in the interactive dyad produce shared significance can be understood in terms of three key features of their performance. First is the quality and processes of synchronization between the partners of the interactive dyad. Second are the experiences of arousal that provoke emotional responses and trigger learning in the context of dance-music interaction. Third is the capacity for intentional control and modification that dancers cultivate through the process of learning and performance.

Each of these contribute to the most valuable dance-music experiences, characterized in terms of flow and personal style, and catalyze the micro-transformations that partner interaction causes.

First, synchronization describes how individual dancers facilitate the production of shared significance through a variety of interactive behaviors. Dancers referred to the effects of these behaviors as *compenetración* or mutual understanding, which characterized a good performance or desirable partner. Such behaviors include: physical and temporal coordination (conforming to a partner's style or time-feel and staying in time together), overt and covert forms of imitation ("I watch her and then repeat back the kinds of movements she seems to enjoy most"), and predictive ability ("I can tell what move he's going to do next just by looking at his face"). Such behaviors are readily understood in terms of the operation of the MNS. Evidence from research on imitation and empathy suggests that mirror neurons facilitate coordination in time and space and feelings of smoothness of interaction through the linking of proprioceptive and emotional centers in the brain with visual, motor, and auditory centers (Rizzolatti and Crighero 2004, Molnar-Szakacs & Overy 2006, Iacoboni 2009). Synchronization thus contributes to the unfolding both in time and in terms of style of a good performance.

Repetitive sound and movement fosters a strong sense of connection and mutual understanding as well as a regularized background against which alterations or unpredicted events in the dance-music interactions stand out. Cognitive scientists "suggest that the capacity for music to create such a strong environment for *minimized prediction error* (and resultant affect) provides the very basis for a strong emotional

response to an *unpredicted* event” (Overy & Molnar-Szakacs 2009:494).<sup>53</sup> The mirror neuron system facilitates action understanding in part by predicting the outcome of familiar sequences of actions and plays an important role in the way that the actions/interactions of dance-music are understood and how they evoke an emotional response (Overy and Molnar-Szakacs 2009, Iacoboni 2009). This suggests a neural basis for Leonard Meyer’s theory of musical expectancy, which argues that syntactic deviations evoke emotional response and form the basis of musical meaning (Meyer 1956).<sup>54</sup>

By disrupting the regularity of movement and sound, performers provoke affective and emotional responses in a discursive partner. Arousal of emotion in dance-music performance entails both syntactic and non-syntactic features. Repetition itself stimulates the ANS (autonomic nervous system) and while deviations from the regularity and predictability elicit affective responses by standing out against the repetitive and predictable nature of dance-music, non-syntactic deviations like sudden movements or changes in volume may induce the startle reflex (D’Aquili and Newberg 1999, Juslin and Västfjäll 2008). Scholars have argued that while musical expectancy induces emotion in listeners, it does not account for all unexpected events or all forms of emotion and arousal linked with the flow of music in time (Meyer 1956, Juslin and Västfjäll 2008). For example, a sudden movement may be incoherent in the context of partner dance in terms of dance-music syntax (as occurs in the example analyzed in this chapter). It may

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<sup>53</sup> Minimized prediction error refers to how action understanding operates on the basis of previously experienced actions. Motor recall of previous actions, permits humans to predict the outcome of observed actions. Of course this is useful for dancers sequencing familiar figures and combining a mostly shared repertoire of steps and styles.

<sup>54</sup> There have been many critiques of Meyer’s theory – see Feld 1984 for a lit review of some.

however stimulate the ANS and elicit a reflex-like brain stem response (startle response), which has affective power. Syntactic alterations will, however, be more likely to catalyze a learning process, offering the possibility of assimilating the new act or sequence of acts comprising an action.

Learning responses also involve the MNS and ultimately have an effect on the individual as well as on transformations of style. Characteristics of the mirror neuron system that support imitation also support the flexible or creative uses of action scripts associated with learning. The three mechanisms of imitation include retrieval, construction, and refinement (Rizzolatti et. al. 2001:668). ‘Action-level imitation’ involved in copying a behavior not already in the motor system entails “dissecting the observed behavior into a string of simpler sequential components that are already in the observer’s repertoire” (ibid). This suggests that new motor actions are assembled from an individual’s repertoire of motor acts and complex actions.

Engaging the skills used in learning, expert dancers can move beyond syntactic deviations to modification of choreographic actions outside the rules defining syntax. In terms of neural processes, sensory perturbations can be blocked or amplified and their effects on the nervous system modulated to serve arousal or quiescence of the ANS. Referred to broadly as deafferentation, such processes have been studied in relation to religious experience and contemplative practices (D’Aquili and Newberg 1999). Dancers focus on their partner and the music, modulate their responses, and modify their action repertoires. This may operate like deafferentation at the boundaries of conscious and non-conscious processes. Like instrumental musicians and practitioners of mystical religions, individuals come to control aspects of the autonomic nervous system and sensory

function that are not under conscious control in most individuals (D'Aquili and Newberg 1999, Becker 2004). Through training and performing, musicians become able to control emotional processes that are also typically part of the autonomic nervous system (Becker 2004). Similarly, dancers become experts at kinetic dimensions of identity performance and action programs that cue particular kinds of social experiences.

The interactive dyad produces shared embodied significance in terms of the feelings and emotions aroused through dance-music performance, and more specifically through its interactions. Some of the interactions establish a sense of mutual understanding, which gives rise to the feeling of flow. Such interactions geared to synchronizing the two dancers may be ways of attending to a partner, but also include the predictable flow of steps defined by the performance practice. Alterations of that “syntax” may arouse a negative emotional response (disappointment of prediction) that triggers a learning process. Other deviations from the expected unfolding of performance also contribute to arousal but not directly to a learning process. Finally, expert dancers can consciously modify dance-music performance practice by using their skills as learners and performers to break down complex actions into smaller component acts. Recombining the smaller components of dance-music movements or juxtaposing characteristic movements, dancers open a new realm of creative possibility. By understanding these dimensions of performance in terms of the MNS, the analysis presents a view of how social agendas of individual agents initiate processes of bio-cultural evolution.

### ***Salsa Cubana: Origins, Music and dance processes, habitus***

*Salsa* was introduced into Cuba during the 1980s, two decades after its advent in the musical and migratory exchanges between NYC and Puerto Rico (Duany 1996, Berríos-Miranda 2002).<sup>55</sup> From the 1960s to the latter part of the 1980s, popular music in Cuba was dominated by *nueva trova*, a singer-songwriter style renowned for its sophisticated lyric poetry (Berríos-Miranda 2002, Leymarie 2002, Moore 2006). It took until the mid-1990s for *salsa* to be articulated as a Cuban idiom. Musicians on the island were largely excluded from the international *salsa* market, which was centered in the US, due to the embargo; in Cuba, the dance-music became the subject of a polemic against US hegemony and commercialism (Berríos-Miranda 2002:25, Moore 2006). *Salsa* was referred to as *son*, *son montuno*, or *guaracha* underscoring its widely acknowledged Cuban roots, or simply *música bailable* meaning “dance music” (Perna 2005).

The contemporary usage, *salsa cubana*, reflects a shift in conversations about dance-music and a change in its position within Cuban society. Starting during the 1990s, and accompanying Cuba’s reentry into the global economy after the fall of Soviet Union, dance-music came to dominate the Cuban music industry (Moore 2006). Displacing *nueva trova* and challenging the figure of the ethically motivated revolutionary with the conspicuously consuming revelers, musicians from bands such as *los Van Van*, *NG la Banda*, and *La Charanga Habanera* were part of a vanguard in the new entrepreneurial economy (Fairley 2004, Hernandez-Reguant 2009). Largely based on tourism, the new economy generated both hard currency and debates over morality; dance-music became associated with the “zone of contamination,” in which foreigners and Cubans could

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<sup>55</sup> Salsa is a transnational popular social dance music created in New York City by Puerto Rican musicians using Cuban musical resources to create a new musical sound (Navarro quoted in Berríos-Miranda 2002).

intermingle, generating an unofficial domain of exchange (Perna 2005, Fairley 2006).

Among a variety of transnational genres including hip-hop and *reggaetón* that flourished in Cuba, *salsa* became an important current drawing tourists and Cuban dancers alike.

The style of *salsa* dance-music that emerged in Cuba during the 1990s drew on transnational contemporary popular music like hip-hop, reggaetón as well as Cuban folklore such as *rumba* and references to Afro-Cuban religious music. Referred to by some authors as *timba*, this style of salsa uses *rumba* clave more consistently than other styles. It also follows the conventions of *guaguancó* in that the *montuno* often has an increasing tempo. In *timba*, dancers cultivated the habit of letting go of the handclasp of social dance on the *montuno*. Initially, just women performed an erotically charged style of solo dance and their partners would step behind them and take a minimal role in this dancing referred to as *despelote* (Perna 2005, Martínez, personal communication). Before long the movements of *despelote* become adopted by men and in particular came to be associated with *reggaetón*. *Timba* has often been described as “blackening” salsa through the use of folkloric musical and choreographic elements (Perna 2005). Its eroticized dancing also can be considered a racializing practice, especially since *despelote* was originally associated with “zones of contamination” and *jineterismo*. Like the variety of local styles of *salsa*, defined by instrumentation, local rhythms, lyric content, and other stylistic parameters, Cuban bands and dancers built upon the generic framework to produce a dance-music practice that resonated with everyday life and linked them into the transnational *salsa* market.

Today, *salsa cubana* refers to a contemporary and heterogeneous dance-music practice that draws on Cuban social and popular dance-music traditions as well as

transnational popular music. Scholars, musicians, and fans use a variety of terms to refer to the dance band music that emerged out of the 1990s including *timba* (Perna 2005, Vaughn 2011, Baker 2011), *música bailable* (Perna 2005), *salsa*, and *casino* (Padura Fuentes 2003, Balbuena 2005, Alén 1992). Here, I will adopt the term *salsa cubana*, used by the musicologist Olavo Alén and also by many of the dancers met at *La Tropical* and other venues (Alén, personal communication). *Salsa cubana* captures both the particularity of the Cuban traditions of social and popular dance as a heterogeneous local tradition linked with gender, race and ideologies of romantic relationships as well its historically specific relationship with the transnational phenomena of *salsa*.

*Salsa* music is organized around processes of the Afro-Cuban percussion ensemble (Boggs 1991, Mauleón 1993, Berríos-Miranda 2002). As Berríos-Miranda notes, the most important feature of *salsa* (the one musicians most often use to distinguish the genre) is its rhythmic profile, consisting of interlocking polyrhythms (Berríos-Miranda 2002). The *clave* pattern, which originated in *rumba* and *son*, functions as a time-line pattern that coordinates all parts of the ensemble. *Clave* implies polyrhythmic interlocking texture, not just a singular metric pattern or point of entry. The pattern consists of two phrases: a three-note syncopated side and a two-note downbeat side. The order or so-called “direction” of the two phrases comprising the *clave* rhythm is determined by how its rhythm lines up with the main melody. Either “side” of the *clave* rhythm can begin the song, but once in motion the pattern remains constant and does not (typically) change direction. Also similar to *rumba*, the *clave* pattern prescribes when

instrumentalists and singers may improvise and the ensemble uses drum calls or changes in rhythmic patterns to cue section changes.<sup>56</sup>

The basic *salsa* ensemble consists of piano, bass, percussion, and winds. The pianist plays accompaniment of arpeggiated chords called *guajeos* or *montunos*, phrased in coordination with the direction of the *clave*. Conga drums and timbales make up the core of the percussion section. The conga plays a running bass part or *tumbao*, which reinforces the anticipated bass figure with two resounding open strokes on the “four-and.” The anticipated bass, also related to the bass drum pattern in *guaguanco*, defines the phrasing and fluid rhythmic feel of *salsa* and many other popular dance styles, such as *son* and *mambo* (Manuel 1985). The timbales (or *paila*) plays an elaborated version of the *clave* called the *cáscara*, on the shell of the drum and marks section changes by switching patterns. In Cuba, ensembles commonly include the drum kit, as in Latin Jazz. By contrast, US salsa groups have tended to avoid the drum kit due to its connotations of rock and use of backbeat. Hand percussion, in particular, the *claves*, but also *guayo* or scraper and *chekere*, play timekeeping roles.

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<sup>56</sup> Such rhythmic or rhythmic/melodic “calls” were also used in *danzón* and *son*.

Figure 46. Salsa: basic parts

The image displays seven musical staves, each representing a different instrument's part in a salsa ensemble. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The staves are as follows:

- Son Clave:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, starting with a half rest on the first beat.
- Guayo or guiro:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a half rest on the first beat.
- Bongo:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a half rest on the first beat.
- Paila (timbales):** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a half rest on the first beat.
- Conga:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a half rest on the first beat. An 'x' is placed above the eighth note on the second beat, indicating a slap.
- Bass:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a half rest on the first beat.
- Piano guajeo:** A rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a half rest on the first beat.

**Son Clave** (can begin on either “side” of the phrase, keeps going, i.e.: does not “change direction” within the song)

**Guayo** or guiro (↓ ↓↑)

**Bongo** (mm. 1-2 martillo or basic bongo running pattern, m. 3 bongo bell, played on the montuno)

**Paila** (timbales): cascara (the rhythm played on the shell of the drum) compare to the *guagua* in *rumba*

**Conga** x=slap; this part is called *tumbao*\*

**Bass** (basic concept; outlines clave, reinforces tumbao on 4-&)

**Piano guajeo**

\*Note: phrasing is typically anticipated. Use last two notes of “tumbao” (two open tones on beat 4-&) as reference for phrases, also the “anticipated bass pattern” indicates this phrasing.

The song form most commonly used in *salsa* is the two-part *son-montuno*. As in *rumba*, the A-section presents a song or verse, and the B-section presents call and response between the lead singer and the chorus. The larger formal sections are also broken down into smaller units, the structure and order of which vary in accord with the style and the arranger. The A-section will contain a song in verse/refrain format and may include instrumental interludes and perhaps a vocal interlude. The B-section or *montuno* will use a progression that is often a reduction of the main verse and usually consists of some call and response between the lead vocalist and a chorus. The *montuno* permits improvisation for the vocalist and instrumentalists within particular parameters. In recent years, new styles of *salsa* have emerged. Some recombine *salsa* with other Caribbean and pan-Latino genres, such as dancehall reggae, and reggaetón.

Like variations in instrumentation, rhythm, phrasing and lyric content, *salsa* dance styles vary regionally. Some examples include New York “On-2” and Cali, Colombia’s rapid paced dancing style (Waxer 2002a). Contemporary performance practice of *salsa cubana* draws its basic step (*paso básico*) from *casino* and *son*. Named after the *Casino del Playa*, the dance style *casino* developed in Havana in the 1950s, among the elite social clubs in the capital city. By contrast, *son* is said to have developed in the Eastern provinces and was commercialized in Havana by the 1920s as a symbol of national culture, although there is evidence that suggests it developed in Havana (Manuel 2009). Both *son* and *casino* use the loose embrace of the closed social dance position; *casino* additionally uses open position, in which the couple holds hands. In *casino*, the couple step towards one another with the left foot and press palms together on one side as they meet in the middle; the rhythm of the footwork matches the quick-quick-slow pattern of New York *salsa*. The *son*-derived basic step may include a tap or a kick on the anticipation of the downbeat followed by a footfall behind the original resting position of the foot, but the original *son* step has a more syncopated metric placement of footfalls. The rhythm of the basic *salsa* step is quick-quick-slow, quick-quick-slow.<sup>57</sup> The *son* footwork synchronizes with the *clave* rhythm rather than the downbeat of the measure and has a rhythm of slow-quick-quick. Both the *casino* and *son* basic steps share the pattern of footwork, RLR, LRL with other styles of *salsa*. A stylistic difference in the performance of the step is that Cuban dancers use a brief pause between the right and left

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<sup>57</sup> In *salsa Cubana*, the basic step contains a small stop during the “slow” of the quick-quick-slow in order to accommodate the kick or tap on the anticipation of the downbeat. By contrast, for example, New York style “On Two” has continuous movement in the footwork; the dancers also remain “in the slot” meaning that they move forward and backward in a line. Differences of footwork are relatively minor. The somewhat different time feel creates a greater difference among dancers accustomed to different styles.

sides, whereas in New York-style the movement is continuous. In Cuba, dancers also commonly use variations of the basic steps, and attend closely to the particularity of rhythms, quoting dance styles in accord with quotation of musical styles.

For musicians and many dancers, especially in *salsa cubana*, besides *clave* the most important rhythmic feature is *tumbao*.<sup>58</sup> Referring to the pattern played on the low conga drum, *tumbao* (among the term's various uses) defines the rhythmic phrasing for dancers and musicians by accenting the beat in anticipation of the downbeat. This rhythmic placement defines the beginning of the phrase and is marked most prominently and consistently on the conga with two open tones on beat four of the measure (see Figure). Dancers often use this as a reference point for entering the music; while the footfall lands on the downbeat, Cuban-style salsa dancing begins with a tap or a kick accenting the anticipation of the downbeat. Manuel refers to this rhythmic feature as the anticipated bass and underscores its links with both *rumba* and *contradanza cubana* (Manuel 1985). The phrasing of *tumbao* and the anticipated bass figure play a foundational role in a system of interrelated rhythms and dance-music styles throughout the hemisphere that originated in the creolization of European contra dance in nineteenth-century Cuba (Manuel 2009). The anticipated bass links *salsa* with this system of interrelated rhythms and (mainly salon) dance styles that include *contradanza cubana*, *danzón*, *son*, *mambo* and *chachacha* to name a few (Manuel 2009, 1985 Balbuena 2003). The characteristic rhythm was exported and circulated throughout the Americas and circum-Atlantic appearing in Argentine tango and US ballroom styles among others (Manuel 1985, Chasteen 2004, Thompson 2006). For this reason the dance-music

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<sup>58</sup> Not all dancers use *tumbao* as a reference point. Many use the melody or a idiosyncratic sense of time to organize their dancing.

analyzed in this chapter may be best understood in terms of two dimensions captured by the term *salsa cubana*. On the one hand, the dance-music is part of a transnational phenomenon; on the other, it is part of a particularly Cuban tradition of popular and social dance that in the broadest senses reaches back to the nineteenth-century.

A style of female solo dancing developed during the 1990s, referred to as *despelote*; its movements emphasize waist, hip, and flexible torso and tended to be highly eroticized. Today, *despelote* has been adopted by both men and women and incorporated into both *salsa cubana* and other popular styles of dance such as dancing to *reggaetón*. To dance *salsa* with *despelote* can also mean dropping the handclasp on the montuno to dance independently. Balbuena notes that there is a figure in *rueda de casino* (a style of *casino* danced by multiple couples in a circle) called “el despelote” (Balbuena 2003). Not everyone incorporates *despelote* into their *salsa* dancing, and several men explained how they would do things to provoke their partners into such a display.

Contemporary styles of *salsa/casino* have been shaped by the prevalence of professional dancers in the social dance scene in Havana (Balbuena 2003). Styles tend to use polyrhythmic movements, refined control/coordination of body movement in terms of beat placement and the systematic organization of movement, and facility with numerous styles that serve as ornaments to the basic steps and figures. Metric placement and repertoires of steps also distinguish professional/standardized performance practice. Cuban-style dancing attends with precision and care to the music and its rhythms, and ornamenting with other styles may be done in accord with rhythm and other musical elements. Finally, not all participants share or participate in all of the sub-styles of *salsa* dancing and the generational differences are pronounced. In particular, styles that use

*despelote* and *columbia* are regarded by some as distasteful and vulgar. Many dancers use stylistic quotation of popular, folkloric, and salon dance styles to ornament and enrich their dancing.

Dancing *salsa cubana* allows individuals to experience a sense of self and connection with another individual in several culturally valuable ways. Both professional and recreational dancers describe this aspect of the dance-music. Professionals tended to use the term *concepto* to describe the particular sense of self in performance roles. Ways of describing the experience of self associated with dancing are often couched in terms of a sense of naturalness of the context and the activity (I was born to do this), of an experience of direct contact with an inner essence, psychological reality, or spirit, and of the uniqueness of self expressed through shared cultural expressions (“I am [like] Changó” or “I link a lot of different dance styles to make my dancing unique”). Among the most prominent expressions of self in social dance are expressions of gender roles and romantic relationships.<sup>59</sup> In some sub-styles ethnicity/race and nationality become foregrounded (see comments by Valdespino, Bárbara and Elías). Less explicit but equally important, dance permits expressions of individuality and exteriorizations of a psychological interior and a general sense of well-being. Yeny Dalman, a professional dancer and singer who began at age 16 dancing at the Tropicana, now in her 50s, works with *Oba Ilú* explained: “when one dances there is something very spiritual inside the person... you bring it out with dance...” (Dalman, 4/23/11). She went on to describe how

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<sup>59</sup> Some dancers commented on the quality of relating and attention between partners in feedback interviews with regard to its interpersonal quality. E.g. “I would never want to be with such a clown.” Some couples, felt the need to express to me that much of the dancing I witnessed was “wrong” or “bad” in that it did not project a proper relationship between the partners. E.g. it was vulgar.

she expresses her passionate and even violent nature through dance. Elías a middle-aged recreational dancer explained that:

I was born to dance. I am, what they call in Cuba, a *farandulero*. Dance. Party. Music. I like music to dance to it. And I, without drinking, I feel like I've had three bottles of rum (Elías and Bárbara, 7/12/11).

Many recreational dancers like Elías and his partner Bárbara underscored the importance of dance in creating a sense of well-being and enjoyment of life. Bárbara, an elementary school principal, explained that:

It's a form of entertainment, pleasure, a way to escape your problems and relax your body, a form of exercise... it connects me with a part of my personality that is very happy ... it takes me out of problems ... happiness is fundamental (Ibid.).

Her partner Elías elaborated:

I don't know if you can say this but there's a lot of burdens here in Cuba, a lot of problems, a lot of need... as a drunk might let go of this by drinking, Cubans dance ... dancing turns your mind green ... they call me *puro* [a man over forty] because they see my physical appearance, but I dance like a child... I don't have a fancy title or a trade but I [can] dance (Ibid.).

*Salsa* or *casino* as many Cubans refer to it, also expresses individuality as well as ethnicity and nationality. For women, the expression of their individuality tends to be oriented towards their partner and takes the form of adapting to his style, not losing the pulse of the musical time and maintaining the basic step. Bárbara stated simply, "I don't have any special steps." Her partner, Elías, on the other hand explained very clearly how he projected his individual style:

It's a traditional dance but I mix ... to get my steps you have to know ... I dance *casino* and jump to *son* and jump to *bolero*, and jump to *rumba* ... women who have danced with me have said 'you make changes with your feet that aren't easy' ... Do you have some music there? (ibid.).

Valdespino, who has experience working with foreign *salsa* dancers, explained:

When I dance *casino* I go more for elegance than complexity.... I always try to feel what I am doing. To make a show, to move my feet, to also do a step or a gesture from *columbia* while dancing *casino*, I like those sorts of things. Many people with knowledge of *rumba*, *guaguancó*, *columbia*, and all of this, use lots of steps and combine and I think it gives another flavor to *casino* (Valdespino, 3/24/11)

Part of the reason dancers incorporate steps from *rumba* and other distinctly Cuban dances such as *son*, *danzón*, and even *chachacha* was an awareness of the dance's transnational context. The presence of foreigners raised the issue of Cuban national identity. Perhaps recent growth in tourism has accompanied other more far reaching transformations in society and political ideology. Bárbara expressed:

Wherever there is a Cuban and you see him dancing, you know that he's Cuban. They're dancing *casino* all over the world today but each has his style and wherever there is a Cuban you know he Cuban... it's an inborn identity (Elías and Bárbara 7/12/11).

Elías added "it's a stamp ... if I dance next to a Puerto Rican and I mark the same steps it comes out different, even better" (ibid.).

Regarding the particularly Cuban style of dancing *salsa*, Valdespino explained it in terms of distinguishing and claiming the dance for themselves.

The problem is that there are many, many styles and every place or every country where this dance has become strong has added its grain of sand. In New York, in Puerto Rico it seems that to differentiate themselves they have added their little bit. That is the difference. Maybe they dance on another beat. What I see is that foreigners have the opportunity to take classes with many teachers, Cubans, New Yorkers, or maybe there's a European who has learned in Puerto Rico or Venezuela or learned in Miami and for them it is easy to nourish themselves. Since that is not so easy for us... and many of the people who know *rumba* and so we try to enrich ourselves, perhaps not with so many variations and figures but with the body movement. There is always something that we bring to it, a little more flavor. ... the body movement: there we bring a little, we are a little ahead. We try to create something that is strictly speaking our own over what ...

something is born ... that in other places something changed and something was added ... we try to enrich the dance and ourselves (Valdespino 3/24/11).

His comments seem to link expressions of identity with body styling. He distinguishes those who know *rumba* from those who only dance *casino* or *salsa*, perhaps implicitly returning to the racial distinctions drawn within the Cuban nation through dance styles including *son* and *rumba* (see Chapter two).

*Salsa cubana*, like European social dance from the Waltz onward, revolves around the independent couple configuration. Traditionally consisting of a man who leads the dance and a woman who follows, this configuration embodies a myriad of cultural habits and beliefs about gender roles, sex, sexuality, and romantic relating. Dancers understood the performance roles of partner dancing to be related to gender roles and romance, some even referred to *salsa/casino* as an erotic dance. Dalman was direct in stating that “a person can also fall in love through dance, through the movements” (Dalman 4/23/11). Martínez likewise regarded his *salsa* dancing as an extension of his masculine virility, expressed in his identification with *Changó*, an *orisha* characterized as a womanizer (Martínez 4/3/11). In a more practical sense, men indicated that one of the reasons for dancing *casino* or *salsa* was to “*ligar una chica*” or to pair up with a girl (Martínez 4/3/11, Rosado 6/28/11, Madden 6/29/11). These beliefs were couched in terms of the utter naturalness of the roles. Iván Valdespino, a professional folkloric performer who also works as a *salsa* dance instructor, explained:

In the social dance position, the man leads because he commands in the relationship of the couple. I don't know if it is a thing due to *machismo* or taboo, but he always imposes his body-language, his *hombria* (manliness) when dancing. The woman always tries to be feminine, to move her waist, and the man tries to make a show of how he is dominating the situation (Valdespino 3/24/11).

The naturalness of the roles was self evident and expressed in the dynamic of who conforms to whom in the dancing couple as well as who solos, and how. Mainly, the dynamics and values of male-female relationships were expressed in the physical interactions of the dancing couple.

Professional dancers as well as recreational dancers were concerned with the sense of relationship implied by couple's dance. This was both a matter of romantic ideals and dance technique. Dalman explained that even in her professional roles there was a fated quality to the relationship:

In couple's dancing, first of all you must know one another and relate to one another... there must be an interrelation ... For example I have a partner, almost everything that I have done on TV and in the movies has been with him. We have something. They always tell us, "you and you"... the interrelation between us makes it flow" (Dalman 4/23/11).

Similarly, Martínez approaches dancing in terms of the relationship, referring to the enactment of the romantic couple as the *concepto* of social dance. Martínez commented on how the quality of the relating affects the quality of the performance:

She saw the camera she departed from the *concepto*... She was demonstrating her qualities as a professional dancer. I could have demonstrated my eccentricities as well but I had to live a relationship with her. I was working on the basis of dancing, not to do things alone" (Martínez 7/29/11).

Fundamental to the naturalness of these roles and ideas about relating, the couple configuration involves the cultivation of specialized awareness of the partner.

Several dancers referred to this as mutual understanding (*compenetración*) but also as a kind of flow of energy or chemistry. Valdespino explained that for him part of the goal of dancing was for both partners to "flow with energy" (*brote de energía*, literally to sprout or to have an outbreak) (Valdespino 3/24/11). Bárbara explained the importance of chemistry between the couple for a good performance.

There must be chemistry, because if I dance with him and he doesn't give me the inspiration to dance, I dance inhibited. But also, if I am dancing dryly, he would get worried and inhibit himself. There needs to be chemistry. ... There are those who look at their feet when they dance. No! I dance with him looking at his face. I look him in the eyes. I already know what step he's going to give me next. We have this mutual understanding (*compenetración*) (Elías and Bárbara 7/12/11).

Elías added to this by saying that “the chemistry comes from here [*he points to his heart*] she dances and feels the music as I do. This happens. It's like the flu” (Ibid.). Like Elías and Bárbara, Dalman described the sense that something is transmitted between partners:

It is not just how you move your arms and feet. Your face, hair, your gaze, the mouth. The look in your eyes, it speaks... I realize that this person is transmitting something ... (Dalman 4/23/11).

Although they describe it in slightly different terms, dancers value the chemistry that exists between the couple.

Dancers recognize that while the sense of flow may be better with some partners, it is also something cultivated through visual, tactile, auditory behaviors. Dalman and Bárbara both emphasized the gaze and looking into the face and eyes of a partner as well as synchronizing in time and adapting to a partner's style of movement. Some male dancers explained that they always sought out an understanding of what their female partner liked and sought to accommodate her. Bárbara insisted that she always conformed to the style of her male partner, and that this, furthermore, was the correct gendered behavior.

Professional and recreational dancers agreed on the naturalness and incalculability of romantic connections in the context of dancing. The belief that dancing operates as a natural expression of romantic and gendered relationships was articulated again by Valdespino, when I suggested that a man leading the couple might do something to

influence his partner's experience of the situation. He began by cutting off my question before I finished:

[interrupting] ... No, no, no. First... its not just to take someone to dance one piece and then try to ... You dance. First you enjoy... you begin with basic movements, a basic turn ... I think that as you go building more confidence so ... You have fun. There are those who will not permit you to dance *despelote* because the lady will not allow it. There are those to whom it does not matter because they are single or because they don't care and after some good *casino* when the band's *montuno* is ... calls to the dancer, the couple releases [their embrace] and to dance *despelote*, to move the waist... it happens, and its over, and [back to] normal. It could be that they dance *despelote* and nothing happens; it could be that they like one another. It could be yes, or it could be no (Valdespino 3/24/11).

Seemingly out of nowhere, he raises the issue of *despelote* and then ends saying that "it could be yes or it could be no" implying that the result of such a dance interaction could imply a reciprocation of the man's advance to the woman. Perhaps like the initial stages of dating behavior in our society, the first indications of interest are often articulated through non-verbal interactions.

Thus many dancers expressed similar notions about the naturalness of the identities enacted and performed through *salsa cubana*. Overall similarities in ideas about gendered roles and romantic potential were shared. The distinctions made by dancers identified them first as Cuban and further as Afro-Cuban or black through the quotation of popular and folkloric styles. Dancers indicated that they cultivated a specialized mode of attention to their partner, which felt like the transmission of energy or communication and which facilitated the flow and pleasure of the experience.

For Martínez, like the others, couple dancing is intimately linked with his sense of masculinity, his sense of public reputation and persona. Traditional values about gender and romantic roles articulated by the interviewees reflect these broader issues of identity.

A cross-generational perspective can be gained in the descriptions Martínez provides of his father's dancing and its importance in orienting the younger man to the significance of dance from an early age.

### **Performer Bio: Miguel Martínez**

Miguel “Chino” Martínez was born on October 6, 1964 in Havana and grew up in the suburban neighborhood of Marianao. Small, closely set houses line the streets where one must walk for at least ten minutes to get to a



Figure 47 Miguel Martínez.

transportation through-fare. Marianao lies between the central urban zones of Havana and the outlying suburbs, which hosts the art schools, ISA and ENA, on the grounds of what was once the Havana Country Club. In Mariano, the residential neighborhoods are dotted with cinemas, bakeries, and vendors selling bootlegged cds. Copies of new musical releases, domestic and imported, vast compilations of mp3s by top line artists, and videos collections of *reggaetón*, hip-hop, and R'n'B are available for about \$1.20 USD each. A great fan of hip-hop, Martínez brought such discs to our lessons for me to copy for him on my laptop.

The front porch of Martínez's childhood home accommodates a few simple chairs and a weathered bench where his father sat reading the newspaper the first time I visited. Small and wiry, he peered at me from behind his copy of *Granma* and murmured something about the mis-representations of Cuba in the US press. Retired from a long career as a machine tool operator and an instructor in a vocational school, the elder Martínez had also been a celebrated social dancer in his youth. Dancing with his wife

Braulia, they inspired their son's love of dance and fed his aspiration for a professional career. For the younger Martínez, dance has been more than a profession; it has been the all-consuming pursuit of his adult life.

When I first interviewed Martínez, just before we began our long stint of dance classes together, I asked him how he got started dancing, to which he replied:

Dance came to me through my parents. They both danced very well. I noticed how people admired good dancers and I liked that. I saw my mom and my dad dancing. I learned from both of them. They danced very elegantly. Even though I was young, I knew what I liked and what I didn't like (Martínez 4/3/11).

He described watching his parents dance and having a sense of interiorizing the feelings and details of their interactions. Furthermore, he indicated noticing early on that dance was also a way of developing a broader reputation.

My Dad, for example, he was very crazy when he danced. He would improvise something when people would least expect it. He would do some funny step and people loved him for it. So from there, I went capturing all these little details and interiorizing them within me. I kept on doing that until I started developing myself in the world of art, in my case in folkloric dance. This brought me to the point where I could do it on my own. It was deep inside me (Ibid.).

Not only did his father dance with flair, joy and affection, but he also won prizes and earned stature as a dancer. Hearing Martínez describe his father's reputation and achievements as social dancer, the value and social importance of dance became clearer for me. It resonated with the passion and nuance that I saw in the dancers I met at *La Tropical*, or the *Disco Temba*. The male dancers I met described their quest for a personal style. Men explained developing a personal style. Women explained how they followed well, kept time, and adjusted to their partner's style. Men and women displayed their subtle sense of interaction, expressing social values through their bearing and relating.

Martínez explained that he approaches his own dancing and teaching through his memory and idealization of his parents' relationship as they danced it. More than once he referred to couple's dancing as "living a relationship" (Martínez 7/29/11), the way that couple's attend to one another and understand to the point of anticipating each other's movements. He explained:

What I learned from them was the natural ability – the grace. The movements. The smile they always had when they danced. The joy they gave to the dance. There was something special that they gave to the dance. Mutual understanding (*compenetración*) (Martínez, 4/3/11).

Not only did Martínez inherit his parents' grace and love for dancing, but his particular affection for *son*, in its historical expression, seems to be linked with his family's background. When we watched *son* in montages of old footage I had on my laptop, Martínez mused about being born in the wrong era. He lamented the loss of the style and elegance after observing the way that people danced *son* in an earlier time. We listened to recordings of Arsenio Rodríguez not available in Cuba. He narrated the ways the music worked together with the dance. Although *son* was established in Havana several decades before his parents arrived, it is strongly associated with the eastern province of *Oriente*, where they had grown up.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, because of its status association with the rural provinces of *Oriente*, *son* was the more acceptable than the salon dances of exclusive social clubs and commercial entertainment industry. After the revolution, folklore was promoted and dance bands were treated more "neutrally" (Moore 2006).

They danced *son* because we don't have the light of folklore in my family. But you know how it is in Cuba, everyone believes but its just that in my family its

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<sup>60</sup> *Casino*, which Martínez also mentions, refers to a style of social dance associated with the *Casino de la Playa* a private social club in Havana. The style of dance dubbed "*casino*" developed in the 1950s; it has different timing and body styling than *son*. Both words are used in their specific meanings as well as generically to refer to popular couple dancing

not like the other families that are really inside the religious thing. What I saw was popular dances – *son* – that was what I saw. When there was music for *casino*, they danced *son* (Martínez 4/3/11).

His comments underscore the implicit divisions drawn by cultural activities like dance. Among these are: divisions between Havana-born natives and those who have migrated to the capital which persist to the present day, and class divisions between genres such as *son*, which emerged as a popular dance in the 1920s, and those like *casino*, which arose in the 1950s in exclusive social club settings. Although he claims that “everyone believes,” in the context of the popular renaissance of Afro-Cuban religion in recent years, there are tacit divisions between “those who know and those who can merely watch,” as Martínez put it. Professional folkloric performers include artists, *creyentes* (believers), and ritual experts.

In his youth, Martínez took his first organized dance classes at the local *Casa de Cultura* (Cultural Center) where he learned Latin American folk dancing in *aficionado* classes. As he grew older he began studying modern dance, “with a much more serious attitude, more responsible, and mature.” It was then that Martínez discovered that he enjoyed the technical training of modern dance, which from then on marked his personal style. He joined an *aficionado* group called *Manallao* at the Cultural Center of Marianao (*Casa de Cultura*). Despite a period of time spent in amateur training, even with the prestigious Modern Dance Ensemble of Cuba (*Danza Contemporánea de Cuba*), Martínez like others who came from the amateur training considers himself self-taught.

I am self-taught, no one can say that they taught me. I am no one’s disciple, but I went through a period of training as an *aficionado*. At first, I was involved in modern dance, I wasn’t yet involved in this world of folklore. ... We were a good group and the assessors were quite good. They helped us learn a lot. We reached the top among the groups in Havana (Martínez 4/5/11).

The group attained the highest level of classification for an aficionado ensemble. They participated in competitions and performances at the municipal and provincial level. As Martínez gained experience and training, he found himself in the position to join the Modern Dance Ensemble of Cuba. He had started training with them in the classes they offered for *aficionados*. He said however, that he felt “really drawn to folklore” and at this critical juncture sought out a way into the world of folkloric performance.

I liked modern dance but it wasn't what I truly wanted. Folklore really called to me. So, one of my friends from the group knew another group. He invited me to meet them. Soon after that I started working with them in the Old Havana [neighborhood]. That was how I started in this world of folklore (ibid.).

With this contact, Martínez found his way into the folklore scene. It was at this point, in his late teens that he began to master the repertoire.

Performances by the CFNC were popular, well attended, and provided a real alternative to commercial popular music. During the 1970s and 1980s folklore achieved the popularity and importance as “revolutionary culture” that its founders had aspired to.

At that time the *Conjunto* [CFNC] was excellent. In that era it was like saying “Los Van Van.” The *Conjunto* was the Van Van of folklore.<sup>61</sup> When they had a concert, the theatre was full and people were left waiting outside. They handed out a synopsis and the show lasted from 8 to 10 pm with an intermission. I was a sponge at that point. I went everywhere to see the Conjunto. I saw them four days in a row and I always tried to learn I learned a little thing from every performance (ibid.).

He explained how the CFNC set the “gold standard” of folkloric performance. “In the first generation, the performers came not from schools but from their traditions ... they were monsters; each one has his particular specialty” (Martínez 4/5/11). Immersed in this

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<sup>61</sup> Los Van Van are one of the most famous, internationally known, and long-lasting popular dance music bands in Cuba. They were formed in 1969 and continue to perform and tour today, despite the death of their founder, Juan Formell on May 1, 2014. They are referred to as “the Rolling Stones” in Cuba due to their epic history in popular music and longevity in the music business.

world of spectacle and performance he explained, “I wanted to become recognized in the world of folklore” (ibid.).

Unlike professional training for dancers in conservatories and schools, amateur groups did not provide the same breadth of study. Folklore required familiarity with the music and song repertoires of Afro-Cuban religions. The field of folkloric performance included those trained in schools as well as performers who came from religious families. Martínez supplemented his training with a program of self-directed study. He described how his skill for observation and imitation served him well and played an important role in his development as a dancer:

I learned a lot on my own. To dance you have to understand the music and the song. It is not dance for the sake of dancing. I had to adapt my ear to the *toques* [rhythms] – they were all the same to me at first. In this company they taught us how to dance the *orichas* [Yoruba deities/ancestor spirits]. I left the rehearsals practicing and dancing until my mom bought me an album of folklore. It was *Oba Ilú*, Jesús Pérez, the *tambolero* [batá player] of *Danza Contemporánea*.<sup>62</sup> I spent all my time practicing. I would go to a folkloric show and capture something and come home to practice it. I went wherever there was dancing – if there was a *tambor* [fiesta de santo] I went I watched and I practiced what I learned. That was the way I did it. I went collecting details from here and there. I was a fanatic of the *Conjunto* [CFNC] in the time of Goyo [Hernández] and all those people who were monsters (Martínez 4/3/11).

While some dancers had access to the repertoire either through their families, or through conservatory training, Martínez had neither. Rather, he adapted his modern dance training, and his natural ability to observe and imitate, to supplement his training through careful observation.

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<sup>62</sup> Jesús Pérez, for whom Hernández named his ensemble, played the batá drums for the Modern Dance Ensemble of Cuba (*Danza Contemporánea*). First led by Ramiro Guerra the ensemble was trained in modern dance techniques following Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham among others. Along with other instructors and choreographers, Guerra with the accompaniment of the traditional Afro-Cuban musicians, developed a uniquely Cuban style of modern dance.

In addition to the concert-type venues, the CFNC held a weekly event called *Sábado de la Rumba*, where performances were more accessible and the atmosphere more casual.<sup>63</sup> For aficionados, *Sábado de la Rumba* offered the rare and valuable opportunity to perform for a broader public. Few people took the challenge; they had “stage fright” in that time, Martínez recalled. Participating, he explained, however, could increase one’s reputation: “If someone got up to dance with the *Conjunto* [at *Sábado de la Rumba*] and did a good job that day, they received recognition.” So, in order to publically solidify his reputation as folkloric dancer, Martínez eventually performed at *Sábado de la Rumba*. He explained how he debuted himself at the event. “I came out of nowhere. One day at *Sábado de la Rumba* I presented myself. They said, ‘who is this kid?’ He dances well” (ibid.).

Martínez however did not gain easy acceptance. His interpretation of *columbia*, and perhaps of folkloric dance more broadly, was at odds with prevailing performance practice. According to official institutions in Cuba, folklore constitutes the essence of national culture and as such was taught within specific parameters. These were enforced through the use of evaluations of individual performers and professional ranking, as well as through the use of assessors on official projects.<sup>64</sup> Interpretations of folkloric styles

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<sup>63</sup> Later more public venues began hosting weekly folkloric events, including Callejon de Hamel and La Peña del Ambia at el Hurón Azul, UNEAC. These venues were different from the concert-style presentation in that they were participatory public events.

<sup>64</sup> The role of assessor is evidenced on Hernández’s cv which lists it as a job that he has performed on numerous occasions. Manuel (1990) and Moore (2006) each describe the plantilla system used in part to rank performers and peg them to a salary level. On several occasions I witnessed the evaluations or juries that were given by performers in Oba Ilú. A committee of folkloric professionals arrived at the rehearsal space for the evaluation of one of the dancers. They gave her commentary and criticism in feedback noting even some of the cosmetic details of her self-presentation that she should alter for professional performances.

were kept within parameters that conformed to core values.<sup>65</sup> Although Martínez understands *rumba* as Cuban culture, he also regards it as black music that is linked with other black popular music, in particular artists from the US.

I gave myself the task of learning *columbia*. In truth, I used American movements too, because all of the black culture around the world comes from the same source. I was watching Michael [Jackson]. Those dances are truly African; they come from our roots. When I was watching Michael dancing, I see *columbia*. If you take away the backdrop – what you see when Michael Jackson dancing is *columbia*. Mute the music and put another kind of music on and you will see. Turn off the music and put me dancing there and put on a tune by Michael with the same tempo? It will fit. What you need to keep [the same] is the tempo (Martínez 4/3/11).

Martínez, like many Cubans, is a great fan Black music from the US. He experiences diasporic identity through his access to US hip-hop and R'n'B in particular. He furthermore explained to me how there were times when spent hours on end listening to US radio broadcasts using a parabolic antennae before imported music became readily available as bootlegged CDs. Identifying with *columbia* as a kind of black popular music, rather than a form of nationally unique and ethnically Cuban music, Martínez touched a nerve in those entrusted to assess the quality of folkloric performance.

His interpretative stance was rejected. “So, then they put me down because I wasn’t with any of them” (Martínez 4/3/11). Despite the conflict around his style, Martínez achieved his goal and turned professional noting that this occurred when he eventually joined the dance company, *J.J.* Martínez earned official recognition through his A-level classification and salary as a dancer and has not stopped since. Martínez

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<sup>65</sup> For example, the government promoted folkloric rumba but downplayed its existence as a commercial genre. It also acknowledges three main sub-styles (*guaguancó*, *yambú* and *columbia*) but not *rumba-abakuá*, which arguably constitutes another sub-style.

acknowledged that he changed his style to appease them, but even so he did not achieve the kind of recognition he sought. He recalled,

It still hurts. The film [a movie that was made by a European filmmaker about Cuban folklore] I told you about. I was in that because [the director of the group] was paid to put us in the film. They did not even mention me. That is a thorn that has stayed with me (Martínez 4/5/11).

Clearly, Martínez has been recognized as one of the top folkloric dancers, evidenced by his inclusion in a select group. While his colleagues recognize his skill and excellence, full recognition has remained elusive for him.

Technical training, despite his insistence that he is self-taught, was an important basis for Martínez as he sought a professional career and it remains central to his style and method. He is systematic and analytical in his approach to teaching. He applies the principles of anatomical analysis, rhythmic independence, and coordination to popular and folkloric styles alike. His own technical approach also became a defining feature of his personal style. When I asked him what kind of creative stamp he brought to folkloric dance, he explained:

My own originals? For example, I have a seated movement, I didn't give it a name but it comes from the mimetic dance "Cómo se empina un papalote" [How To Fly a Kite]. This is not *guaguancó* exactly. Besides that it is very difficult. You have to have strength, and it takes technique. Many people in the rumba groups are from the street (*de la calle*) and don't have training. ... This move is from Chino (ibid.)

With his modern dance training and disciplined practice routines, Martínez has achieved a level of mastery that positions him uniquely between popular and staged genres.

Furthermore, his dedication to dance has resulted in not merely a professional career but recognition among his peers.

Martínez describes his aspirations as a dancer not simply in professional terms but rather links this with the broader notion of his individual reputation and social being. In our initial interview, he explained, “I always dreamed of being in this line... I always wanted to be known as a good dancer” (Martínez, interview, 4/3/11). He uses the term *bailarín*, denoting a professional as opposed to an amateur or recreational dancer, but links this with wider notoriety. Dancing, and dance-music more broadly operates for Martínez as a way of projecting a public persona and situating himself in the world. He explained the sense of personal affinity he felt for certain roles, such as the *orisha Chango*. He prides himself on the technique that he has mastered, distinguishing himself from other *rumba* dancers with his refined style.

Martínez made clear the links between dancing and his fundamental sense of self, as a physical being, and a psychological or spiritual reality. On the one hand, his corporeal existence offers one set of defining parameters:

I would have liked to be a ballet dancer but I have flat feet. I probably could have been good at ballet, I feel something for that ... everyone needs to recognize their limitations. I need to do something that fits with my physique ... my thing is folklore, my physicality is folklore... I could also be a popular [music] dancer (Martínez 4/3/11).

This aspiration, recalls the blending of high art technique with popular forms that characterizes both Martínez’s personal style as well as the Cuban socialist era aesthetic’s more broadly. In popular music ensembles such as *Los Van Van* and *NG la Banda*, conservatory trained musicians apply their sophisticated musical training to popular forms creating hybrid styles that burst with energy and emotional realism. Martínez went on to explain certain techniques in modern dance and ballet training that he cannot do and

underscored how his body is shaped for folklore underscoring the naturalism and even biological determinism with which style can be seen.

Dancing, for Martínez entails both a fated quality and a revelatory sense of making manifest his own essence or spirit. In fact, he explains the experience of performing as the bringing forth of a spirit:

Many people tell me, you have a spirit and when you are dancing he is with you... all of this energy when you dance columbia or when I dance whatever other thing ... I get this energy ... this ... Now, I am not me. I go out onto the dance floor and I try to deal with this enveloping ... it feels pulled to me, identified with me, it fights with me, and feels contented with what I have danced... when I don't feel it... the spirit was not with me that day (Martínez, interview 4/5/11).

In this way, Martínez regards dancing as a way of revealing an inner essence of self, which translates into his reputation in the social world at large.

Martínez describes his aspirations as a dancer not simply in professional terms but rather links this with the broader notion of his individual reputation and social being. In our initial interview, he explained, “I always dreamed of being in this line... I always wanted to be known as a good dancer” (Martínez 4/3/11). He uses the term *bailarín*, denoting a professional as opposed to an amateur or recreational dancer, but links this status with wider notoriety. Dancing, and dance-music more broadly, operates for Martínez as a way of projecting a public persona and situating himself in the world. Throughout his career his interpretations of dance have situated him clearly, if not controversially within the world of folklore. From his identification of *columbia* with Michael Jackson, to the projection of his sexuality through his performances of *Changó*, Martínez negotiates his identity through dance. When asked which genre best expresses his creativity, Martínez is immediately clear and explains how he is identified with

*columbia*: “I like it the best because it’s a dance it allows for everything. And after that, *Changó*.” He continued:

I believe that I am *Changó*. I see myself identified with *Changó*. ... Like all Cubans I feel identified with *Changó* and this too is tied to *columbia* (4/5/11).

Perhaps referring to the expression of virile masculinity that ground both the *oricha* *Changó* and the performance of *columbia*, Martínez underscores the importance of these archetypes for “all Cubans” indicating that they are socially and culturally valuable roles. Indeed, other professional performers recognize his natural fit for the role. Yeny Dalman commented on the natural quality of character revealed through folkloric dance. She explained:

There are dancers for as much as they would like to dance *Changó*, they cannot do it as well as others can because it is not their temperament. They dance all the steps, but you realize that something is missing in their face. I’ve seen it. For, example Chino [Martínez] this boy, he gives it that something *sexy* [she speaks the word in English]. But he also gives it that thing of a proud man. The other one they have now, he dances but there is nothing in his face, nobody at home there (Dalman 4/23/11).

Martínez, like other performers regards the roles he is best at as an extension of his inner essence or psychological landscape. He describes *Changó* as a “womanizer, who likes parties, the man who makes love better than all the rest, and he who rules over the music at a party, over the dance, over the drums and life itself” (Martínez 4/5/11).



Figure 48. Miguel Martínez performing *Changó* with Oba Ilú at the Hotel San Alejandro, Marianao. Havana, Cuba. April 2011. Right to left in the back: Gregorio Hernández, Amauri Fernández, Silvio. Seated: Korominas (playing the *Itotele*), Kiki (playing the *Iyá*).

In the dance-music performance analyzed in this chapter, Martínez negotiates his identity as a powerfully attractive male partner through his creative performance of *salsa cubana*. With an extraordinary female dance partner, and Martínez leading, he shapes their dancing in ways that are both romantically and aesthetically satisfying. Although, he admits that one would have to ask her to truly know how she experienced the dancing, for him their compatibility as a couple was practically a foregone conclusion. He first and foremost describes the experience saying, “Anyone would think that we are a couple who had danced together all of our lives” (Martínez 7/29/11). Like Dalman who exclaimed, “People fall in love dancing!” Martínez articulates a degree of continuity between his

lived experience of romantic roles and desire and the experience of couple dances (Dalman 4/23/11). This particularly pleasurable and creative performance provides insight into the confluence of dance roles and identity as lived experience.

His partner in the performance was the most well-matched with him in terms of her skill and style of dance.<sup>66</sup> She too is a professional dancer and *salsa* dance instructor in courses organized for tourists. In contrast to the other partners he had that night and on another occasion (at a different venue), he praised his partner's dancing unequivocally:

She has a very refined style. Very elegant and her movements are well synchronized. She has mastered the dance well. She has the *concepto* of the dance. She dances in a refined way, her movements are well defined (Martínez 7/29/11).

The characteristics of her dancing, described in technical terms, contributed nonetheless to both the ease of their connection and to his enjoyment. When he finished describing the quality of her dancing, I asked, "And how did you feel?" He replied, "Very good. Very comfortable..." Shortly after that, I noted that several times she imitated him exactly with her movements. He responded by saying "Of course." So again, I asked what it meant, to which he replied, "that there's chemistry, even though this is the first time I have danced with her" (Martínez 7/29/11). This sense of being in the flow together, the chemistry he experiences with this partner creates a sense of intimacy upon which his identity negotiations take shape.

Furthermore, Martínez indicated that the performance was not merely a professional or artistic exercise, but that it was in some sense a kind of romantic experience.

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<sup>66</sup> I do not know the dancer's name. Although she agreed to be videotaped, she declined to be interviewed.

Relishing the sense of the romantic liaison, he went on to describe his romantic encounter in terms of both the public dimension of its spectacle and in terms of their identities as a well-matched couple. In his comments he not only lauds her physical beauty but also twice describes her in racialized color terms. First, he refers to her as a mulata, and later describes her as “achinada” (lit. Chinese-like, or a person descended from a black and a mulato):

Girl! You know she’s pretty, she has a fine body, she’s a good dancer... Imagine it! In public, everyone is already enjoying themselves watching the couple: Chino and China... because she is Chinese-like too (ibid.).

Thus his dancing provides a way of building a reputation as a womanizer. Martínez seems to derive a certain degree of pleasure from the sense that it is an illicit conquest. The encounter operates on another level as a highly romanticized encounter in which he experiences the compatibility with this dance partner in idealized terms. The broader dancing public witnesses the spectacle of their dancing, which testifies to their compatibility as star-crossed lovers. In describing the encounter, he refers to his partner by the feminine form of his own nickname, calling her China when he recounts the event. Stating that she is “Chinese-like,” he makes a pun on his nickname, which also refers the shape of the eyes. Their similarity of expertise and almond-shaped eyes makes them a thorough match, a perfect union or marriage. Thus he creates a romantic drama through this performance, one in which he enacts the role of a seducer, a Don Juan figure, who loves ardently and truly but remains faithful to none (Stolcke 1989). As such, he occupies culturally valuable roles, known as a good dancer and irresistible male partner, which he achieves by conflating his role as a desirable partner with that of a master dancer.

## Performance Analysis

Next, I present an analysis of Martínez's creative performance of *salsa cubana* in which he negotiates his identity as a folkloric dancer and powerfully attractive romantic partner through his masterful dancing. Dancing with a partner whom he met on the dance floor, Martínez blurs the distinction between techniques of dance and romantic intimacy.

He uses two strategies to shape the performance, one of miscommunication and seduction and the other an embedded strategy, which reveals his identity as a masterful folkloric dancer. Here, I draw on linguistic analysis of verbal seduction, which categorizes it as a form of miscommunication. In the first strategy, which I refer to as 'mis-leading,' Martínez deliberately entices his partner into sexual feelings and expressions in the manner of a seduction. Expertly woven into his dancing, Martínez employs disruption, ambiguity, trickery if not deception, all typical of seductive behavior (Claid 2006, Green 2001, Mortensen 1997). Similar to verbal acts of seduction, Martínez engages in "alternation between flaunting and revealing slightly, in order to reduce interpersonal distance, increase intimacy and avoid rejection" (Ciceri 2002). He uses his role as leader of the dance couple to provoke his partner and elicit emotional responses, enticing her into



Figure 49. Miguel Martínez and dance partner at 1830, July 15, 2011. Havana, Cuba.

sexual feelings and their expression in dance by altering standard performance practice and building the performance around his personal agenda. He builds tension and resolves it by deploying tactile cues, controlling proximity, using danced gestures to insinuate physical attraction and provoke erotic feelings, shifting styles of dance, and repeatedly challenging his partner to perform solo passages. The main pattern of his mis-leading takes shape with the alternation of styles, in which he establishes a sense of connection and intimacy in the traditional closed position of partner dancing, only to sever that connection by switching to a solo style of dance. Calculated to elicit responses and intensify the emotional arousal, his dancing reveals an ambivalent dynamic of empathy and othering at the heart of seduction. His mis-leading elicits emotional responses from his partner evidenced by the ways she adjusts her dancing to meet the demands of his creative alterations.

Seduction has been defined in both negative and neutral terms, taken to mean “to be led astray” or simply, “to be led somewhere else” (Roof 2007). Seduction can also be understood as part of courtship and romantic/erotic practices. In either case its use reflects a conscious strategy to elicit particular emotional responses such as interest, attraction, and desire in another person or to entice them into sexual activity (Greene 2001, Ciceri 2002, Roof 2007).<sup>67</sup> Particularly salient to the performance seems to be the way in which [it] is used to enable oneself to come out of anonymity and to get noticed and chosen” (Ciceri in Anolli et al 2002:103). Seen in this light, the dance performance

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<sup>67</sup> Historically seduction has been, however, also a matter of law due to the use of physical force, violence, or as a matter of breach of marriage promise and it thus has implications for class status and identities such as gender and race (Gale 2011, Wade 2010, Stolcke 1989). This is not to trivialize that but to examine how aesthetic practices like dance-music are thoroughly imbricated with the scripts of emotion and sense-making.

as part of a public display combining values of romance, gender roles, and couple interaction provides a site for Martínez to garner his reputation and persona on his own terms. They begin dancing classic *casino* but their performance takes another route, which leads through the erotically explicit style of *despelote* and then to a final phase of open-ended improvisation distinctly unlike the social dance with which they began.

Martínez uses a second strategy of embedding different styles of dance into the couple performance of *casino* to further his identity negotiation. By ornamenting the basic couple dance with two sub-styles of *rumba*: *columbia* and *guaguancó* as well as *son* and even other styles, Martínez creates a hybridized style of *salsa* that is unmistakably Cuban and shared with others in particular communities of interpreters. As Valdespino explained, the use of folklore serves dancers as a way of making the dance “our own” in the context of a transnational scene (Valdespino 3/24/11). In one sense the embedded strategy reflects the tendency of Cuban dancers to listen for rhythms and quotations of musical style as cues for their choreographic choices. On the other hand, this style of dancing locates him within a community of *salsa* dancers who distinguish themselves through their knowledge of Afro-Cuban folklore. In this manner, such ornaments articulate both ethnic and racial identities in the context of a transnational community of *salsa* dancers. Furthermore, I argue that shifting between styles supports Martínez’s arousal of emotion and elicitation of responses from his partner. It offers his partner choreographic resources for responding to his withdrawal into solo dance styles. In particular, the quotation of style draws on the more antagonistic and explicitly erotic *rumba* and *despelote* styles.

The performance was recorded on July 15, 2011 at a restaurant called *1830*, which hosts dancing on its outdoor patio two nights per week. Overlooking a small bay and contained by a high wall on the street-side, the patio and garden adjoining the restaurant convert into an open-air dance club with a low stage, two seating areas, and a small sculpture park.<sup>68</sup> The entrance fee is \$3 CUC, making it one of the least expensive tourist venues for salsa dancing, as typical charges run between \$5 and \$35 CUC. There are venues largely reserved for Cuban citizens that charge the entrance fee in national currency (*moneda nacional*) such as *La Tropical* or those that have no entrance fee such as the *disco tembas*, sponsored by recreational centers and the public dances on the Anti-Imperialist Plaza during the summer carnival season. More expensive venues have air conditioning, feature headline acts, and run into the early morning. By contrast *1830*, which people refer to by its first two digits as “*mil ocho*,” closes at midnight, features the house band *Sierra Maestra* on Sundays, and a DJ with a low-key floorshow on Thursdays. Tour groups of salsa dance enthusiasts from Europe, Canada, and the US frequent the venue after their officially sponsored dance classes during the day. The crowd typically includes foreign tourists as well as professional dance teachers and other Cuban nationals. It was also located conveniently down the hill from a house in Vedado, where I rented an apartment for much of 2011, making it a convenient location for filming Martínez. It is a venue in which he was “at home,” evidenced by the number of people (both Cuban and foreign) in the crowd that he greeted as friends.

The couple begins with an exposition of *casino*, the style of dance used for dancing *salsa* in Cuba. He leads unobtrusively and elegantly as the couple begins in

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<sup>68</sup> The sculpture park in the garden at the restaurant *1830* is featured in the video of *Agua Pa' Yemaya*, a 2010-11 hit song by Elito Reve y Su Charangon. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24wj2wXhdBA>

standard fashion with a series of basic steps and figures [0:00-0:57]. Dancers begin this way in order to get synchronized in time, and to get a sense of each other's style; both of these are especially important when dance partners meet for the first time. The sense of connection and synchronization will serve as the basis of their performance. Timing is important for all dancers, but Cuban style *salsa* dancing tends to be particularly attentive to rhythms, stylistic quotation, and other musical elements. Coordination in time facilitates a number of habits and modes of attention by which the couple establishes the mutual understanding or *compenetración* that produces a good performance.

As experienced dancers, Martínez and his partner had no trouble maintaining the timing of their dancing, even though, the first song they danced to was not appropriate to the style. Rather than *salsa*, the first tune they danced to was *reggaetón*, which has become popular in Cuba in recent years, just as in many parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>69</sup> In this case, however, the song is by the Paraguayan group, Parner. It is not particularly good for dancing *salsa*, due to its rhythmic feel, which Martínez noted in the feedback interview. In the performance, it is evident that he still listens carefully and engages actively with the music. At 0:36 there is a dynamic and rhythmic change in the music. The texture thins as percussion, which subdivides the beat, drops out; the vocal line seems to slow and the dynamics drop. Martínez and his partner finish a figure and he brings her into a tender but more formal embrace of closed dance position reflecting the change in mood. He maintains a respectful distance between their bodies and raises their right arms up as in *son* or *danzón*. They go from the casual and light-hearted open

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<sup>69</sup> It is not uncommon to hear *reggaetón* in *salsa* venues. Musicians in Cuba, often structure *reggaetón* around *clave*; some bands even record some songs in both styles or more commonly blend the two types of dance-music, making it common and rather easy to dance *salsa* to *reggaetón* music.

position, characteristic of *salsa* dancing, to a tender but slightly distanced embrace appropriate to salon styles of social dance. Showing the subtlety with which he responds to the music and revealing some of the range of styles and subtle variation he commands, Martínez presents himself as an elegant and gentlemanly partner. Shifting the mood of their interactions with the adjustment of their posture, he foreshadows the use of stylistic quotation to evoke different emotional palettes of couple interaction.

Seeking to establish trust and confidence, he leads firmly but softly, maintaining respectful space between them at first. He explained during the feedback interview:

“What I do here, I give her a little confidence so that she feels relaxed,” (Martínez 7/29/11). He continues:

Then there is... the gentleness with which I control the dance. I control the dance, because the man always leads. He determines the sequence of turns. So, the gentleness with which I take her hands when I make the turn. We're enjoying but there is a certain control from my part that is very gentle that she is absorbing. There is something that is reaching her... that she is understanding... something that I am communicating to her with the very touch of my hands (ibid.).

He underscores the importance of tactile sensations, both ones produced intentionally, which guide the sequence of turns and figures, and the non-conscious response he expects in his partner from the quality of his touch. This helps shape the dynamic between the dance partners and informs the shared significance they establish between them. His gentleness is meant to give her confidence in the sense that, it sets the mood of relating between them and encourages her to relax, assuring her that he is not rough or aggressive.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Keeping the distance between them allows her to relax and encourages her to connect more empathically with him as they dance. It is typical that only intimate partners touch freely, despite the use of eroticized movement, especially in styles like *despelote*, rules of engagement on the dance floor require control. As professional dancers, they are both particularly adept at both expression and the coordination of physical

During the feedback interview he commented on the first section of dancing: “See how she smiles and enjoys herself because she is not worried that she will get lost or confused [i.e. lose the beat or get out of time]. The smile is important because you can understand the situation immediately” (ibid.). On the one hand, he attends carefully to her responses, receiving feedback and begins to understand her as a dancer. On the other, he underscores that she is secure in her timing, referring to not getting lost. He indicates how mutual observation or attending carefully to a partner is an important dimension of social dance. Establishing mutual understanding requires the coordination of several sense modes, including musical sound and timing, touch, and observation, which have motor as well as visual and auditory dimensions. The process of attending to a dance partner is a specialized kind of focus, which some dancers refer to as the “communication of the couple” as well as, *compenetración* (mutual understanding).

In the dance, she responds sensitively to his lead, taking a classic feminine role looking to him for cues rather than initiating her own interpretation of the music. Traditionally, exhibitions of solo dance have been the domain of men in Cuban *casino* and *son*. Women do not solo so much as ornament the dance with sinuous body movements.<sup>71</sup> One of the most important characteristics of the women’s role is to maintain the proper timing and basic step no matter what the man does. Martínez and his partner display refined sensibilities of coordination and synchronization, which contribute a growing sense of rapport and ever increasing sense of intimacy. Having his own

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and emotional control, but attentiveness to a dance partner is important in order to pick up the cues and create a more flowing performance.

<sup>71</sup> There are variants of son/salsa that involve free improvisation for both men and women, notably the NYC *mambo* style, evidenced by 1950s footage of Millie and Cuban Pete and other Palladium dancers.

agenda, Martínez soon establishes a pattern of disrupting their connection by switching to a solo style of dance.

After approximately one minute [0:57], the DJ's voice enters over the song's choruses and Martínez again shifts the tone of the dancing. He tosses away her arm to indicate a full turn and when she comes back around, Martínez has his back to her. This constitutes his first overt alteration to the *casino* style dancing that has been proper and elegant thus far. To be certain in social dance and in *casino* or *salsa* the leader never turns his back to his partner, unless it is for the briefest instant during a full turn or spin. Here, Martínez departs from his role as a partner and leader and dances in the male-only solo style of *columbia*. This first solo only lasts for approximately twelve seconds, but it is just the first in what will be a series of disruptions. Although the length of time may seem short, the disruption is significant. He dances "against the time" (*contratiempo*), and abandons his partner with whom he has established a sense of trust, flow, and relaxed elegance. He breaks their sense of connection by turning away and dancing against the accented beats of the music. At first, she does not take his cue to solo but rather watches, perhaps looking for opportunities to mirror him. As in verbal seduction, Martínez makes his actions ambiguous drawing her to him by insinuating closeness but following this with breaks in the communication/interaction.

In the feedback interview he did not acknowledge this as a disruption, but rather as giving her an opportunity to solo. He notes, "I let go of her a little so that she can dance too and do her little thing freely so that she doesn't feel as if I'm on top of her all the time and trying to stand out all by myself" (Martínez 7/29/11). At another moment he does acknowledge that the solos are meant to be provocative:

I let her go a little and then I provoke her with some movements of my arms or legs to let her see that I... I'm in front of her so she can see and get the whole situation and she can do her thing too. With me she does her thing very elegantly, keeping the sense of time very carefully. Keeping the *concepto* of the dance. Keeping the steps in time with the music and using the basic steps of *son* (Martínez 7/29/11).

He refers to the solos as “un pequeño reto” (a little challenge) for her and notes that they create space for her to demonstrate her skill as a dancer. He stops short of saying that he breaks away to dance provocatively for her but indicates that he dances at a distance giving her a full view of him. Knowing that solo female styles are generally eroticized, her options for solo material also further his agenda, as will be borne out later in the performance. Furthermore, other male dancers who use a similar style of incorporating *columbia* into their *salsa* do not necessarily elicit elaborations from their female partners, as was the case with the couple of Raúl and Miriam who dance regularly at *La Tropical*. An accomplished dancer, Raúl often took elaborate solos but his partner (and girlfriend), with whom he danced exclusively, maintained the classically feminine role of dancing the basic step with small embellishments, until such time that he took her hands again to dance together.

Martínez elicits his partner's performance by causing some level of unease. The solo passages constitute a challenge emotionally as well as technically since they disrupt the flow and connection that makes good couple dancing. Martínez composes his solos from steps and gestures a male-solo form, which is not typically in a women's repertoire of dance movements. Not only it is not surprising that she cannot mirror him in this style, neither can she take cues from this dancing until he returns to the couple formation. This effectively breaks the connection between them and leaves her with a decision to make

about how to respond. At first, she maintains the basic step and then on subsequent solos she begins to elaborate. By the third time he does this they begin to coordinate their solo dancing [3:41-3:51]. Tricked again and again, she eventually begins to resist his lead [5:06, 6:27]. He uses a free spin to get out of partner position, since it is one of the figures in which the couple drops both hands and her back is momentarily turned. She comes out of the free spin, as normal, with her left arm up, expecting to bring her hand down on his right shoulder. In the meantime, he has moved out of position and is soloing with his back completely turned to her [4:55]. Now familiar with his pattern, she resumes soloing on her own. At 5:06 he gives her the downbeat to resume their dancing, but instead she takes a free spin, delaying the cross body lead that reasserts their couple dancing. He has to get into position again and rather than placing her hand into his outstretched up-facing palm, he is required to take her hands to do a cross body lead in order to reinitiate the close-contact couple dancing. As her responses to his disruptions evolve, it can be deduced that his solos provoke an emotional response, which catalyze the learning response (D'Aquili and Newberg 1999, Rizzolatti et. al. 2001 Juslin and Västfjäll 2008). She adapts to his style and her varying responses reflect that process of learning.

When he returns to dance [2:31] from the second solo break, Martínez draws her into closed position to reassert their closeness and to reestablish the synchronization of their dance interaction. The embrace of closed position is reassuring and eases the tension of his *contratiempo* performance, since closed position is the most basic and automatic movement of the dance. This reestablishes not only the flow of their dancing. After the uncertainty of the disruption, this creates a sense of security and connection as the next

song begins. They dance the slightly more complex figures of *casino* for approximately thirty seconds.

Next, Martínez initiates a series of complicated figures. This segment [1:13-2:30] exemplifies the sequencing of figures in a progression from basic to complicated. In addition to more complicated figures, he also moves her hands around their heads in rapid ornamental gestures. This action constitutes another sort of challenge to his partner in the sense that it would be possible to become confused and to either lose the beat or get an arm tangled in one of the turns. Neither of these happens. Of course, his partner sails through the arm-twisting figures, as she is an expert dancer herself. The further complication of the figures may slowly intensify the arousal of their performance. As described by D'Aquili and Newberg, arousal of the autonomic nervous system occurs with an overload of stimuli sources (D'Aquili and Newberg 1999). This way the tension of arousal builds, as their dancing requires allocating more attention to bodily movement. Eventually, according to the neuroscientists quoted above, stimulation of the ANS may result in an overflow, giving rise to the language-less experience of flow.

These more complicated figures also draw the couple into closer physical proximity. During this series of steps, Martínez begins to close the breezy, comfortable space of simple turns and basic figures in open position. In one figure, he catches her arms beneath his [1:40] and in another he initiates a type of “walking turns” characteristic of *son*. In this case, he places her open-palmed hand on his torso [1:42] underscoring the dynamic of physical contact and control at the center of Cuban styles of couple dancing. This creates yet another way by which the passage brings greater physical contact by the sequencing of figures.

Next, the couple maintains their dancing with their respective internal sense of pulse and timing over a noisy cross fade. The next song begins at 2:04, after the rough sonic transition; it is a remix of 50Cent's *Disco Inferno*. Here the hip-hop song has been remixed with additional instrumentation including percussion (conga and timbales playing their respective parts) and piano *guajeos*, the rhythmic accompaniment of arpeggiated chords characteristic of *salsa* music. These tracks make it appropriate for their dancing and give the song a somewhat different feel from the original version.

Being a relatively sparse arrangement, *Disco Inferno* accommodates the additional tracks quite well. The tune's original bass line has hits on the first and third beats of the quadruple measure, leaving space for the *tumbao*, which marks the beginning of the phrasing on the fourth beat of the measure. The open-tone eight-note figure on beat four, played on the conga drum, organizes phrasing for dancers and musicians alike. Furthermore the original arrangement has only one other percussion line, which consists of claps on the backbeat. Typically the accented pattern on two and four, which characterizes blues, R'n'B, rock, and pop music in the US, is considered contrary to the polyrhythmic feel of *salsa* and time-line based music. In this case however, due to the syncopation of the vocal line and the minimal instrumentation, the song is more flexible in its rhythmic structure. Once the strongly rhythmic piano *guajeos* and *tumbao* of the conga drum are added, the backbeat merely reinforces both the open-tones of the *tumbao* and the first hit of the two-side of the clave. The clap that falls on the three-side of the *clave* is relatively unobtrusive because it aligns with the *timbales*.

Since the singer consistently syncopates the vocal line, especially during the verses, they fit well with the piano *guajeo*, although they take on a different feel in the

new rhythmic context. Importantly, Martínez noted that because he identified with the song and knew it well, it contributed significantly to his enjoyment of the dancing. He also commented that he included a move that he learned from watching hip-hop videos as an acknowledgement of the musical style. His identification with this remix is important in terms of the tensions and dissatisfactions in his professional career with his personal interpretations of *rumba* and its relationships with black popular music of the Atlantic diaspora (Gilroy 1991). Recall his comments regarding his view of Michael Jackson and the rejection of his style as “breaking” (a style of hip-hop dancing that began in the 1970s but became popular in the 1980s) rather than Cuban folklore. In this sense, the nightclub dance-floor allows him artistic freedom to create a hybrid style that engages folklore in a conversation with both Cuban popular dance and diasporic black popular music. In this sense, ethnic/racial identification may be understood as central to the negotiation of his public persona, gender, and romantic agendas.

The seduction begins to gather momentum during *Disco Inferno*, approximately one minute into this song and three minutes into the overall performance. As they come out of a series of the complex figures, Martínez does something completely surprising when he leaps out of the last turn [3:02]. This move is totally out of place – it is not a dance move of any kind – his partner is visibly startled but continues moving with the music’s steady pulse. Commenting on this moment during the feedback interview, Martínez commented with mischievous pride, “she was not thinking this crazy man was going to do that there!” (Martínez 7/29/11). He went on to explain that the surprise was meant to heighten her awareness of his touch. This action exemplifies particular kinds of deviations within performance, which operate by triggering the startle reflex rather than

provoking affect through an alteration of syntax (Juslin and Västfjäll 2008,). Both types of alterations, along with generic features of dance-music such as repetition and complicated passagework, contribute to the arousal, often referred to as aesthetic experience. The startle effect heightens sensitivity by arousing the fight or flight mechanism of the autonomic nervous system. For the individual who experiences the rush of the startle reflex, the increased sensitivity can shift how she interprets their interactions. Heightened sensitivity seems to trouble the ground of interpretation: the situation is no longer “normal” but rather open to multiple interpretations and a reflexive stance. Even if the difference simply means that ambiguity, or possibility of a “double entendre,” becomes heightened, the dancing takes on significance that is out of the ordinary. His jump also charges the interactions with incalculability. By placing her on alert, he heightens the tension and destabilizes her interpretation of the dance interactions.

Soon the dynamic of their dancing changes, and she demonstrates a change in attitude towards his solo passages and the “little challenge” that they pose. About forty seconds after his jump, he gives her a free spin and they solo together for the first time [3:41]. This time she seems prepared for his *columbia* solo and responds with a few steps of *guaguancó*, a different sub-style of the same genre. He affirms her response by staying close to her. This time Martínez does not give her his back for any great length of time. This marks the first time that she joins him in the quotation of folkloric styles and initiates a more heterogeneous phase of dancing. These quotations of other styles of dance suggest alternate modes of couple interaction. *Guaguancó* involves a competitive and flirtatious edge between the dancers, in which mutual provocation constitutes the norm. This marks a transformation of the dynamic between the dancers as leader and

follower, one in which shifting dance styles contributes to shifts in tension and its resolution. Each style has a somewhat different *concepto* or sense of self that is linked with the dance's performance role. The characteristic mood and role invoke an array of movements, gestures, attitudes, and emotions that comprise the forestructure of understanding related to that genre. While they may not be fully invoked as in a performance of that genre, here they are moods and subject positions, which are juxtaposed in a stream of improvisations.

Martínez uses different figures in the *casino / salsa* lexicon either to break away from the couple formation or to reassert its dominant movement paradigm. The concerted movements of the couple and his breakaways create tension and resolution in the course of the performance. As the leader of the dance couple, Martínez guides their concerted movements and chooses when and how to exit the couple dancing and transition into solo dancing. Over the first three to four minutes of dancing, she acclimates to his pattern of withdrawing to solo dance. She responds creatively with her own solo dancing and quotation of folkloric styles, which receives his affirmation. He continues to surprise and trick her, maintaining his unpredictability. In one such instance, she comes out of a free spin, expecting to find him facing her, as he should be if they were dancing *casino*. [4:51] Her left arm is raised in the correct position to come down onto his shoulder. Instead she discovers that he has moved away during her spin. Such an alteration can be understood as a deviation from the syntax of the dance. Its disruption of expectation arouses an emotional response, which in part triggers a learning process. Based on the importance of predicting the outcome of sequences of movement and interactions, the disruptive experiences prompt integration of other possible outcomes and responses.

The introduction of solo dance, and specifically *columbia*, disrupts the relationship of leading and following. It introduces other choreographic resources of the *rumba* genre more broadly. His partner responds with the same genre but a different sub-style and performs some *guaguancó*. This introduces a very different paradigm of couple dancing and relating. In *guaguancó*, the partners dance independently of one other, in this game of flirtation and seduction, that can be both humorous and quite competitive. The dance entails independent movement and agendas, which contrasts with the concerted movement of the social dance couple formation. It contrasts with the paradigm of interaction articulated by *salsa* or other forms of social dance, which enact the ideal of romantic union. It is worth noting that social dance enacts concerted movement and the illusion of union, but simultaneously places the woman in a position vulnerable to aggression. Furthermore, social dance cultivates obedience, since the woman's role is to follow the man's improvised lead. The independence of the couple of *guaguancó* is much more sharply defined by seduction, flirtation and antagonism of two separate individuals. As dance-music is so closely linked to feelings of romance and erotic emotion, the styles of dance movement can be considered as engendering different moods and styles of couple interaction. Confident in her dancing and familiar with the style, she picks up on the stylistic quotation, which he affirms by soloing with her [3:41-3:51, 5:15-5:24, 6:54-7:21]. These passages satisfy both the edgy feel of *guaguancó* in the context of casino and the original orientation of female partner in *salsa* and casino, which is to "stay with" the man. As noted by many women interviewed, they regarded their role in casino as keeping time, not getting lost, and conforming to the man's sense of time and style of dance. In this sense, the broader roles of the dance are still satisfied/satisfying.

Now with growing familiarity and a widening palette of styles of interaction, she seems emboldened. Quickly, he turns away again to solo, but rather than remaining in place and keeping the basic step, she takes an extra quick step towards him [5:16]. He affirms her advance by moving up very close to her and then responds with his first overtly sexual movement, circling his pelvis suggestively. By her response, an observer can understand that he has crossed a line of propriety, as she circles away from him. He is too close and obviously provocative. Nevertheless, Martínez explained to me that women “love this kind of thing,” an attitude shared by other male dancers (Martínez 7/28/11, Madden 6/28/11). I asked for clarification, to which he replied: “The erotic movements. Girls like them a lot” (Martínez 7/28/11). In one sense, his comments indicate that such movements are reliably affective. On the other hand, “erotic movements” refer to the movement of hips and pelvis, which are characteristic of feminine movement. In this sense, it is possible that women respond on some level to the apparent similarity of a partner’s movement to their own characteristic movement.

In the context of motor neuron theories of action understanding, the direct-matching hypothesis suggests that one’s personal repertoire of motor actions underlies the degree of arousal experienced in action observation (Calvo-Merino et al 2005, Rizzolatti, Fogassi, and Gallese 2001). Men’s hip circles can be understood as arousing in at least two ways. First, such movements mirror feminine movement back to women. Such imitative interaction has been shown to facilitate smoothness of social interaction in the context of gendered and non-gendered social behavior; it appears to be a fundamental principle of social bonding (Iacoboni 2009). In verbal interaction, imitative movements are part of the process of seduction (Claid 2006). Second, the pelvic circle articulates

attraction in some sense. Its erotically suggestive kinetic image, however, also may evoke, if non-consciously, the direct-matching of movement patterns associated with the pleasurable encounter of sex, with its emotional valences. In the explicitly romantic/erotically charged context of a nightclub and popular music, such gestures indicate attraction, authentic or performative, they have affective value.

Here she begins to mirror his solo dancing [5:32] and the tenor of their *casino* changes. After the last exchange he takes her into closed dance position and performs a spinning step. The spin, borrowed from *son*, closes the respectful space between them that he had carefully maintained at the start of the dance. He follows that with a lift picking her up off her feet and balancing her on this thigh continuing to spin them around. [6:27] The incremental effects of the moves and exchanges as in the last example draw them to greater physical proximity and to seemingly greater intimacy. In this moment they experience their first full body contact.

Their dancing climaxes with the woman's performance of an improvised sequence in the style of *despelote*, an erotically charged style of solo dance.<sup>72</sup> [7:02] The passage of *despelote* lasts approximately twenty-two seconds but fulfills the goal of the seduction. Recalling how Valdespino described the provocations of men to their partners trying to get them to do a little *despelote* on the montuno (call and response or B section of the *son-montuno* song form commonly used in *salsa*), affirms the effectiveness of their

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<sup>72</sup> The style arose during the 90s in the context of the dance-music referred to by some as *timba*, see Perna 2005. Originally performed by women in the context of outrageous displays, such as the *subasta de la cintura* (auction of the waists), women were invited onto the front edge of the stage to compete in their ability to perform certain movements with colorfully descriptive names like “el tembleque” (coconut pudding) and others, while a dance band played. The repertoire of movements was also associated with a style of salsa dancing in which women broke away from their dance partners and formed a line on the dance floor performing eroticized movements. Eventually *despelote* was appropriated by men in the context of their own stage shows, such as those by *La Charanga Habanera*. *Despelote* contributed to the rise of *reggaetón* and the styles of dance used for *reggaetón*.

seduction strategies and we must assume their attractiveness as partners, either dance-wise or romantically, as the two are conflated here. She enacts a sexually desirous, if not explicit character or mood, in her dance movements. Interestingly she chooses a song most resembling *timba*, the Cuban style of salsa from which *despelote* emerged, for her solo. Entitled *Muevete* (2005) by the New York City-based salsa-reggae group Dark Latin Grooves, the song is most like *son-montuno* of traditional salsa and rumba of the four songs they dance to. Furthermore, it has the tempo increase characteristic of *timba* and *rumba* that accompanies a build-up of energy during the *montuno*.

The *despelote* emerges out of a passage of *guaguancó*, in which Martínez's partner reverses the roles of leader and follower. She comes out of a *guaguancó* step in which she mimes the back and forth movement of the long skirt traditionally worn in folkloric performances of *rumba*. Then she does something new: she initiates a dance step, which she then teaches to him. [7:23] Next she turns her back to Martínez and begins a side step but unlike *guaguancó* she backs up into him. This is the position for *despelote*. Glancing over her left shoulder to catch his eye, he takes the cue and synchronizes with her movement. Martínez remains largely obscure behind her and moves in cut time to her faster pace focusing intently on her dancing and taking in the show. She bends backwards as if reclining horizontally and hovers in a wide legged stance for six seconds undulating from her knees to her neck. The movement of the undulating spine and independent torso used in this heightened moment are the technical basis of Cuban modern and folkloric dance training. They have been incorporated into *timba*, *despelote* and *salsa cubana*, in part through the participation of professional dancers in teaching and performing. Using strength and control, she re-contextualizes

these characteristic movements in this popular dance-music setting. As she rises up from her horizontal position they resume their movement as a couple for a moment, while maintaining the *despelote* position of woman in front. They soon transition seamlessly back into *salsa* dancing.

This passage evidences her audacity and command as a female dancer as well as proves the success of Martínez's seductive agenda and prowess. Over the course of dance he has provoked her to this impassioned response and somewhat bawdy display. She performs her *despelote* as much for the broader public as she does for Martínez, in a sense rewarding him for being a pleasing partner. As Valdespino notes, some women do perform *despelote* and others do not (Valdespino 3/24/11). Men enjoy provoking women to this but for many women it remains distasteful, despite having been canonized in the "official" vocabulary of *salsa cubana* and *casino* (Balbuena 2003). Its performance is not necessarily an expression of erotic emotion directed expressly at the partner, as noted by Martínez and Valdespino, but it is an enactment and expression of arousal related to the dance-music performance. Moreover it locates a woman in social space due to the fact that its performance as part of *salsa* especially in that that particular venue is rare today.<sup>73</sup>

In the third and final section of their dancing, Martínez changes his dancing from the relatively strict alternation of solo and couple dancing to a fusion style. Rather than the sequential quotation or alternation of styles, he begins to mix movements together in the same passage or step. For example, Martínez [10:14] holds her hand in a modified open position, but performs a movement from *columbia* with his torso and legs. This willingness to be present to her as a partner while using the style of dance that he had

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<sup>73</sup> What I notice was more common was that some people just dance *despelote* style, which is common for *reggaetón*, and in which case it has a somewhat different array of dance moves for the couple.

previously used to turn away from her suggests a new mode of interaction. Now the dancers operate in more fluid and improvised mode. Without the structuring effect of specific styles and their performance practice *casino* and *despelote*, they must attend carefully to one another in order to stay synchronized. It becomes noticeable that at times they lose their sense of synchronization because they are no longer operating in any particular style. In one instance, the couple performs the *casino* figure *ocho* (eight), in which each one turns to the same side.<sup>74</sup> As they emerge from the figure [10:28], they are not synchronized. Their interactions seem to show that without the paradigms of couple interaction, established by different styles of dance, it proves harder to be synchronized in time.

This fusion section reflects another level of control and modification of the movement scripts associated with couple dancing. As the two have moved through several phases in the arc of their performance, they have performed a succession of styles of partnering and soloing. These include the exposition of classic *casino*, the violation of the expectations of the genre leading to arousal of emotion, and then modification and learning. She learns his pattern of altering the couple dance with solo dancing at times apart and at other times together. Finally, their dancing climaxes with her performance of the risqué solo female dance style of *despelote*. The juxtaposition of a variety of styles of couple's interaction and enactment of the traditional male/leader-female/follower organizing principle has been pushed to the breaking point. Having just danced in a series of relatively clearly defined roles organized by style, it seems that "fusion" section does not quote styles of dance but rather breaks down or segments their movements and

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<sup>74</sup> Since, they start out facing, they move in opposite directions. If we imagine looking down from above, their movement would make the upper and lower circles of a figure eight [8].

postures. So whereas stylistic quotation may juxtapose sequential passages or choreographic phrases, the fusion-style dancing no longer leaves the syntax of the dance intact. It breaks down and reorganizes the dancing at smaller unit-levels of movement and gesture. This process involves reflecting on the passages and movements so that the dancers can then feel and recombine the segments of known action sequences.

In contrast to standard *salsa* dancing, their performance has a dramatic arc. First they alternate between figures and closed position, with very short breaks for soloing, which at first remains the province of the male lead. Then their interactions build romantic/erotic tension with increasing proximity, physical contact, as well as ambiguity and insinuation of erotic gestures. The alternation between couple dancing and male soloing gives way to soloing together as Martínez's partner learns his style. As leader, Martínez effectively heightens tension by suggesting different styles of dance-music that imply different styles of couple's interaction. In particular the style of couple's interaction in *guaguancó* leads into female solo dancing in the *despelote* style, creating a climactic moment of eroticized female dancing. After her solo, however, their dancing shifts again, and they spend more of their time soloing freely, linking these longer passages of improvisation with brief and basic *casino* figures. This final passage is characterized by more focus on the process of synchronization and less use of the fixed patterns of syntax in the different styles that the two dancers have quoted throughout the performance. The dramatic arc moves for a while towards greater physical intimacy in terms of proximity and contact, but it leads to a somewhat surprising destabilization of their roles, which requires a different kind of attention and coordination.

In summary, Martínez's creative performance can be understood as a way that he negotiates his identity as a folkloric dancer and an attractive romantic partner. By taking his alterations of *salsa cubana* as evidence of identity discourses, his strategies can be understood as modes of mis-leading or seduction and an embedded strategy that places folkloric styles of dance in relation to transnational styles of black popular music. Like the concept of footings that correspond to a subject position, differences between styles of dance-music evoke different styles of partner interactions. Unlike footings in conversational interaction, here we can observe the juxtaposition of different styles of partner interaction in relatively rapid succession as the dance couple moves from the formality of closed dance position in a gesture to *danzón*, to the bawdy seductive play of *guaguancó*. I refer to the underlying mood and movement of these dance styles as kinetic paradigms of interaction. Highlighted through Martínez's virtuosic and intertextual manner of leading, the kinetic paradigms of interaction contribute to seduction by bringing more choreographic and corresponding emotional resources into play. Encountering a partner who is not just a skillful dancer, but a professional dancer and instructor, Martínez must account for her subjectivity and agency on different terms than he might with a lesser partner or a simply domestic relationship. In this sense, her presence requires him to also stretch his repertoire of movement and performance. Demonstrating his skill as a dancer and seductive partner, Martínez negotiates his identity not only in gendered terms but articulates his heterosexual masculinity in racialized terms. For Martínez, this permits him to experience the styles of dance that for him most

authentically articulate his creativity and identity as a dancer and facilitate the projection of his persona as a desirable partner.

## Chapter 5

### Calling the Íreme to Dance:

#### Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández Ríos and community responses to creative folkloric performance

*Erume erume india abakuá, awana bakoko yamba.*

The spirit of the *abakuá* is reborn in the dance of the *íreme*. The king of Bakoko is here.  
– A song used to call the ancestor spirit, or *íreme*, to dance

*Con el baile yo demuestro que esto es mío.*

With the dance, I show that this is mine.  
– Pedrito “El Bumbo” Menocal, 6/25/12  
on dancing as the *íreme* in public.

Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández (1936–2012), famed performer and folklorist, negotiated his identity as a *de facto* public leader of the *abakuá* community and a Cuban patriot through his creative performances of *abakuá* folklore during the final years of his life. Starting with the founding generation of the CFNC, Hernández developed his role as a *portador de la cultura* (culture carrier) on the basis of his affiliation with the *abakuá* community and talent as a performer of *rumba*. Building on his long career, he eventually gained access to and participated in the institutional life of national culture. When in 2005 as part of a broader process of reform, the *abakuá*, an all-male ritual community,

were legalized, their role in Cuban culture and society shifted. Through his position as an institutional insider and member of the *abakuá*, Hernández sought to participate in the redefinition of the *abakuá* community. By altering standard performance practice of folkloric genres, Hernández succeeded in intensifying the community's public presence, and positioning himself as an intermediary between the community and institutions of national culture. He positioned himself as a *de facto* public leader of the community, expressing his patriotism through his performance of *abakuá* music and dance in public. In doing so, he intensified the community's public presence and used folkloric performance as a way to assert community ownership of the traditional music and dance.

Using ethnographic evidence, including videotaped performances, song classes and interviews with Hernández as well as feedback interviews with participants and other performers, I analyze his performances as kinetic conversations, which reflect his individual agendas and identity negotiations. By tracing the interactions and alterations of performance practice, I focus on how Hernández shapes performances in socially efficacious and aesthetically compelling ways based on kinetic performances of identity, social knowledge, and his familiarity with *abakuá* ritual performance practice. The outcomes of these performances not only establish Hernández as a *de facto* public leader, but also intensify the public presence of the community and open space for the establishment of a new way-of-being in public for members of the *abakuá* community.

The *abakuá* have been both an important symbol of anti-colonial resistance for the socialist nation as well as the subjects of harsh repression by Cuban government until quite recently (Sosa 1982, C. Moore 1988, Pérez-Stable 1999, Brown 2003, Ayorinde 2004, Moore 2006, Farber 2011). Comments made at the first Congress on Education and

Culture (1971) described the *abakuá* brotherhood as a “focus of criminality and juvenile delinquenc[y]” reflecting longstanding stereotypes as well as conflicts with the modernizing projects of the socialist government (Sawyer 2006:67). Regarded as an impediment to full integration in society membership in the *abakuá* community was considered to be an anachronism that would disappear with progressive modernization and increasing class equality (Sosa 1982).<sup>75</sup>

The *abakuá* have emerged prominently within a broader religious renaissance that bloomed during the 1990 and 2000s. The upsurge in popular religion has origins in the reforms of the late 1980s. Among Afro-Cuban religions the first wave was the legalization of the religious community of *regla de Ocha* (also referred to as *Santería*) through the formation of the Yoruba Association of Cuba in 1991. Later, reforms led to the creation of the Organization for Abakuá Unity (*Organización de Unidad Abakuá*, OUA) on December 21, 1999. The organization represents the decentralized, radically egalitarian and yet highly hierarchical community to the government (Torres Zayas 2011:13). Subsequently in December 2005, the Ministry of Justice legalized the *abakuá* by including the organization in the official Registry of Associations in Cuba granting permission for their meetings and celebrations (Cosano 2007, Pérez 2011, ICA conference presentation). In the context of historical shifts in Cuban society the *abakuá* are being reinterpreted and repositioned within Cuban society. In order to incorporate the *abakuá* into this broader social reform movement, they have been reinterpreted as a popular religion. This was ultimately successful but not without debate among members

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<sup>75</sup> Ayorinde provides a discussion of the Office of Religious Affairs that illuminates the active stance the government took in managing religious groups in part through research that yielded negative portraits of participants. (2004)

and others. Their dance-music has been gaining public prominence in the context of this religious renaissance and broader processes of transformation and redefinition of the nation. The community has undergone dramatic expansion of membership and a transformation of its position and significance within Cuban society, but prejudicial attitudes and discrimination still remains (Torres 2010). These far reaching changes were among the processes of redefining the Cuban nation from one based on political community to one defined in terms of its unique history and culture that transpired during the crisis of the 1990s (Hernández-Reguant 2009).

In his role as a prominent folklorist and performing artist, Hernández was one of the artists and intellectuals that were granted elite status and privileges during the 1990s and 2000s as the state undertook many bureaucratic and ideological changes. Evidenced by authorization of his performing ensemble *Oba Ilú* in 1995, as well as the permission to travel and earn money abroad, awards and certificates, as well as a steady stream of official engagements for his ensemble, Hernández had access to and support from official quarters.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, his access and success had been built in no small part on his affiliation with the much vilified and (until 2005) illegal *abakuá* community. As a folklorist and elite artist, Hernández was well positioned to add his voice to the processes redefining the Cuban nation.

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<sup>76</sup> *Oba Ilú* was formed in 1995, the same year as many of the *rumba* and folkloric ensembles groups that are now fixtures in the Havana scene, such as *Rumberos de Cuba*. At first the group worked on private contracts with individual venues, such as hotels that catered to tourists; later they were awarded a government *planilla* and performers receive regular salaries in addition to the option to earn supplementary income (*un estímulo*) for private contracts (Fernández, personal communication). In addition to the group, Hernández was able to record a cd (*La Rumba es Cubana Su Historia*, 2001), which Moore notes was not possible for many artists under the old system (Moore 2006). He also received numerous awards including a 2008 Cubadisc award and recognition of his service and lifetime achievement.

Analysis of recent performances reveals how Hernández pursued individual agendas and also acts as an advocate for his community. He draws the *abakuá* into a more central place within the Cuban nation as well as solidifying his position as a culture broker or intermediary between official institutions and groups within the Afro-Cuban community. By altering standard performance practice, Hernández made the public performance of *abakuá* liturgy aesthetically compelling and politically efficacious. By inserting ethnographically correct performance elements into the stylized folkloric projections of national culture, he appealed to those in the audience who knew the liturgical repertoire of the community. He also bolstered public prominence of the community by extemporaneously incorporating individual members from the audience into his performances. In so doing, Hernández opens public space to this largely invisible community through his roles as a performer, and ensemble director.

The chapter begins with a brief description of the framework through which I analyze and interpret Hernández's performances. Next, I describe the context of the performances starting with Hernández's professional career as a folkloric artist. I take note of the role of *abakuá* folklore at earlier points in his career and discuss the methods and training of *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* where he established his career. Next, I describe the history of the *abakuá*, their relationship to folklore, the community's music and dance, and give evidence of their contemporary significance through the words of performers and initiates with whom I worked. Then, I lay out Hernández's agenda in the context of the popular religious movement and the transformation of public space in contemporary Cuba. The second half of the chapter examines two examples of Hernández's creative performance of *abakuá* folklore and the identity negotiations that

shape them. The conclusions reflect on the political power Hernández garnered through folkloric performance, however relative and ambivalent. I explore the implications of his performances for the transformation of the *abakuá* community and how participation in these public performances shapes a new mode of being-in-the-world for initiates.

### **Kinetic Conversation: the community of interpreters**

In this chapter, analysis of Hernández's creative performances of *abakuá* folklore illustrates the position and operation of the community of interpreters in kinetic conversation. Here, the community of interpreters refers to individuals joined in a social network around the performance/interpretation of a type of dance-music.<sup>77</sup> Members of a community of interpreters share a history of interactions by which they learn a set of dispositions and tendencies to perceive and respond to the dance-music in particular ways. Some of these are consciously articulable, while others consist of non-conscious responses including emotions and some stylistic features of movement.<sup>78</sup> Such stylistic features of movement, when viewed by other participants in an event can be understood as a kinetic performance of identity. Kinetic performances of identity, like emotional responses to dance-music are indicative of a *habitus*, a way of being or habitual state of the body (Bourdieu 1977).<sup>79</sup> Acquired “unawares” and experienced as natural, such habits

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<sup>77</sup> Describing the emotional reactions in musical situations as the result of a community of interpretation, Becker writes: “emotional reactions in musical situations are experienced within individuals, but the musical expressions that trigger those emotions are framed within historically determined, culturally inflected complex of musical conventions known to musicians and musical listeners alike. The unit of musicians and listeners can be thought of as a ‘community of interpretation’ (Fish 1980), a single biological process operating within shared musical histories (2001:146).

<sup>78</sup> Bourdieu's concept of *hexis* is useful for the non-conscious dimensions of this. And the category of *concepto* describing the character roles enacted by performers describes the conscious dimension of this.

<sup>79</sup> Defined as a “a system of dispositions.... the result of an organizing action... a way of being or habitual state of the body” habitus refers to socialized subjectivity (Bourdieu 1977:214, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:126).

of movement and related emotional responses arise in response to the collective enactment of a musical event (Becker 2010). Kinetic performances of identity locate individuals in relationship to a community and are central to the processes of arousal and experiences of shared significance produced by dance-music events.

Some shared qualities of interpretation, like kinetic performances of identity, make individuals distinguishable as members of a community of interpreters in the context of dance-music events. With regard to *abakuá* folklore, initiates distinguish among those who know ritual performance practice and those who have learned the dance-music in the context of professional folkloric training. An experienced *abakuá* dancer expressed a common sentiment among the initiates I interviewed, “I know instantly if a man is an *abakuá* from the way he dances” (Fernández, 3/21/11). Such differences as the correspondence between dance movements and song texts and the sequencing of movements, among other features mark initiates to other initiates solely on the basis of their style of dance. Furthermore, the quality of movement of a dancer trained with technique differs from that of an initiate who just learning the dance in the ritual context. Such kinetic performances of identity reflect the histories and social locations of participants in an event. Since movement routines are linked with emotional responses, they are important to the experience of self and to the arousal of the nervous system central to aesthetic experience (Sheets-Johnson 1999, Becker 2004, Molnar-Szakacs and Overy 2006). Initiates to the *abakuá* brotherhood experience particularly intense emotional arousal in dance-music events because in ritual context the dance is associated with the ecstasy of spirit possession (Menocal 2/14/11, Fernández 3/21/11, Torres 5/11). Reflecting a shared ontology or way of being in the world, kinetic performances of

identity result from the operation of supra-individual biological processes in dance-music events (Becker 2010, Núñez 1997, 1999).

Supra-individual biological processes refer to something that “is manifested in individuals [...] but it is realized through biological processes that take place beyond the [...] individual” (Núñez 1997:155, 1999). The community of interpreters reflects the operation of supra-individual biological processes in dance-music events through a variety of non-linguistic or embodied tendencies to experience and respond to dance-music, including emotional responses and kinetic performances of identity. Classic examples of non-musical supra-individual biological processes include speech accents and epidemics. Both are phenomena that present in the individual but operate at the level of the group. Individuals do not invent accents, but acquire them and can even cultivate the ability to control them to some degree. Processes such as accents and epidemics are “biological” in the sense that they are driven by self-generating and self-sustaining dynamics. In terms of dance-music events, the shared mode of interpretation that results from interaction over time has its own self-sustaining dynamic.

Creative dance-music performances, like musical events more generally reflect the self-sustaining dynamics of supra-individual biological processes in two ways that are important for understanding how the transformation of the *abakuá* community becomes generated from within through the processes of public performance. Defined here in terms of alternations of standard performance practices, creative performances rely on processes beyond the individual agent of such creative alterations. Alterations may produce emotional responses or dance movements or both in response to dance-music performances. The movements and emotions by which individuals perform and respond

to performance interactions are part of an on-going biological or self-sustaining process. Such interaction among participants relies on these largely non-conscious processes central to the event. Since dance-music events create a social context for learning and enacting the socially and culturally valuable experiences of self entailed in the movements and emotions catalyzed by a particular style of dance, theoretically alterations that become incorporated into the *habitus* or dispositions of perception and interpretation transform the experience of self, albeit incrementally. This process of transformation is part of the self-sustaining nature of the underlying biology of the *habitus*.

Performances present an opportunity for transforming *habitus*. In discursive terms, the dance-music event requires both an interlocutor, an individual to whom the protagonist directs a performance, and a community of interpreters who share the performance practice. In this way, even solo performances operate in a system of social interaction. Members of the audience and other performers who belong to a particular community of interpreters may respond emotionally to performances in ways that shape the unfolding performance. Arousal plays an important role in such a system. The discursive process suggests that the community of interpreters may amplify or neglect to recognize an individual alteration. If amplified, an alteration may become part of a stylistic shift, and shapes subsequent identity negotiations. The concept of supra-individual biological processes locates the audience in a much more significant role than has previously been attributed to them. The audience response plays a determining role in the viability of a creative performance. If they do not respond to a creative alteration, that identity negotiation will be shut down. If they respond enthusiastically to creative alterations there is the chance that the alterations will be repeated and will become

established. This has implications for the protagonist of the performance and for the community of interpreters. With repetition creative alterations transform the set of dispositions and processes that bring forth a sense of self and a kinetic performance of identity in dance-music performances

Identity like subjectivity has a kinetic dimension that is shaped through intersubjective or interactive processes and supra-individual or collective processes. The ways that individuals move in social space and in interaction with other individuals forms a fundamental part of the experience of self and identity. Furthermore, movement is fundamental to the ways that an individual locates themselves in a social landscape. Dance-music events provide important cultural spaces for the enaction and transformation of the kinetic dimension of identity.

### **The Abakuá community: Origins, Music and Dance Processes, *habitus***

The *abakuá* are members of a male-only ritual community, which exists as a decentralized network of lodges in and around the Western port cities of Havana, Matanzas and Cárdenas. Founded in Cuba in 1836 as a mutual-aid society, *Efik Buton*, the first *abakuá* lodge was formed by Cuban-born slaves who purchased ritual secrets from Africans of the *cabildo de nación Carabalí bricamo apapa efi* (Palmié 2007). The term *cabildo de nación* (literally: town council of a nation) refers to a type of mutual aid association formed by free Africans and later Cuban-born people of color under the Spanish colonial authority. These associations functioned to mitigate the horrors of slavery and became social spaces in which African cultural practices became established and learned by subsequent generations (Childs 2004). *Efik Buton* very quickly gave rise to a network of hierarchically-organized associations based on the transmission of the ritual

secrets from one group to another in a system of sponsorship. By the mid-to-late nineteenth-century until the middle of the twentieth-century, the *abakuá* played an important role in the control and distribution of jobs in the industries around the waterfront and nearby neighborhoods, especially in the contracting of stevedors (Palmié 2007, López Valdez 1966).<sup>80</sup> At various times during its history, the community became targets of repressive legislation. They were out-lawed, and during the nineteenth-century were subjected to retaliatory deportations (Casanovas 1998, Pérez and Torres 2011).<sup>81</sup>

Contrary to conceptions of *cabildos* as organizations restricted to a single ethnic groups, the *abakuá* were not ethnically or racially exclusive.<sup>82</sup> The associations accepted both African-born and Cuban-born blacks, as Chinese and whites by the 1860s into a culturally African organization (Brown 2003, Miller 2009). Like other Afro-Cuban and African diaspora religions and expressive traditions, the *abakuá* formed an intentional community within which individuals formed a type of kinship bond with other initiates. Initiates swore an oath of loyalty and members were required to stringently guard the secrets of their organization. The characteristics of their membership as multi-racial and

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<sup>80</sup> Palmié notes that this function as labor contractors is similar to the Ekepe/Ngbe operation in the Cross River region.

<sup>81</sup> The *abakuá* faced repression and mass deportation in 1866, when a large number were sent to Fernando Po (now, Bioko) in the Gulf of Guinea (Casanovas 1998:93). Again in 1876 mass arrests of *abakuás* took place during a campaign of “de-Africanization;” these included black, mulatto, and white members (Casanovas 1998:123-4). Brown emphasizes that historically the group has had an ambivalent relationship with the government, as it poses a parallel and sovereign organization of authority and justice (Brown 2003). Casanovas notes that the group first initiated whites in 1857, the same year that laws were enacted segregating artisan associations (Casanovas 1998:63). The connection between the activities of the *abakuá* and the volatile struggle around labor and immigration during the later part of the 19th century seem to offer a compelling background in which to understand their reputation for criminal activity. Furthermore, the racialization of the *abakuá* may be an effect of subsequent anthropological discourses in the context of the Afrocubanist movement. Palmié characterizes the group as an “intentional community,” which seem a useful category for understanding religious and utopian communities in the Americas and circum-Atlantic.

<sup>82</sup> Research shows that not all *cabildos* were segregated by ethnicity (Childes 2004).

inclusive of individuals from the elite classes has led some to describe them as holding out an alternative vision of nationhood and identity (Guerra 2003).

In recent years, the *abakuá* community has experienced a shift in its position in Cuban society amid the broader renaissance in popular religion. Heavily repressed during the early decades of the Cuban Revolution, the *abakuá* were nonetheless upheld as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance. With legalization, the *abakuá* have come into a new and still developing relationship with the Cuban government and mainstream society. Some people now consider the community to be part of the cultural patrimony of Cuba (Torres 2011).

At the same time it is hard to understate the persistence of negative stereotypes and prejudice against this community (Cabrera 2005, Moore 2006, Pérez and Torres 2011). Several authors comment on the particularly harsh repression suffered by the *abakuá* community during the height of the socialist era in Cuba (C. Moore 1988, Hagedorn 2001, Brown 2003, Moore 2006). This was corroborated by an older initiate who commented:

Now this has a different kind of orientation. Those who looked after the *abakuá* were MINIT [the Ministry of the Interior] and it remains MINIT... we would prefer that rather than MINIT that we were attended by the Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Culture. There is a National Folkloric Ensemble, an Institute of Anthropology that studies things of man ... But no. Precisely the police, the most repressive medium, that can exist in any place...so, it had to be, that when the *abakuá* were going to hold a *plante* five-hundred police trucks would have to show up with handcuffs to take everyone to jail, this is a reality that cannot be hidden (Anonymous).

Such memories are part of the experience of being *abakuá* over the decades prior to the legalization of the community in 2005. These issues however are not entirely a thing of the past, as I encountered three police trucks when visiting a *plante*. The police required

us to produce identification and to submit to a pat-down and we were not allowed in with glass bottles. This is a far cry from the open harassment and injunctions against new initiations of previous decades. The significance of being an *abakuá* publically in contemporary Cuba reveals tensions and contradictions even in today's thawing climate.

The group's practices revolve around rituals, music, dance and an esoteric language with origins in the Ekpe/Ngbe (Efik, leopard-men) secret societies of southeastern, present-day Nigeria (Ishemo 2002, Miller 2005, Palmié 2007). Drums are literally central to the community's rituals and cosmology. *Ekue*, a drum that remains cloistered in the sanctuary, transmits the Voice of the Great Mystery: the secret at the center of the *abakuá* tradition. Sounded using a friction technique, initiates describe the drum's voice as the roar of a leopard. In addition to *Ekue* there are two percussion ensembles. The first consists of ceremonial instruments, which members of the hierarchy use in the performance of ritual actions. The ceremonial drums are decorated with plumage and correspond to the top four ritual offices (*plazas*); the fifth drum corresponds to the mythological woman *Sikan*. The second ensemble consists of a set of drums played for the purpose of music-making. These are used primarily during the celebration known as *la valla* (Sp., cock pit), a competitive exchange of music, song and dance which follows the main ritual activities.



Figure 50 *Abakuá* musical ensemble, Havana style. The entire ensemble is referred to as the *Biankomo* or *Biankomeko*. It consists of the large mother or *Bonkó Enchemiya*, plus the three small drums, collectively referred to as the *Encomo* or *Cankomo* consisting of (in size order from small to large): *Obiapa* (top), *Eroapa* (right), and *Cuchi yerema* (left). The metal bell is called the *Ekon*. Havana style *abakuá* music often does not include *erikundi* (rattles) but may include *itones* (sticks).

The musical ensemble, referred to collectively as the *biankomo* consists of three small drums, plus the large lead drum, a metal bell (*ekon*), sticks (*itones*) and rattles (*erikundi*). [Figure 1. Photo 2 views of Havana style musical ensemble] Two kinds of rattles exist; two double-headed maracas in a cross formation, and a pair of basket rattles. Although commonly found in Matanzas, only one lodge in Havana uses rattles (*erikundi*).<sup>83</sup> The three smaller drums together form what is called the *cankomo* or *nkomo*. The individual names from small to large are: *obiapa*, *eroapa*, and *cuchi yerema*. The lead or mother drum is the *bonkó enchemiya*. The musicians play interlocking rhythms of two

<sup>83</sup> In addition to instruments, other features that distinguish regional styles include differences in the rhythms, pronunciation, and song texts.

against three, with one playing a steady time-keeping part. A soloist plays the *bonkó enchemiya* improvising and instructing the dancer with drum calls and other rhythmic formulas. A time-line pattern, played on a metal bell (*ekon*), coordinates the percussion with call and response singing. Sticks are used to play a pattern on the side of the *bonkó* or another resonant surfaces, may not always be present.

Figure 51. The *Abakuá* Musical Ensemble: musical parts, Havana style

The figure displays musical notation for five different instruments in a 6/8 time signature. The notation is organized into two systems. The first system contains five staves, each with a unique rhythmic pattern:
 

- Erikundi (rattles), Itones (sticks)\***: A sequence of eighth notes.
- Obiapa (small)**: A sequence of dotted eighth notes.
- Eroapa (medium)**: A sequence of quarter notes.
- Cuchi yerema (large)**: A sequence of eighth notes with rests.
- Bonkó Enchemiya (lead drum, ride pattern)**: A complex pattern of eighth notes and rests.

 The second system contains one staff for the **Ekon**, which features a steady eighth-note pattern. A note below this staff specifies: (m.1-2 basic; m.3-4 alt. pattern).

\* Sticks are not typically used in public folkloric performances.

Songs and recited texts in the Carabalí language, commonly referred to as *lengua* (Sp. tongue), comprise an important part of ritual performance and community life. Members of the hierarchy, whose offices or ranks are referred to as *plazas*, recite texts corresponding to the ritual actions over which they preside. Among the officials are individuals charged with maintaining not only ritual actions but also the liturgy, music and dance of the community. Prayers, invocations, and recitations are referred to as *nkame* and have conventional ordering including a request to speak, an assertion of authority, a greeting to the natural and supernatural elements, naming of the hierarchy by

*plaza* and a greeting to the assembled rank and file as well as the specific ritual actions.

The *morua yuansa* (ceremonial song leader) keeps and performs the sung repertoire, including the songs used to call the *ireme*, an ancestor spirit, who verifies the veracity of the proceedings and tests the knowledge of the assembled brothers during the *valla*.

Another officiate, the *encricamo* accompanies and leads the *ireme*, who is blind, with verbal directions.

Songs, referred to as *inua* are performed in a call and response texture. They vary in length from couplets to long texts with improvisational sections. Choral responses have one of two forms. They can be sung in a fixed melodic formula or comprised of exact repetition of a short melody. Songs may be four or six or more lines of text and often have a conventionalized sequence of choruses related to the meaning of the song. Again, the order of texts is important because it reflects semantic content and thus understanding of the liturgical language, which is highly valued among initiates. Song texts direct ritual actions, recount foundational myths, greet a multitude of beings and entities, recognize positions in the hierarchy, invoke authority, describe lineages and relationships among lodges, declaim community values, call the *ireme* or ancestor spirit to dance and direct the *ireme*'s movement.

Figure 52. *Inua* or song, example: *Muñanga ekue*.

**Soloist:** Muñanga ekue, ita amananyuao.

Muñanga ekue, ita amananyuao.

Eforikomun, (yereka!) Efori isun

sangobio, monina y bonkó.

Obonsiro ekue, awarariansa ngomo

(Eyeye) awariansa, awariansa ngomo

**Chorus:** Aaaa

Awariansa awariansa ngomo eee

Awariansa awariansa ngomo eee

Ooo ooo o

The text in Figure 48 exemplifies songs performed in the *valla* in that it presents four lines of text plus a chorus, which uses a characteristic melodic formula and a sequence of choruses. Songs may be shorter or much longer and skillful singers may include improvised sections in longer songs. This song recounts a lineage or succession of lodges: *Muñaga efó, Eforikomun, Efóri isún*. The relationship among the lodges is described by the words: child (*monina*) and mother (*bonkó*). Within the community one lodge is born from another in a process of sponsorship (*apadrinar*, Spanish, verb: to act as a god-parent). Each lodge has a repertoire of songs that recount the history of its own founding and location within a branch or lineage of the larger community. Members of lodges in the same lineage have a closer degree of affiliation than with brothers in the community at large. This song celebrates the unity of that lineage, asserting that they share one frame of mind, or as Hernández put it “un solo pensamiento.” The theme of unity is particularly important.

The first line of the song, which also functions as its title *Muñanga ekue* (Spanish, *Parche de ekue*; English, Ekue’s drumhead) refers to the skin or drumhead on the sacred *ekue* drum that transmits the Voice of the Great Mystery. The process of making the drum and finding an appropriate skin for the drumhead features centrally in the group’s foundational myths. *Ekue* refers to both the drum that resides in the sanctuary, and the sound that emanates from the drum, the Voice of the Great Mystery. This sound has transferred the lineage of the *abakuá* from generation to generation. It links the participants, both historically and in the present moment. *Ekue*’s drumhead transduces the sound of the Voice, which is then received and projected by the *bonkó enchemiya*,

making it available to be enacted in movement by the *íreme* and witnessed by those gathered during the *valla*. The song salutes the instruments of the musical ensemble by saying *awariansa ngomo*. *Ngomo* refers to the drums of the musical ensemble, which are considered brothers, equal to the other initiates.



Figure 53. Men from Oba Ilú play abakuá music. From L to R: Pentón: *Ekon*; Silvio: *Cuchi yerema*; Dionisio: *Eroapa*; Librado: *Bonkó Enchemiya*; Amauri: *Obiapa* and song.

Translation tends to be idiosyncratic in the case of *abakuá* songs and spoken texts. Interpretation relies on the vocabulary items, which identify what the song is about. *Carabalí*, the *abakuá* language has been dismissed by traditional linguistic scholarship citing its lack of a formal grammar (Cedeño 1988). While this confirms notions of decay set forth by Ortiz, such perspectives neglect the fact that initiates use the language for interaction in their daily lives and in ritual settings. New research may yield different conclusions. What was significant for Hernández and other *abakuá* that I worked with

was pronunciation and command of a repertoire of spoken and sung texts, as well as the ability to improvise, and use the texts to interact with other initiates. Hernández pointed out particular vocabulary items in the songs that were mispronounced “in the street,” i.e. among those in public with little knowledge. Other initiates also emphasized the importance of verbal skill and knowledge. Even without formal grammar initiates use this language for ritual as well as everyday interactions, greeting one another in elaborate exchanges, formulating questions and receiving answers, and identifying one another. Speakers create new verbal phrases and songs texts in the course of interaction in conversation and song (this is also mentioned by Argeliers León, program notes 1964).

In the *abakuá* ceremonies, a masked dancer possessed by an ancestor spirit or *íreme* performs a variety of roles and ritual functions, prime among these is to attest to the voracity of the proceedings. *Íremes* occupy places in the hierarchy of officials and depending on the particular group there may be up to thirteen specific *íremes*, each with a different name and set of functions. For this reason, the *íreme* has various repertoires of movement, some of which are ritual actions. As a spirit being, the *íreme* is blind and mute but possessed of supernatural vision. He communicates through his dance and his movements correspond to words, phrases, graphic designs drawn for ritual purposes, positions in the hierarchy, and elements of the foundational myths. For this reason the *íreme*'s dance is referred to as a language (Ortiz 1993, Balbuena 1996, Torres n.d.).

The most exciting and iconic performances by the *íreme* take place during the *valla* when he emerges from the sanctuary and dances freely among the initiates gathered

in the courtyard.<sup>84</sup> This is also the moment that Hernández has codified in folkloric performances, both through his work as an instructor at the ISA, in the CFNC and through his own ensemble's performances.<sup>85</sup> While the *íreme*'s dance does not have a basic step, it has characteristic movements in addition to the poses and choreographic phrases, which correspond to particular lexical items, stories, and other aspects of liturgy.<sup>86</sup> Dancers may coordinate their movement with the timeline pattern (Sp. *a tiempo*, in time) played on the *ekon*, or dance entirely independent of it (Sp. *contratiempo*, against time). At times, the *íreme* dances in response to rhythmic calls of the *bonkó enchemiya*, to the verbal guidance of the *encrikamo*, to the songs of the *morua yuansa*, and to the verbalizations and songs of the brothers in the *valla*.

First and foremost, the *íreme* uses a gesture of cleaning or bathing, called *ramiando*, iconic of his role in purifying new initiates. Second, he advances haltingly tapping his foot or staff in a movement called *tatiando*; this underscores his blindness, as he feels his way along. Rapid but irregular in cadence, he may move in fits and starts, at times taking a posture and remaining still awaiting the speech or song that will literally move him. He may retreat or charge sometimes seemingly angry and menacing other times mercurial and impish. He tests the verbal skill of those who interact with him. His

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<sup>84</sup> The beloved masquerade dancer is iconic of the community in general and familiar to the non-abakuá public through its traditional appearance in carnival.

<sup>85</sup> This is not the approach to *abakuá* folklore manifest in Furé's synopsis of *Ciclo Abakuá*, which was much more theatrical and narrative. Hernández's approach abstracts the moment when the *íreme* reemerges to dance freely in the *valla*.

<sup>86</sup> Choreographic phrases representing offices in the hierarchy (*plazas*) and central mythological figures constitute an important repertoire. These have corresponding graphic representations of positions in the hierarchy called *firmas* (Sp. signatures) or *anaforuana* (Cr. graphic representations of ritual offices). Some gestures correspond to specific words, e.g. running one's finger across or around the neck means *acua* or kill, and refers to *mbori acua*, the sacrifice of the goat. There are particular song lyrics that instruct the *íreme*, such as: *afia rufie*, *afia roro*, meaning to dance in the middle and to dance to one side. There are sequences of movements that refer to lines of liturgical text and ritual actions, such as greeting the astral bodies, or referring to the river *Odan* which figures centrally in the mythology.

emotional demeanor is mistrustful, but proud. The gliding quality of movement indicates his belonging to the spirit world.

The *íreme* wears a full body masquerade *saco* (Sp. coat or sack). It is usually in a patchwork or stripes of boldly colored fabric, ornamented with stiff fibers encircling the elbows, knees, and cuffs (Cr. *empitá*); this contributes to the characteristic gate. Around his waist he wears a belt with three small cowbells (Sp. *cencerros*, Cr. *enkinaka*) which he shakes to signal his joy, approbation or agreement, but which also ring faintly as he moves around. In folkloric dance, the *íreme* carries a little broom (Sp. *escobilla*), or a branch or a handkerchief (Sp. *rama*) in his left hand. In his right hand he carries a staff or a short stick, which in the old days was a club (Sp. *garrote*) used to defend himself or to menace people. The staff or stick



Figure 54. Íreme Eribangandó

also identifies to which one of the two main branches of the *abakuá* lineage the dancer belongs, *efí* or *efó*. In folkloric performance, the style of dance is typically *efí*, the faster and more dynamic of the two main styles.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> In ritual there are four styles of dance that correspond to the four original tribes or lands (*territorios*). The lodges are said to belong to one of the four different branches corresponding to these original African tribes. In actuality, most are considered either *efí* or *efó*. In dance, *efí* refers to a fast style and carries a long staff or stick. *Efó* is a slow style that carries a short stick. The other original are *afiana* (*oruru*) and *efori*,

The dance of the *íreme* is learned in large part by observation and imitation, both in the *plante*, and in folkloric dance classes. Professional dancers learn the dances largely divorced from their semantic content. The quality of correspondences between movement, text and musical sounds defines the ritual aesthetics. Hernández, who taught *abakuá* dance for many years for the CFNC and later at the ISA, emphasized that there was only imitation, no technique or floor exercises. This comment distinguishes *abakuá* folklore from other styles and training methods, leaving much of the movement implicit, rather than explicitly defined, in contrast to that of *rumba* and Yoruba dances, in which the movements are broken down for pedagogical purposes and practiced in the classical manner as floor exercises. In the case of *abakuá* folklore in the performances analyzed in this chapter there are distinctions drawn between *abakuá* initiates who perform the tradition in relation to their experience as participants in ritual celebrations, and other folkloric performers who have learned the dance as part of professional training. Each individual's response to the dance-music displays a kinetic performance of identity by which others may locate him in the broader social landscape.

Each association or lodge holds a ritual celebration (*plante*) once a year or every few years. Most of the rituals of the *plante* occur in the seclusion of the sanctuary or *famba*, while celebrants wait gathered in the courtyard. Initiates may come and go from the proceedings but most of officiates or ranked members of the hierarchy remain inside. Upon finishing, a procession of officiates and musicians emerge from the sanctuary into the courtyard. The *íreme* named *Eribangandó* leads the procession and completes a series of ritual tasks, then returns to the sanctuary. The musical ensemble remains and

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which likewise have corresponding dance styles. It is most common to see the fast dance style, *efí*, and occasionally *efó*, the other two are extremely rare.

accompanies singing and dancing by the gathered rank and file members. At this time, many will gather around the musicians for the competitive exchange of ritual knowledge known as the *la valla* (cockpit). Participants take turns playing percussion, leading songs, dancing, and having disputes in the *abakuá* liturgical language. In this way the rank and file learn the language, as well as the myths and songs of the broader community as well as the history and songs of their particular lodge. They may also learn the corresponding gestures and choreographic phrases. While not all possess the skill or interest in mastering the repertoires, the ability to perform music, dance and speak the language draws respect from fellow initiates and operates as a medium of exchange in public settings, where a few words in the esoteric *lengua* or tongue may be rewarded with a favor from an otherwise anonymous *ecobio* or brother. Acquiring this esoteric knowledge also increases one's status and the chances that one might be selected for an office at some future time.

The competitive exchange of ritual knowledge reaches a climax with the reemergence of the *íreme* from the sanctuary. The process can be long and arduous requiring great verbal skill, since the *íreme* must be coaxed out of the sanctuary by the words of the *encrikamo* (the official who attends and



Figure 55. At a *plante* in Guanabacoa, June 2012.

leads the *íreme*) or the songs of the *morua* (the ceremonial song leader).<sup>88</sup> Although blind, he can see the spirits of men who died without proper rites, maleficent objects, and other dangers in the world (Hernández 2/17/11). He is thus mistrustful and reticent to emerge from the sanctuary. Hernández explained:

When the *íreme* is going to come out of the sanctuary, they open the door and he sees things outside that mortals cannot see. He sees bad things and does not want to go out. And so the *morua* starts to speak to him until he begins to be taken by the songs. And when they see that he is outside and when wants to go back inside, they close the door. And he sees this is bad, and this is bad, and this is bad. And everybody, all the *abakuá*, they talk to him so that he feels that he is among his family, so that he can calm down (Hernández 2/17/11).

Once out in the open, many *abakuá* brothers will try to speak to the *íreme* in *Carabalí*, complimenting and admiring him, assuaging his skittishness or agitation.

The *íreme*'s dance is a form of spirit possession. It is said that the spirit inhabits the masquerade costume or *saco*, so that he who wears it may become possessed. The sounds of the *abakuá* world, the songs and speech pronounced in the liturgical language induce the spirit to enter the dancer. Fernández commented on the physical experience of dancing by saying that "I am not myself," (Fernández 3/22/11). Menocal explained the difference between dancing in the *plante* and dancing in a public folkloric show, "...in a *plante* they are possessed, one arrives to play, to dance [pauses] it fills you," (Menocal 6/25/12). He continued, "they are spirits of ancestors that come to possess and to celebrate... they are considered the hosts of the festivities and they come out to have fun and to rejoice" (ibid.). Although it is considered to be for the purposes of entertainment,

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<sup>88</sup> The *íreme* is an ancestor spirit that possesses a dancer in full-body masquerade. *Íremes* (of which there are many) perform ritual functions, from preparing food offerings, to making animal sacrifices, as well as protecting the sanctuary, disciplining the misbehaved, and even ejecting troublemakers from a gathering. They occupy offices (*plazas*) in the hierarchy and because they are spirits they authenticate the proceedings, validate verbal transmissions and thus the men chosen for such offices must be possessed of much knowledge.

the valla with the presence of the *íreme* and its competitive exchange of knowledge is crucial to the transmission of the history/cosmology, music, dance, and liturgical language.

Descended from a *cabildo de nación*, *abakuá* lodges have played a role in both the self-definition of black ethnicity and subaltern masculinity, as well as mainstream conceptions of race and national culture (Hagedorn 2001, Arroyo 2003, Childs 2005). The organization and its ceremonies created not only a retreat from racist society but also a dissident sub-culture that permitted self-affirmation (Helg 2005:187). Some historians

have argued, that among the working classes in Cuba racial distinctions are less sharply drawn than among the elite and this is evidenced by the community's long history of multi-racial/multi-ethnic membership (de la Fuente 2001, Guerra 2003). Indeed, the *abakuá* have initiated creoles,



Figure 56. *Abakuá* initiate tattoo with the name of his lodge, image of the *íreme* and a leopard-man. Havana, 2011.

mulattos, Chinese and whites since the 1860s, into what has been understood as a culturally African organization (Palmié 2007, Cabrera 2005, Sosa 1984, Casanovas 1998:63). Although, the integration of non-blacks has been a point of controversy at times, one historian suggests that the community reflects an alternative interpretation of the ideology of social unity and racial fraternity endorsed by political elites (Guerra 2003:157).

The interpretations of *abakuá* identity have varied, but remain linked with notions of what Stephan Palmié calls “agonistic masculinity” (Palmié 2007). Mainstream

perceptions of the *abakuá* have tended to be cast in the most negative racialized terms, and the group continues to be stereotyped up to the current day as a largely marginal and criminal sub-culture associated with extreme violence, although this has started to shift in recent years (Pérez and Torres 2011).

When asked, “why would a man today want to be *abakuá*?” scholar, journalist, and *abakuá* initiate, Ramón Torres Zayas raised his eyebrows and told me that I was asking “hot” questions (Torres 4/11).<sup>89</sup> He nonetheless explained that the prime motivation was perhaps a sense of feeling marginalized and dissatisfied with the powers that be. His master’s thesis reflects the use of new social sciences discourses about the *abakuá* to probe issues of reform within Cuban institutions and society (Torres n.d.). In the thesis, Torres reflects on the lessons of self-governance and democracy that might be gleaned from the community (Torres n.d.). In his estimation, membership functions as recognition of individual worth and value. He explained further that the emotional bonds produced by participation were of the utmost importance. These included the recognition afforded to initiates by the community, and the status signaled by membership. Torres summed it up by saying, “I’ve never seen anyone cry on account of being thrown out of the Party, but I have seen them cry for being thrown out of their lodge” (Torres 5/11). The second reason he gave was religion, but he coupled that closely with the sense of brotherhood that initiates enjoy. Finally, Torres explained that being an *abakuá* meant having “a presence in the neighborhood” (Torres 5/11). Membership grants status; being *aprobado* or approved by other men signifies valor among other qualities. An *abakuá* is regarded as having “tested or proven manhood,” and *hombre aprobado* (Torres 5/11).

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<sup>89</sup> Torres Zayas is a journalist and writer who has published book on the *abakuá* brotherhood. He is also an initiate and has a plaza in his lodge.

A common theme of self-description was the sense that to be an *abakuá* signified strength of character as well as morality. Graviel Calmuse, one of the dancers from *Oba Ilú* who was also an initiate, described the *abakuá* as unique because they “only require character” (Calmuse 8/25/11). He underscored the differences with common perceptions of priests in the Ocha-Ifá religions making a living off initiations.

The *abakuá* also have the only religion that does not generate profits. It is not a profit-making religion it only requires that you have the qualities... of a man. It does not require money. Only money to lend [to other members], if needed. But not the quantity of money required to make your saint. It’s a religion that makes you prepare yourself more in terms of thought or outlook than with money. (Calmuse 8/25/11).

He compares the *abakuá* to the Yoruba religion, underscoring its parallel positioning with regard to other Afro-Cuban religions, which not all initiates accept. Some, including Hernández emphasized its historically secular orientation and contested its definition as a religion.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, in contemporary society such distinctions reveal the moral debates and values at stake. Calmuse points out that the money paid for the initiation ritual is not a lot and it used for a communal emergency fund from which the lodge can make loans to members in need. The ethic of mutual aid remains an ideal among members. His comments also underscore how initiation to the *abakuá* becomes an important symbol social status available to men of little financial means. The *abakuá* remain largely local, which is another way that they contrast the Yoruba religions, which have vast transnational networks that reach to Latin America, North America, Europe and Africa. The situation of the *abakuá* may be changing with growing acceptance of the

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<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, Hernández pointed out that the fact that the *abakuá* do not admit women pointed to its secular nature, as religions admit both men and women (personal communication).

Cuban diaspora community in New York and Miami and the growing practice of *abakuá* rituals abroad.

Initiates also linked membership with valor and patriotism. Again, Calmuse explained that “the *abakuás* were the ones that hid many of the *mambi* heroes in their homes... they helped the July 26 movement...” (Calmuse 8/25/11). He points out that they protected the nineteenth-century rebel soldiers from the Spanish authorities and links that with Fidel Castro’s rebel movement. Pedro Menocal, an older initiate, exclaimed, “When the Cuban flag hadn’t been invented the symbol of Cubanness was the *íreme*. What do you think of that? Take note! The *íreme* with the rebels! The Maroon, the tough guy...” (Menocal 6/25/12). Menocal continued, however, and asserted that beyond the notion of patriotism, the *abakuá* identify with the rebel as self-governing and autonomous. At another point in the conversation Menocal explained that to be *abakuá* simply means to be a “free man” (Menocal 6/25a). This sense of autonomy beyond all else is central to *abakuá* identity.<sup>91</sup>

The group functions as a fraternal organization permeating the everyday life of initiates in the form of a powerful social network. The bonds that create and maintain that network originate in the ritual of initiation (Cr. *baroko*). Requiring a process of sponsorship and vetting, only adult men are initiated into the community. Initiates swear to uphold a code of honor, which is often summarized as: to be a good father, a good son, and a good brother. This often repeated cliché does not capture the depth of feeling many initiates have for the sense of belonging, affiliation, and responsibility experienced

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<sup>91</sup> Beyond that the topic of the *abakuá* itself seems to be a channel for critical discussions. Examples of these include Torres’s master’s thesis as well as Sara González’s film *De Cierta Manera* (1974) that takes a critical look at revolutionary society through a movie with an *abakuá* theme in the plot.

through participation. The code of honor represents a form of morality associated with being fearless and having a warrior's heart (*motu chekendeke*), which empowers initiates to protect the secrets of the organization, but also to confront and resist oppression in their own lives. Amauri Fernández described the initiation as a form of death; having already pledged his life, he explained, he could now face whatever situation might arise fearlessly (Fernández, 3/21/11). Torres noted however, regarding the code of honor, it leaves a lot of room for interpretation (Torres, 5/11).

### **Performer Bio: Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández Ríos**

Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernández Ríos patriot, *rumbero*, and *abakuá* initiate passed away on January 8, 2012 in Havana and was buried in Colón Cemetery with the pageantry of a state funeral. Hundreds of mourners followed the procession of vehicles and officials who attended the burial. Many of those on foot had spent the night honoring Hernández in song and dance at the *El Palacio de la Rumba* (The Palace of Rumba), where many in the *rumba* community saw him off.

A towering figure in the worlds of folklore and national culture, Hernández was celebrated by people from the government, foreign visitors, as well as the world of folkloric performance and traditional communities of Afro-Cuban musicians. While his CV states that he was born on November 17, 1936 in Havana, friends recount that he moved to the



Figure 57. Gregorio "El Goyo" Hernández with *Oba Ilú*. Havana, Cuba, April 2011.

capital from Pinar de Rio around age five. They describe how he worked shining shoes as a child, underscoring his humble origins in contrast to the status that he achieved. His network and influence extended within Cuba to the institutions of national culture, and internationally among Europeans and North American interested in *rumba* and Afro-Cuban folklore.

Awards and citations honoring his lifetime of performance and work as a folklorist lined the walls and cabinets of his apartment in the Vedado neighborhood. At our first meeting, he explained to me that the revolution had largely solved the problems of poverty that he and many like him had faced.<sup>92</sup> Hernández was pro-revolution and stated that those who complained about the current day problems had no concept of the kinds of bad conditions which the revolution had eliminated.

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<sup>92</sup> On two occasions he gave me reference materials, in the form of photos of Havana before 1959 that had been digitized and passed around on a flash drive. He wanted me to understand the magnitude of the changes that the revolution brought.



Figure 58. Photos from Gregorio Hernández of Havana before the revolution. Top left: a house in Plaza Cívica area of Havana, 1951. Top right: a *solar* rooming house in Havana, 1956. Below: the neighborhood of Atarés on the outskirts of an industrial area (also an area know for the *rumba* tradition). Hernández gave me a file of these photos explaining that he supported the revolution because it had done much to improve the conditions for the working class.



A member of the founding generation of the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba, CFNC), Hernández distinguished himself as a dancer and singer and dancer of *rumba* and *congo* folklore. He performed as a featured soloist in the Congo Cycle (*Ciclo Congo*), as a lead singer of *congo* folklore and earned

stature in the *rumba* community. During the 1970s, Hernández started to become widely known as a folklorist and *abakuá* initiate in the context of his professional life. His first staging of *abakuá* folklore was an infamous production called *Baroko* (c. 1970). It has since been largely eliminated from the history of the CFNC and does not appear in the catalog produced for the ensemble's fifteenth anniversary, nor in the printed version of Hernández's CV, which he gave to me in 2008, although it was subsequently mentioned in his obituary printed by UNEAC in 2012 (Martínez 1977). Although many people in official positions were reluctant to discuss the production, *Baroko* has remained part of the memory and oral history of the *rumba* scene in Havana.

*Baroko* was presented by the CFNC around 1970 and consisted of a folkloric dramatization of the initiation ritual of the *abakuá* community, referred to in the Carabalí language as *baroko*. Its debut performance ended in fistfights and provoked a considerable controversy, both among the *abakuá* community and in government institutions. Fernández, a member of *Oba Ilú* and an *abakuá* initiate, was aware of the controversy even though it occurred before he was born. Describing what he knew of the event he said,

He brought a live goat on stage. What do you think happened? He ended up in the hospital and he was not the only one. . . . He was profane” (Fernández, personal communication).

Underscoring that fact that Hernández had violated the promise to protect the secrets of the community, Fernández described the resulting violence of some *abakuás* who witnessed the performance.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> At that time, the community was experiencing harsh repression by the government (Hagedorn 2001, Helg 2005, Moore 2006). There had been a one-day strike in the port organized by the *abakuá* (Farber 2012, Perez-Stable 1999).

Other initiates, however, voiced tolerant attitudes towards the staging of folklore. Menocal who is also a longtime participant in *rumba* and folklore, as well as a practitioner of Afro-Cuban religion, confirmed the scandal that was caused by *Baroko*, remembering:

Goyo stood his ground against tremendous pressure. He was even suspended from his lodge. But afterwards they gave him a *plaza* [a position in the hierarchy] and everything else, because in truth it was a work of folkloric research (Menocal 6/25/12).

Like many other practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions, Menocal does not regard the public performance of religious or ceremonial music and dance in an entirely negative light. Maximino, a percussionist with *Rumberos de Cuba*, remembered this production as key to Hernández's career. He recalled:

After *Baroko*, his career really started to grow. You know, with the controversy people were talking about him, his name circulated (Maximino 6/22/12).

Thus, Hernández positioned himself relatively early in his career somewhat contentiously between the official institutions and the community of *abakuás*.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, after the controversy of *Baroko*, Hernández continued to work with the CFNC.

His career developed around his role as a performer-informant or *portador de cultura*, mediating between institutions of national culture and the *abakuá* community.<sup>95</sup>

He stayed with the CFNC for twenty-five years participating in numerous productions.

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<sup>94</sup> Hagedorn describes in detail the many different situations in which early participants found themselves. She notes that some were recruited as an alternative to participating in the *zafra*. She observed that the contradictions of participation in the CFNC caused strife for some of its most prominent performers. The singer Lazaro Ros apparently benefited in the sense of recognition and visibility, with several early recordings and a movie; yet seems to have developed a bad reputation among many segments of the religious and musical community at large.

<sup>95</sup> Hagedorn 2001, Brown 2003, and Wirtz 2013 each discuss the role of the “performer-informant” in the methods of the CFNC.

He went on to work as an artistic director, assessor of folkloric performances in the *planilla* system and a teacher of *abakuá* dance.<sup>96</sup>

Hernández made few recordings during his lifetime. Several of these rare distinctions attest to his involvement with the *abakuá* early in his career. He appears, although not credited, on an anthology of folkloric recordings made by Cuban musicologists between 1976 and 1988. His voice as a soloist is unmistakable on Vol. X,

*Abakuá* music of the Anthology of Afro-Cuban music (*Antología de la Música Afrocubana*, EGREM COL 0011, 2006). Even in the first recordings he made apart from the folklore scene, as a guest soloist on Tata Güines recording *Aniversario*



Figure 59. Gregorio Hernández and Oba Ilú performing at *Casa de Alba*, 2011. Rogelio Martínez Furé can be seen seated at the table on the right.

(1995), Hernández incorporates evidence of his links with the *abakuá*. All three of the *rumba* songs include

references to *abakuá* liturgy through the use of the unmistakable melodic formulas and characteristic vocables of their responsorial singing and as well as lines of ritual text.

After the CFNC, he went on to teach in the major music and dance schools in Havana, including the Ignacio Cervantes Conservatory, the National Art Schools (*Escuelas Nacional de Arte*), and finally at the *Instituto Superior de Arte* (now known as

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<sup>96</sup> Although Hernández is conspicuously absent from some of the early documentation of the CFNC, he appears in the liner notes to an early audio recording and in the 1977 *Apuntes* and in a video released in the 1980s.

*ISA-La Universidad de las Artes*). He slowly became a legendary *rumbero* and a towering personality in Cuban cultural life.

In 1995, during what was arguably the worst of the Special Period, the government authorized Hernández and others among the founding generation of the CFNC to organize performing ensembles, which could contract directly with hotels and other venues. Hernández named his group *Oba Ilú*, in honor of Jesús Pérez, using the master drummer's Yoruba ceremonial name. Pérez had been an important figure in the diffusion of Afro-Cuban music and creation of Cuban modern dance. Hernández's stated objective reflects the values and agendas of the CFNC and the earlier era. Hernández described the mission of *Oba Ilú* as being "to promote Cuban/Afro-Cuban folkloric music, demonstrating its universal values and importance to national culture" (Hernández, 2/17/11). Hernández early training became the template for *Oba Ilú*, and he used the techniques and methods of the CFNC but added his own interpretative and creative vision. Unlike the folkloric performance of prior decades, the group worked in tourist and recreational venues on national tours as well as locally in Havana. Hernández dissolved the group in 2001 citing a lull in tourism and spent the next few years touring and teaching in Europe with Isnavi Cardoso Díaz.

In 2005, the same year that the broader *abakuá* community was legalized, Hernández and Cardoso reformed *Oba Ilú*. During this second phase, the group was awarded a government contract or *planilla*, which guaranteed salaries to those performers who were officially evaluated. In addition to gigs contracted with hotels and the circuit of folkloric venues, Hernández contracted the group for official events as well as his own engagements. Prominent among Hernández's own projects was a series of lecture-

demonstrations that came to be titled “From the roots to the synthesis” (*De las raíces a la síntesis*). Starting around 2007 and through 2011, Hernández gave these lecture-demonstrations making broad reinterpretations of Cuban music and its relationship with folklore. He located *abakuá* music at the root of the most popular Cuban traditions, *son* and *rumba*. Hernández was engaged multiple times by major institutions of national culture including UNEAC, the University of Havana, Africa House (*Casa de Africa*), and the Cuban Institute of Anthropology. In 2011 alone, he gave the lecture-demonstration a minimum of five times.

In 2010, Hernández composed a set piece of *abakuá* folklore for performance with *Oba Ilú*. The composition reflects the main arguments about *abakuá* music that he made in his lecture-demonstrations, which centers on the idea that the origins of *rumba* can be found in *abakuá* music rather than in the music of Congo/Bantú groups as argued by Fernando Ortiz. He draws comparisons between *guaguancó* and *abakuá* folklore first and foremost by organizing the piece using a three-part form of *guaguancó* consisting of an introduction followed by a verse of A section and a call and response or B section. In *guaguancó* these are referred to as: introduction (*diana*), verse (*canto*) and call and response (*montuno*). In the *abakuá* set piece, the sections function like those of *rumba* but are labeled with *abakuá* terms. The introduction is referred to as the *nkame*. It uses recited texts drawn from the invocations of *abakuá* rituals and admittedly is more like a prelude than the musical introduction of the *diana*. The characteristic melodic formula of *abakuá* call and response, which is sung on the vocables “jeye ye ye” functions in Hernández words like the *diana* to “tune the chorus” (Hernández, ICA 5/26/11). Next, the verse or song section, called *inua*, uses songs of greeting from ritual as well as songs

from the *valla*, a celebratory and competitive exchange of music and dance. Finally the *marcha*, whose name refers to the procession of musicians out of the sanctuary, follows procedures of call and response used in the *rumba montuno*. Just as in *guaguancó*, *yambú* and *columbia*, the dancing occurs during the *montuno* or call and response section. This of course does not follow the procedures of the *valla*, which are much looser and dependent on the interactions and choices of the participants. Furthermore, the specific procedure used in *rumba* to signal guide songs to the chorus is not part of *abakuá* call and response, which relies more on melodic formulas. Nevertheless, composing the set-piece along the basic procedures and formal outlines of *rumba*, Hernández created a familiar form for diffusing *abakuá* song repertoire.

The texts that Hernández has compiled to create the set-piece follow an order that is recognizable as liturgy but summarize ritual proceedings quite abstractly into one formal structure. Furthermore, the texts selected do not disclose specific contents of ritual actions, but rather frame the actions of the performance as rituals. The texts consist of invocations and greeting the appropriate natural elements and members of the hierarchy, as well as claiming authority to speak in an authoritative voice. All of these preface ritual actions. Thus they give the air of sacredness to the context of the performance. This also recognizes the strong preference of *abakuás* for accurate representations of the music and dance, without gratuitously divulging ritual acts.

By giving *abakuá* folklore a definitive form, an orderly logic, Hernández proposes a canonical form, like those of *Ciclo Congo* and *Ciclo Yoruba* of the early CFNC repertoire. He revises or replaces the *Ciclo Abakuá*, written by Rogelio Martínez Furé, which is a dramatic narrative of ritual actions. From all accounts after *Baroko*,

*abakuá* folklore never gained a major space within the CFNC repertoire. Here, Hernández redresses that gap and also identifies a fixed repertoire of songs for public performance. In the context of his conception of folkloric performance as educational (Hernández, 2/17/11), it is interesting to consider the diffusion of this repertoire in terms of the growing *abakuá* community. When asked why other groups did not perform *abakuá* folklore, Hernández explained that it was not because they could not but rather that they chose not to (ibid). Far from permitting the *abakuá* to pass out of existence as he claimed on several occasions that they had no real reason to exist anymore, Hernández's performances standardized and circulated a repertoire of *abakuá* music and recited text. Furthermore, the performances created new public spaces for the community to occupy. As illustrated by the performances analyzed in this chapter, the performance of the set-piece were most clearly and directly addressed to and engaged the *abakuá* community at large. The public performances engage community members in public disclosure of their identity as initiate serving to intensify the presence of a community, which remains largely invisible despite legalization.

While Hernández did not make such agendas explicit, his broader vision seemed undoubtedly linked with asserting the authority to self-define Afro-Cuban expressive traditions, especially that of the *abakuá*. He presented himself directly as a patriot, and rarely commented on issues of race and racism, although he once recounted an incident. He explained to me that while attending a conference of musicologists discussing Afro-Cuban folklore, he noted frequent reference to the *barracones*, or slave barracks as a locus of cultural production. He described standing up to contribute his opinion. He told me, he stood up and said: “Excuse me, but Afro-Cuban music did not come from the

*barracones*. I know this, because I've been there. I've been to the *barracones*.' "And, you know what?" he said, "they laughed at me." He continued explaining to the assembled musicologists, "I know the *barracones* because I've spent time in jail. I can tell you: that crowded, violent, disgusting place is not where our music comes from" (Hernández, personal communication). Despite the times when Hernández's words and actions were at right angles to one another, this conversation underscored his struggle for the authority to define Afro-Cuban expressive traditions in the context of national institutions. Moreover, as an institutional actor, Hernández's performances reveal some of the historical tension between black ethnicity and national culture as a racializing discourse in Cuba.

In claiming an identity as a patriot, Hernández sought to resolve some of the tensions between race pride and nationalism through his reinterpretations of folklore and national culture. Hernández did not make his political agendas explicit and to the contrary he was often self-effacing and indirect. He articulated positions that reflected the ideologies of national culture but altered them to reflect the values of Afro-Cuban culture. Building his authority as a folklorist and re-defining tradition and national culture through his role as a *portador de cultura* (culture carrier), Hernández operated as a culture broker moving between institutions of national culture and traditional communities of Afro-Cuban musicians and dancers. He negotiated his identity as a *de facto* public leader of the *abakuá* and an institutional insider. Among the musicians and communities at large or *de la calle* (of the street, as opposed to schools or other official institutions) he used performance to articulate his vision of folklore. His reinterpretations of the central narratives of Cuban musicology reflect his agenda to challenge long-

standing definitions of Afro-Cuban performance traditions and establish ground for new interpretations.

### **Performance Analysis**

To pursue his agenda of positioning himself as culture broker operating between official institutions of national culture and the *abakuá* community, Hernández negotiates his identity as a patriot and a *de facto* public leader of the *abakuá* community through public performances of *abakuá* folklore. In the first of the following two examples, Hernández emphasizes his identity as a member of the community. In the second example, he positions himself as a patriot highlighting his identity as a leader of the *abakuá* in the context of the nation. He uses a different strategy in each case to shape performances in politically and socially effective ways. The first of these, I refer to it as an “embedded” strategy. Based on the linguistic concept of code switching, the embedded strategy reveals how Hernández uses his knowledge of ritual performance to demonstrate his membership and leadership role in the *abakuá* community. Carol Myers-Scotton describes code switching as a creative act and part of the negotiation of a public face (Myers-Scotton 1993: 476). Code choices<sup>97</sup> at any linguistic level, Myers-Scotton argues, indicate the negotiation of personal relationships, including the signaling of social-group membership (Myers-Scotton 1993: 476). While I have earlier explicitly rejected the idea of codes and have redefined the notion of communication, here the concept of a linguistic code may be thought of as an interpretive stance and code switching as a change of interpretive stance. This concept may be usefully applied to cultural and musical performance understood in terms of the idea of the community of

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<sup>97</sup> Here understood as interpretive habits.

interpreters. Rather than linguistic code, switching between dance-music idioms may be understood as indicative of a way of orienting oneself to the event, reflecting shared histories of mutual interaction. These histories result in a set of shared tendencies or dispositions to interpret a dance-music idiom in terms of particular emotional scripts, kinetic performances of identity and verbal meanings. When Hernández switches from *rumba* to *abakuá* songs, in the context of a folkloric performance, he succeeds at provoking the participation of *abakuá* initiates, who respond to the tacit call of song texts used in ritual to call forth the ancestor spirit of *ireme* to dance. In this way, he demonstrates his knowledge of ritual practice and receives an affirmative response from the community in the form of their impromptu performances. Thus he negotiates his identity as an *abakuá* and a public leader of the community to the extent that initiates respond to his call by divulging their own membership or identity.

Furthermore, the embedded strategy parallels the verbal strategy of code switching by creating common ground between Hernández and the “minority” community of *abakuás* (Myers-Scotton 1993). Here, *guaguancó*, the ubiquitous and thoroughly familiar sub-style of *rumba* serves as the dominant discursive medium in its function as national culture. By comparison *abakuá* folklore, which has been marginalized even within the folkloric repertoire, operates as a minority or ethnic identity discourse. By embedding the minority or ethnic discourse within the broader, more familiar genre the performance moves from the generally shared to a genre that is not equally accessible. The movement from a shared genre and to a restricted genre sheds a critical light on national culture. As a kinetic conversation, the performance creates this

effect by shifting the ground of interpretation and changing the relationship among participants, namely between the performers and audience.

The second strategy that Hernández uses, I refer to as a direct strategy in that he uses the set-piece of *abakuá* folklore to present the music and dance of the *abakuá* community as such. Here he alters the performance, however, in such a way as to reframe the meaning and significance of the broader political event of which it is a part. I draw on the concept of contextualization as a feature of discourse as discussed by Jan Bloomaert (2005). Contextualization “comprises all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, [or] cancel...any aspect of context which in turn is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence” (Auer quoted in Bloomaert 2005:41). Further analyzing the process of contextualization, Bloomaert explains that it has three key characteristics. First, contextualization occurs through conventions about unsaid meanings. Second, contextualization is dialogical, that is it arises from interaction. Third contextualization is “local and translocal” meaning that it involves a post-hoc process of taking up earlier bits of text that were produced in a different contextualization process (Bloomaert 2005:46). Hernández uses the tropes of folkloric performance with minor alterations to shift the footing or to re-frame the larger event through his interactions with the audience. The very minor nature of the alterations that Hernández makes, operate within what linguist John Thompson calls the “fallacy of internalism” (Thompson quoted in Bloomaert 2005:184). This fallacy consists of the belief that political ideologies are fixed in the texts and symbols used to project them and that small textual modifications do not matter (Bloomaert 2005:185). Like the kinetic conversation emphasizes, the recontextualization of the larger political event takes place

through the interactions between Hernández and members of the audience who are *abakuá* initiates.<sup>98</sup> Hernández shapes the performance to imply that the figure celebrated had a “hidden identity” as an *abakuá*. By reframing the vague but ideologically charged texts of the opening speeches, which linked participation in Afro-Cuban religion with patriotism, Hernández speaks to the experiential knowledge of many participants regarding the recent legalization of the *abakuá* community. At the same time, Hernández shifts ownership of the tradition back to the *abakuá* community countering the government’s use of religion to re-consolidate popular support and reinforce its own authority. Hernández decenters the messages of revelation and vague double entendres of the official speeches with his own revelatory action. He reveals Banderas as an *abakuá* through the provocative and exciting performance. Although this is historically inaccurate, the action centers *abakuá* identity – it is through their identity as *abakuás* and as Afro-Cubans that the initiates are invited to experience identification with the black general. Hernández flips the official message of assimilation to one of race pride.

**Example 1: *Oba Ilú* at the *Asociación Yoruba*, August 13, 2009**

The first example presents an excerpt from a performance on August 13, 2009 at the Yoruba Cultural Association of Cuba (*Asociación Cultural Yoruba de Cuba*) by Hernández and his ensemble, *Oba Ilú*. The Yoruba Cultural Association exemplifies the importance of religious organizations, official and unofficial, in the growth and expansion of a uniquely Cuban public sphere. In this performance, Hernández tacitly negotiates his identity as a member of the *abakuá* as a minority community. His

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<sup>98</sup> This analysis focuses on these particular interactions, sidestepping some of the issues that Bloomaert raises about the ways that dialogue does not support consensus in contextualization and understanding. Furthermore, the fact remains that the individual reception of the musical event may and likely does vary.

performance shifts the relationships between the audience and performers, revealing members of the audience as not only competent interpreters of the esoteric liturgy of *abakuá* ceremonial music and dance, but as the true owners of the tradition. Their performances are spotlighted for their authenticity and implicitly contrast with those of trained dancers. Hernández creates space for the community in public by manipulating the intersections between his identity as the leader of the ensemble, a respected folklorist, performer of *rumba*, and quite importantly for the community, a member of the ritual hierarchy in his lodge, the *Morua Yuansa* or ceremonial song leader of *Urianabon Masongo Efi*. He builds his reputation as a public leader of the community, augmenting his standing as a *portador de cultura* within institutional space. He accomplishes this balancing act within the limitations of folkloric performance and his relative power as the director of an ensemble. Using the folkloric form to articulate his own interpretations of Afro-Cuban performance traditions, Hernández makes a series of alterations that draw *abakuá* initiates from the audience into the performance of a *rumba*.

The performance begins as a *guaguancó*, which has a three-part sectional form (Intro AB) that relies on the cues of the soloist or lead singer. He begins with an introduction sung on vocalise and then presents a verse. Hernández selects the song “La noche está como el día” which has an *abakuá* theme and was originally sung by Tío Tom, a legendary figure of the pre-revolutionary *rumba* scene (Hernández 5/23/11). Here the song is arranged by Hernández and *Oba Ilú* and it includes the lines of *abakuá* liturgical text and choral responses [Figure 54. Verse: “La noche está como el día”]. The verse describes a scene inside an *abakuá* sanctuary, which captures the joy of the gathered brothers at the moment that the ceremonial song leader or *morua* arrives. Hernández adds

a tag to the verse in the *abakuá* language. The phrase asserts Hernández's authoritative voice as a *morua* or ceremonial song leader.

Figure 60. *Rumba guaguancó* with *abakuá* text. Verse: "La Noche está como el día." *Oba Ilú* at the Yoruba Association of Cuba, August 13, 2009.

**Verse:**

<i>La noche esta como el día</i>	The night is like the day
<i>Dentro de cuarto de fambá</i>	Inside the sanctuary room
<i>Todo se vuelve de alegría</i>	Everything turns happy
<i>Porque ha llegado el moura</i>	Because the <i>morua</i> has arrived.
<i>Etie momi morua tete morua yene Bibi.</i>	[Switches to <i>abakuá</i> language. Singer asserts his identity as a <i>morua</i> , refers to himself as the incarnation of tradition, the <i>morua</i> of the Bibi people.
<i>Aroro gobio momi eriero moinua</i>	He demands attention to his speech/song in the second line. Characteristic of ritual practice for someone to ask for the floor and assert their authority to speak in the true voice of the tradition.]

*Kama!*  
language.

"Speak!" A call to speak, said in the in *abakuá*

Here used as a cue for the chorus.

**Chorus:** *Akama yusongo.*

Calling the land of the dead. [A song used to call the *ireme*, the ancestor spirit who possesses the masquerade dancer.]

Conflating his roles as the *morua yuansa* of the lodge *Urianabón Masongo Efi*, with that as the soloist and the ensemble director, Hernández manipulates the intersections and slippages between the roles to negotiate a public persona. He moves between directing the song, which is his role as soloist, and directing the performers, which is his role as leader of the ensemble, and evoking his ritual authority to call forth the *ireme*. His authority as an *abakuá* with the ceremonial rank of *morua yuansa*, ceremonial song leader relies in part on his knowledge of the repertoire and in part on his election/selection within his lodge as a member of the hierarchy. Furthermore, as a

member of the broader community he knows many of the initiates, their lodge associations, as well as understanding the tendencies of their response to ritual music. With this personal and social knowledge, he makes choices to shape the performance in ways that are both socially efficacious and aesthetically compelling. This particular performance is not unique. Hernández has used this technique in other performances, equally tacit and indirect but exciting for audiences.

The verse closes with a song used to call the ancestor spirits from the land of the dead. This is followed with another song invoking the ancestor spirit or *íreme*: “erume erume india abakua awana bakoko yamba.” The song states that the spirit of the “*abakuá* is reborn in the dance of the *íreme* the king of bakoko is here.” Drawn from ritual repertoire, this song calls the spirit of the *íreme* to dance in the ritual of the *plante*. Hernández places this song at the start of the *montuno*, which signals the beginning of the dancing in *guaguancó*. He creates a correspondence between the action of the song and the text. It is not the text however that moves the audience to participation. The crucial change in the interpretative stance occurs only after Hernández preempts the dancers from his ensemble from taking the stage and performing the normal sequence of the *guaguancó*. Hernández derails the progression of the performance to the flirtatious and seductive dance of *guaguancó* by preventing his own ensemble’s dancer from taking the stage. This creates tension and a noticeable gap in the performance.

Indeed, for the *abakuá* hearing the music and witnessing the dance of their ceremonies proves deeply arousing. When I asked the journalist, scholar and *abakuá*, Ramón Torres Zayas what it felt like to see and hear *abakuá* music and dance in public, he fell silent for a moment, leaned back smiling broadly and looking at me point blank,

said “ecstasy” (Torres 5/11). In another instance, I asked Felito Reyes why he got up to dance at the *Delirio Habanero* when Hernández was invited as a guest from the audience to sing with *Yoruba Andabo*, a popular *rumba* group. Reyes explained: “Your heart beats [pauses] not in a normal way,” he said signing the palpitation of his heart with his hand hovering over his chest. Then he continued, “no... it beats faster. The words touched my heart because they were speaking about my lodge. They touch my heart because I understand them. I *know*” (Felito Reyes 8/08). In a similar vein, Menocal explained to me that “when one hears music that is so sticky (*pegajoso*) it makes one’s blood boil ...” to dance is inevitable, in his experience; it is a physical response because one is taken by the sound of the music (Menocal 6/25/12). Hernández understands the reactions of the community members and shapes the performance through key interactions and allows the performance to take its course.

The gap in the *guaguancó* that night at the Yoruba Association lasts only thirty seconds in real time, but creates a palpable disruption in the course of the performance. As the song calling the *íreme* continues to resound through the space, a young man approaches the stage tentatively. Holding a handkerchief in his left hand and an umbrella in his right, mimicking the staff and the branch or small broom carried by the *íreme*, he enters the stage and begins an awkward and halting solo dance. He performs the characteristic ritual cleansing gesture of the *íreme* with the handkerchief [3:05]. Next, Hernández acknowledges the man’s dancing in a very personal way—by naming the lodge to which he belongs in the song. This follows performance practice of the *valla*. Hernández begins by signaling the chorus to change the guide song with a call. Since this is a *rumba*, there is a formulaic metrical structure, which allows the soloist to string

together a series of call and response songs, referred to as guides and choruses. He follows the call immediately with the introduction of a new guide song, usually a couplet, or if the tempo is very fast a single word. The first time through the guide, the soloist repeats the second line of the couplet twice, for a total of four lines. The chorus extracts their part, which consists of the first two lines only. They repeat the new guide exactly until the soloist indicates another change. In subsequent repetitions the soloist only sings the couplet and may improvise, altering the first line only.

By changing the guide song from one which generically calls the *ireme* to dance to one that names a specific lodge, Hernández acknowledges him and interacts directly with him through the performance practice used at *abakuá* ritual celebrations. During the *valla* a dancer is acknowledged or identified with his lodge through a song that names that lodge. This young man belongs to the lodge called *Betongo Naroko Efó* as indicated by the song Hernández chooses: *Awana yumba betongo naroko* [3:17]. The dancer responds with a gesture of devotion, by bending down on one knee [3:20]. Perhaps demonstrating his deeply felt emotions, he crosses himself.<sup>99</sup>

Hernández uses idiosyncratic social knowledge, that of the dancer's lodge, to shape this performance. Using a song that mentions the dancer's lodge is typical of ritual performance practice, but Hernández also recognizes the underlying emotional power of identity and at times chooses the songs in order to embolden and inspire the dancing. He explained to me after watching video of an April 2011 performance that he was singing songs to the lodge of one of the dancers belonging to his ensemble "because it makes

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<sup>99</sup> Catholic imagery has been part of *abakuá* ritual since the nineteenth-century. The position of cross-bearer was added to the hierarchy of officiates as a means of protecting *abakuá* lodges. Today many *abakuás*, like Cubans in general, may practice several religions. Here, I take the gesture of crossing himself to indicate feelings of deeply felt reverence.

them dance better” (Hernández, interview 4/19/11). He gives the first dancer further encouragement by improvising a string of different *abakuá* phrases within the call and response typical of the *guaguancó* which are declarations of brotherhood and instructions on how to dance. The words reflect the verbal interactions and songs used to interact with the *íreme* during the *valla*. He gives the dancer further instructions in the guide songs and calls him “brother” and affirms, “we are all brothers” [*yereka, krukoro*].

Here Hernández conflates *guaguancó* with *abakuá* ritual performance practice. The musics are metrically similar, and like other Afro-Cuban religious musics, the use of call and response singing is typical. Borrowing from Yoruba and Congo song repertoires during the call and response section is common in rumba and even in salsa, but here the song text operate to reveal social relationships and facilitate interaction, not merely as textual decorations. The way that Hernández uses the metrical space left open in the *guaguancó montuno* to improvise with fragments of *abakuá* text is an innovative use of quotation. It reflects both his expertise with the Carabalí liturgical language and his conception of *abakuá* music as the origin of rumba.

Nevertheless, the shift to a modified ritual performance practice, that is a fusion of the *rumba montuno* with the use of metrically appropriate songs from *abakuá* repertoire intensifies the excitement of the event for the initiates in the audience. Like Ricoeur’s characterization of discourse as having an interlocutor to whom it is directed, this technique shows how Hernández directs the performance towards those who understand the songs. Despite its presentation within the framework of folkloric performance, the performance differentiates folklore as national culture from the knowledge of ritual communities.

Another young man appears on stage [3:39]. He dances to the *rumba* percussion accompaniment.<sup>100</sup> His dancing does not correspond to the songs, and Hernández' does not acknowledge him. This non-engagement allows Hernández to affirm the expectation of folklore to be both public and inclusionary, and yet there is no interaction between the two. The interloper, however, provokes strong negative reactions among the audience and dramatizes the problem of ownership of the tradition. As soon as this young man appears on stage dancing *rumba*, some in the audience respond with uncomfortable laughter and jeers. He clearly did not understand the “rules” of the performance. The interloper is soon banished by Pedro Menocal, an older and more skillful dancer. In contrast to the fast jittery movements of the two young men on stage, Menocal gets up and approaches slowly, in the style of an *íreme ocámbo*, (old *íreme*) (Menocal 2/14/11). The first dancer respectfully cedes the stage, following the custom that two *abakuá* do not dance at once (unless it is the twin *íremes* *Aberisun* and *Aberiñan*). The interloper pauses but quickly departs in the face of Menocal's self assured presence. Hernández repeats the technique changing the guide song to acknowledge Menocal's lodge: *Efori Komo Ireme Eta-Ipo*. Hernández sings a guide song that name the dancer's lodge: “*A E yayo guanguantemio efori komo, Komo Guanguantemio*” [4:39]. Recognizing one another in public and performing their esoteric knowledge the men create a new way of being-in-the-world in public space for the long discriminated and hidden community.

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<sup>100</sup> This demonstrates how the singer leads. While people focus on percussion as emblematic of African in origins the ways that musical genres are vocal in nature are often overlooked.

## A Community of interpreters

Hernández's identity negotiations activate a network of participants familiar with *abakuá* rituals and oriented to the exclusivity of the performance practice. His performance opens public space to this largely invisible community. Many *abakuás* in the audience understand their performance as an articulation of their ownership of the tradition (Menocal 6/25/12). From their point of view the second dancer does not have a right to be there. The first dancer on stage becomes annoyed and aggressive in his movements brandishing the umbrella and handkerchief, mimicking the *íreme's* duty to discipline unruly participants. The men sitting at the table, from which I filmed the performance, commented immediately. The man seated next to me while filming this event exclaims to his friend Pedro Menocal, "Get him out of there!" [3:53]. From this point forward, it becomes clear that the performance is driven kinetically and emotionally by real *abakuás*, not professional performers. They recognize one another through their style of dance and understand the sonic and kinetic signs of ritual performance.

Among the *abakuás* who dance there are other interactions besides dancing per se, which signal their knowledge of ritual practices and build the excitement of the performance. On this evening, Ángel el Chivo (also an initiate) plays the *quinto*, the high-pitched solo drum of the *rumba* ensemble. As the session on this evening grows hotter in its expressions, the dancers begin to interact with Ángel, who takes on the role of *monibonkó* (child of the *bonkó enchemmiya*) or *bonkó* player of *abakuá* rituals. Both Menocal and the dancer who follows him interact with Ángel who plays drum calls that direct their actions. Shifting to *abakuá* ritual performance practice, Ángel contributes his knowledge of *abakuá* drumming to intensify the performance.

In this sequence, Ángel's calls and interactions with Menocal provoke him further and some of the movements reveal levels of knowledge and information about ritual practices that some of the participants declined to speak about. Fernández and Valdespino both noted upon watching the video that this portion of the performance "gets hot" (Fernández 3/21/11, Valdespino 8/09). Although Fernández pointed out some of the choreographic phrases representing positions in the hierarchy or *firmas*, he also declined to name some, preferring to say that they were things that people did in the *plante* (Fernández, 3/21/11). Some of the sequences narrate stories, or correspond to the texts of particular invocations of the *nkame*. Performances reproduce the entire cosmology of the group in the correspondences and enaction of songs, music and dance knowledge. Here is the way that participants dance feeds off of one another's performances as they provoke one another to more and more esoteric displays. The issue of sequencing the movements along with correspondences informs the aesthetics of their performances.

Later I asked Menocal whether or not the interloper's dancing constituted an act of disrespect (*una falta de respeto*). Menocal responded, "it's not seen as a lack of respect but a lack of ethics, you understand me? Of values. Because the value of what is there is being lost" (Menocal 6/25/12). The infraction was linked with a sense of loss and changing times and meanings of the *abakuá* in public. Presumably it would have been inconceivable in earlier times to interfere in such a session. Indeed others in the older generations express a similar sentiment. Reyes commented, "Things are changing... They are not the same as they were. People don't have the same manners... in twenty years this will all be gone" (Reyes 8/09). The sense of loss may be symptomatic of the broader ruptures in Cuban society. While it may be true that the ways that these men learned to

practice and be *abakuá* are changing. It also seems that in many ways, now that it is legalized, the *abakuá* community is growing. Some members of the community are taking on increasingly public roles in national culture. Following ritual performance practice, Hernández affirms an entire series of emotions, interpretations, interactions, movements, personal associations, and feeling of self and community. The space of folkloric performance, even if temporarily, creates public space for the intensification of the community's presence, and for individuals to live the experience of their *abakuá* identity in public space.

### **Example 2: Re-storying the Nation: Quintín Banderas, *ñáñigo* or *abakuá*?<sup>101</sup>**

The second example illustrates how Hernández negotiates his identity as a patriot through his identity as public leader of the *abakuá* community. His performance occurs as part of an official rally memorializing Quintín Banderas (c.1846-1906), an Afro-Cuban general of the nineteenth-century Liberation Army.<sup>102</sup> The event takes place on August 23, 2011, the anniversary of Banderas' death, in front of a recently restored statue of him in Atrillo Park in the Cayo Hueso neighborhood.<sup>103</sup> Sponsored by government agencies<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> During the colonial era and much of the twentieth-century *abakuás* were referred to as *ñáñigos*, which Ortiz explains as a derivative of *ñaño* a term for "little brother." During the wars against Spain rebel soldiers were often referred to as *ñáñigos* invoking the negative associations with the *abakuá* (de la Fuente 2001, Helg 1990).

<sup>102</sup> The central figure to whom the event pays homage, exemplifies the leadership roles played by Black soldier in the Cuban military during the struggle for independence as well as their subsequent betrayal by the government. More broadly, the story underscores the exclusion of Afro-Cubans within the nation. Banderas served in all three Wars for Independence and achieved the rank of General. He was court-martialed due to disagreements about his personal behavior, specifically regarding keeping concubines in his military camp and was (later) accused of anti-white racism (Helg 1995:120). Following the end of the wars (1898), Banderas became a leader among Afro-Cubans and orator on issues of electoral politics in the early Republican era. He was also among the veterans that were denied benefits for their service as well as employment in the public sector due to racial discrimination by the elite dominated government (de la Fuente 2001). Banderas was murdered in his sleep by government forces on August 23, 1906, during a Liberal uprising against the fraudulent election of Estrada Palma (Helg 1995).

<sup>103</sup> The statue was originally erected in 1921 by Club Atenas, an Afro-Cuban professional association. (Some accounts give a different date). Atenas played a role similar to that of the NAACP in the United

and organized by Afrocubanist artist, Salvador González Escalona,<sup>105</sup> the event affirms the revolutionary and liberationist values of the Cuban nation and links participation in Afro-Cuban religion with patriotism. It is addressed to local residents and a small group of official participants, including intellectuals, activists, visiting dignitaries and two of Banderas' granddaughters.

Here Hernández uses strategy of direct performance to present *abakuá* folklore as national culture with deep ties to the independence movement. While nationalist in orientation, Hernández challenges the contemporary discourse on nation and Afro-Cuban religion. He alters the performance in order to “restore” Banderas as an *abakuá* and again locates ownership of that tradition with the *abakuá* community. I argue that his performance emphasizes the experience of *abakuá* identity for participants such that it eclipses or decenters the government's political message assimilating Banderas.

The dancers establish Banderas's identity as an *abakuá* s however implicitly in a climactic moment of daring. Hernández again breaks down the fourth wall in order to dissimulate the constructed and stylized nature of the folkloric performance. At the same time Hernández uses his composed *abakuá* set piece and the well-disciplined musicians from Oba Ilú to enforce order on a potentially chaotic event. Here, participants are again tacitly invited to join from the audience. This powerful alteration allows initiates to

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States (Helg 1990:56). From article on Cuba/Argentina comparison. Formed in 1917 it was the most famous *sociedad de color* of the Republic (de la Fuente 168, 170).

<sup>104</sup> Sponsored in cooperation with the Department of Culture of the Central Committee, and the President's Office of the Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC). Attendees included a visiting dignitary from Trinidad/Tobago, two great-granddaughters of Banderas, and several speakers from the Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC). Escalona is the director of a local folkloric venue and tourist destination called *Callejón de Hamel* (Hamel's Alley) where he has painted murals on the buildings in a primitivist style evoking various Afro-Cuban religions. Escalona organizes events at the *Callejón* in addition to the weekly *rumba* and folkloric performances on Sundays. See photos of a tv taping occurring at *Callejón* in Ch. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Escalona is an artist and the director of a local tourist attraction and venue for folkloric performance (*Callejón de Hamel*).

demonstrate and live their *abakuá* identity in public space, in the context of an official political event no less. The ground of interpretation of the event becomes the experience of living their *abakuá* identity publically. Viewing the event through that lens, Banderas who was called a *ñáñigo*, a disparaging term applied to rebel soldiers and *abakuás* in the colonial era, now becomes reclaimed as an *abakuá*.<sup>106</sup> In this way, Hernández makes a historical claim to the role of the *abakuá* in the nation and articulates a vision of race pride that has traditionally been anathema in public space and nationalist discourses of “raceless patriotism.” He invites initiates in the audience to experience their patriotism through identification with the *abakuá* and with Banderas rather than through official discourses.

The event celebrates the restoration of the statue of Banderas in Atrillo Park and reflects the transformation of Afrocubanist discourses in recent years from secular artistic performance to the practice of Afro-Cuban religion as national culture. The event organizer, Salvador González Escalona is president and director of *Callejon de Hamel*, a nearby cultural (tourist) attraction and outdoor performance venue that features Afro-Cuban folklore and rumba. He represents a link between the neighborhood and institutions of national culture. González gives a speech reiterating the nexus between

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<sup>106</sup> The appropriation of Banderas occurs in the context of a reinterpretation of *abakuá* history that pre-dates the legalization of the community. Activist intellectuals, prominently including Tato Quiñones have published on this topic since 1998. The *abakuá* community has circulated stories about the community’s involvement in the rebel movement and in particular in relation to an event the assassination of five medical students who were aided by *abakuás*. Goyo is quoted extensively in *la Gaceta* (magazine of UNEAC) in 1998, in which he tells a story of how General Antonio Maceo was saved by Abakuás when the governor of Havana, Trujillo Monagas had vowed to assassinate the leader of the independence movement against Spain. Members of the *abakuá* lodge *Bacocó Efó* had hidden Maceo on a tugboat permitting him to escape to the Eastern part of the island. This telling of history, like the retelling of the execution of seven medical students in 1871 and the five *abakuás* who died trying to defend them, not only links the *Abakuá* to the 19<sup>th</sup> century independence movement but to definitions of citizenship. National culture is part of contemporary public discourse on racial inequality.

Afro-Cuban religion, patriotism, and the continuing struggle for the revolution. In it, he confesses his participation in Afro-Cuban religion as a son of Changó, revealing specifically the *orisha* to which he became initiated some twenty years ago. He enthusiastically assures the crowd that the revolutionary struggle continues, is one from which no one surrenders, and thanks them for being present to remember and memorialize Banderas. Presumably the restoration of Banderas to glory demonstrates that revolutionary ethos and shows how the government “rescues” its black heroes from the oblivion of forgetfulness.

As in the event, many details of Banderas’ life are obscured in his re-contextualization amid contemporary Afrocubanist discourses. Banderas has been recast as a religious figure in the novel *La muerte es principio, no fin* (Death is beginning, not end, 2008).<sup>107</sup> In this book, scholars Natalia Bolívar and Natalia del Río fictionalize Banderas as a *babalawo*, or Yoruba priest. The performance however tacitly claims Banderas as an *abakuá*. While it is not clear that Banderas was an *abakuá*, oral histories have circulated in recent years linking the *abakuá* with heroes of the Liberation Army.<sup>108</sup> In fact, these were routinely repeated to me in interviews, along with other nationalistic framings. Hernández performance decenters the dominant narrative of the nation drawing the *abakuá* community into a central role through the association with Banderas.

By making subtle alterations in the performance of *abakuá* folklore, Hernández succeeds in reframing the event shifting its significance from the appropriation of

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<sup>107</sup> A play on the meaning of *principio* beginning, principle, source and *fin*, end or goal.

<sup>108</sup> There is much biographical evidence that suggests that he was not an *abakuá*. A few year back some people began an annual celebration on November 27 memorializing the *abakuás* in Havana who died coming to the aid of a group of medical students who were attacked by forces loyal to Spain during the wars for independence.

Banderas by the Cuban government to a public outpouring of the *abakuá* community asserting its presence, its music and dance, and even appropriating Banderas in their own name. In contrast to the previous example, in which Hernández creates common ground between himself and the minority *abakuá* community by embedding ritual songs in his performance of *guaguancó*, here he uses a strategy of direct performance. He presents *abakuá* music and dance as such, but uses the folkloric set piece he composed for his ensemble as the basis of the performance. By effacing some of the conventions of folkloric performance, it appears as though the event arises naturally and spontaneously from the momentum of the crowd. In this performance, the ensemble does not wear their customary attire and only the men participate, as would be the case in any ceremonial (or social) context. Furthermore, no attempt is made to prevent volunteers from the audience from joining the ensemble on stage. The performance, in fact, begins across the street from the park with a procession of musicians walking through the crowd to the stage, people joining them as they go. The ensemble's professional musicians share the microphone and the instruments freely with volunteers from the audience, further effacing the staged quality of the show. In all of these ways the performance seems very natural and spontaneous, asserting its transparency and veracity.

At the same time, however, Hernández uses the folkloric form to control the sequence of events, shape the performance, and to contain the energy of the event. He intervenes at key moments to move the event forward and create an aesthetically and politically efficacious performance. Hernández composed the set piece in 2010 and *Oba Ilú* performed it as part of their regular shows throughout 2011. It has a carefully constructed three-part form consisting of *nkame* or invocation/recitation, *inua* or songs,

and *marcha*, or call and response couplets. Hernández typically opens the piece with a long spoken section reproducing sections of liturgy that greet natural elements and the members of the hierarchy, naming their offices or *plazas*. This section concludes with a song *Yamba O*, which also greets the leaders of the lodge and rank and file members. This song leads into a set of songs used to greet all of the instruments of the musical ensemble and the gathered rank and file. In this performance, Hernández foreshortens the recitation and begins with the second half of the song *Yamba O*. He follows that with several lines of text asserting his authority to speak and claims he does not wish to clash with anyone.

Figure 61. *Abakuá* folklore at Atrillo Park, August 23, 2011. *Llamado*, foreshortened introduction. Here Hernández skips the recitation of *nkame* and begins with the song *yamba o*, which usually

GH: Jeye ye ye jeye yo yo	Call to attention or <i>llamado</i> announces the intention to speak.
[pause]	
O yayo kama!	Kama means to speak.
[Boy in the crowd: o yayo kama!]	Unplanned but appropriate response. Affirms speaker's intent to speak and signals that people are listening.
GH: eye eeye eye yayo asere indio obon, mayene obon obonekue eruminan etie momi ekori abakua ewemio abakua umpairan etete eripondo abasi ñhare ekon anamendo. <u>asere asere asere asere abakua o e.</u>	Greets ritual hierarchy, naming the positions Top rank, Middle ranks Rank and file I am a good abakuá I am singing and don't want to clash With anyone [Song of greeting, calls for a response.]

In this way the texts used to compose the set piece follow semantic ordering and correspondences with ritual performance practice. They frame the actions of the performance in the correct ritual ordering beginning with greetings and the customary assertion of the speaker's authority to articulate the tradition.

When the performance begins, the men of *Oba Ilú* emerge from a building across the street from the park and join Hernández, who stands to the side of the stage. Processing together they mount the stage where the rest of the event's speakers have been. The assembly of professional musicians and volunteers from the crowd stand together and sing the *saludo*, a series of songs dedicated to greeting the musical instruments in the ensemble.

Figure 62. *Saludo* sung by Hernández. Abakuá folklore at Atrillo Park, 8/23/11. These responsorial songs use the characteristic melodic formula of *abakuá* responsorial singing. The songs greet the musical ensemble or *biankomo* first as a whole, and then the instruments. The *cancomo* or small drums are named and greeted next: *biapa*, *eroapa* [commonly pronounced “broapa”], and *cuchiyerema*. Then the singers greet the lead or mother drum, *bonkó enchemiya*. Finally, the singers greet the bell or *ekón* [also: *ekón erima*].

**Hernández:** Eye eyeye Biankomo biankomo biankomo  
**Chorus:** aaa biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
 Biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
 O oyo oyo

**Hernández:** Eye eyeye Biapa broapa cuchiyerema  
**Chorus:** Aaa Biapa broapa cuchiyerema e  
 Biapa broapa cuchiyerema e  
 O oyo oyo

**Hernández:** Jeye asere asere asere bonkó enchemiya e  
**Chorus:** Asere asere asere  
 Bonkó enchemiya e  
 Asere asere asere  
 O yayo o yayo  
 Asere asere asere

**Hernández:** Eee ekonerima ekonerima o  
**Chorus:** aaa ekonerima ekonerima o e  
 ekonerima ekonerima o e  
 o oyo oyo

These songs use the melodic formulas characteristic of *abakuá* responsorial singing. They also make a semantically appropriate transition from the solo text of the *nkame* to the song section or *inua* of the folkloric form. The *saludo* includes call and response singing

in familiar melodic formulas. The songs are known from the procession leading to the *valla* or celebratory portion of ritual, and thus are commonly known and elicit participation.<sup>109</sup>

Although, Hernández gives the microphone to volunteers from the audience, it becomes apparent that he maintains forward movement through the folkloric set piece by intervening at certain junctures. He permits a series of improvisations and additions, but once the extemporized segments threaten to confuse the organization or detain forward momentum he intervenes. After several exchanges of song texts led by volunteer singers, one accidentally “doubles back” in the form, by returning to the *saludo* [5:29]. Hernández, asserting his role as director, takes the microphone from the man and redirects the singing [5:49]. [Figure.]

Figure 63. Volunteer #2, song. Abakuá folklore at Atrillo Park, 8/23/11.

**[RETURN TO SALUDO]**

**Volunteer #2:** Queye eeeye yayo morua  
Queyeeeeeee biankomo biankomo biankomo

**Chorus:** aaa biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
o oyo oyo

**[HERNANDEZ INTERVENES]**

**Hernández:** jeye e efi nankerewa efi nankerewa  
Kanfioro nankuko mukarara nankaro  
Jeye!  
Suko nandiwara, kama!, ngomo mukanara  
Jeye! Efi nankerewa kama! Efi nankerewa

Kanfioro nankuko eta muna siro munae  
Chenepon cheneneri  
**Kama!** Efi nankerewa

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<sup>109</sup> The song repeats the word “*asere*” a common greeting in Cuban slang. “*Que bolá, asere?*” means something like “what’s up, man?” Taken to mean something like “brother” in slang, this song reveals its origin as a greeting word.

Jeyeye kerewa nitongo suko bakariongo

**Chorus:** kerewa nitongo suko bakariongo  
Kerewa nitongo oyayo oyayo  
Kerewa nitongo

In ritual, such a move back to the *saludo* would not matter, as the exchange of songs is indefinite and entirely up to the singers and has the purpose of building the energy of the gathering. Aware that the dancers will soon appear, Hernández does keep the energy building and keeps the show moving forward. He takes the microphone and sings a short song that fits metrically in the structure of the *marcha*, similar to the *montuno* section of *rumba*. Hernández inserts calls of “kama!” (Cr. speak) requesting a choral response. In the following segment, Hernández goes back and forth priming the call and response of the *marcha*. He keeps the singing progressing forward through the formal structure of the set piece and prepares for the arrival of the dancers in the vicinity of the stage.

It is worth noting that there were conflicts surrounding the planning of the event that centered on the dance of the *íreme*. Organizers reportedly did not want Hernández to bring out the masked dancers during the musical homage. Members of *Oba Ilú* relayed the drama while recounting the daily gossip from one of the rehearsals. They gleefully spun narratives of how Hernández planned to avert the censors and how he had confronted the organizers. They explained that he would hide the costumes in the bathrooms of *El Palacio de la Rumba*, a performance venue dedicated to *rumba*, which faces the park. As the event drew near this topic was dropped. On the day of the event, when the *íremes* did emerge from *El Palacio*, they wore the costumes belonging to another ensemble, whose director observed the event from a distance.

Reflecting the notion that Hernández's performance decenters national narratives, the performance encircled the space of the official event. Beginning with the procession of musicians from *Palacio de la Rumba* across the street, the *íremes* also emerge from the building. The *íremes* make their way across the park dancing and clowning around, performing their characteristic *murmurakas* among the crowd and make their way to the stage. The two dancers, Calmuse and his friend, Albertico, know each other well and have rehearsed their routines over several years. The dancers take turns improvising and playing with the crowd but also have choreographed duo segments as well as the rapport that develops from rehearsing and performing together over time. Later in interviews, Calmuse later noted that since *El Palacio* served as the sanctuary building from which the *íremes* emerged, he considered the performance utterly realistic (Calmuse 8/25/11).

As the dancers get closer to the cement platform where the musicians are, a man nicknamed Morua who is a *morua* in his lodge, inserts himself into the performance. He displays ritual knowledge playing the role of the *encricamo*, the leader or guide of the *íremes*. He holds out a plantain, which is supposed to be a means of controlling the spirits inside the masquerade costumes. He speaks to them, presumably in the Carabali language, and hovers around imitating what one might see in a ritual context. The *íremes* are feisty and seem a bit difficult to manage. An official from UNEAC can be seen trying to martial them onto the stage but they do not respond to him. They respond more readily to Morua. [8:30] Morua becomes part of the drama of the show, leading the *íremes*.

After this somewhat chaotic transition, [8:45] the *íremes* and Morua stays on the stage. Men from the audience take turns on the *bonkó* and the dancers take turns interacting with the volunteer drummers [9:07, 9:15, 9:59]. While the music and dance

build up the excitement again, Hernández and Morua can be seen speaking to one another [10:30]. Hernández can be seen pointing towards the statue of Banderas. A little while later, Morua says something to Calmuse [10:50] and then to Albertico [10:55]. Then Morua returns to playing his role as *encricamo* continuing to offer the *íremes* a plantain. In retrospect this was the planning of the climactic moment of the performance.

During this exchange between Hernández and Morua, another singer from *Oba Ilú*, maintains the vocal work of the *marcha*. Fernández sings the very short *guias* or guide song for the call and response in the manner of the *rumba montuno*. Volunteers #1 and #2, who were allowed to perform at the beginning, break in and each give a few guides [11:24, 11:44]. Then, Hernández takes the microphone back again [13:04] and Morua leads the *íremes* off the stage towards the statue. Hernández emphasizes continuity by maintaining the song that the previous singer had started “*íreme aweremi, íreme aweremi*” to which the crowd continues its response “*andaria (a)kosundaria.*” This song refers to the pair of warrior *íremes* (twins called *Aberisun* and *Aberiñan*) who the dancers model their performance on. It is said that they are the spirits of two brothers who died in battle. One of the twins is missing a leg and the other is missing an arm, so the dancers hop on one leg. Their performance makes a fitting homage to the memory of Banderas and reinforce the correspondences between song text and action that *abakuás* value in performance.

Volunteer #3 leads the dancers past the military honor guard right onto the base of the statue. This moment boosts the energy, already high, among the crowd. The two dancers do a beautiful job of performing a short improvised routine in parallel movements but opposite directions around the base of the statue. This bit of mischief is

perfectly inline with the personality of the *íreme*, as a spirit being and trickster figure. Calmuse, the dancer confirmed that this was improvised on the spot (Calmuse 8/25/11). He did not specify if he was instructed to do so by Hernández but explained that it was unplanned. The two dancers emerge from the base of the statue [14:01], one of them bumping the soldier who was standing guard on the way out. This indicates a measure of freedom the dancers feel and the freedom ascribed to the figure of the *íreme*. Calmuse continues to dance in front of the soldiers and the statue. Hernández changes the guide song.

Shortly after the *íremes* emerge from the base of statue a voice is heard over the public address system thanking the crowd and Hernández, ending the event [11:39]. Generally, my experience of Cuban audiences has been that they are responsive and disciplined in public spaces. Events clear out with relative ease. Remarkably at this point, Kiki, one of the percussionists from *Oba Ilú*, begins singing the guide, “*yayo e yayo mae*” and the crowd maintains the chorus “*efi nankerewa.*” The crowd is charged up and the musicians do not want stop. The crowd moves into the street in front of *El Palacio de la Rumba* and returns Kiki’s guides for seventeen more guide and chorus cycles, and they seem as if they could go on. After some minutes pass [15:55], Hernández makes his way through the crowd, up to the doors of *El Palacio* where the musicians are gathered. With his final intervention enforcing the folkloric form, he intones a cadential phrase “*A, E,*” the others respond: “*E, A. Efi abarako yereka mokongo machebere.*”<sup>110</sup> This definitively ends the event. As Hernández has been doing throughout, he keeps the event contained within the folkloric form and effectively channels the crowd’s energy demonstrating to

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<sup>110</sup> The phrase invokes the mythological leader of the *abakuá* who united the four separate African tribes in founding the *abakuá*.

officials that he controls the performers, both professional and volunteer. Similar to the *rumba* event, he incorporates members of the audience into the performance, intensifying the event by using it as a public space in which to allow initiates to demonstrate their real-life knowledge. He orchestrates the event masterfully, deploying the dancers in a moment that diverges from the staged activity to create a heightened moment of tension, pushing the event to the edge of spinning out of control. Hernández shortly returns to the microphone to close it down. This moment of ambiguity reinforces Hernández's stature as a leader among the *abakuá* and his position as an unofficial intermediary between the government and the community at large.

Hernández negotiated his public face or identity through the musical interactions catalyzed by the performance of *abakuá* folklore. His cultural performances allowed him to move between governmental institutions and the musical scenes in Havana. His creativity certainly benefited his own career and public stature. At a closer look, his access to institutional power however partial and paradoxical opens up space, not only reproducing the *abakuá* community but also extending it by reinterpreting tradition in terms of his own agendas and contemporary historical context. While all of the *abakuá* might not share Hernández ultimate goals these performances intensify their public presence and transform the community by entraining *abakuá* identity in the public spaces of folkloric and rumba performances.

**Oba Ilu at the Asociacion Yoruba, 8/13/09.**  
**“El Noche Esta Como El Dia”**  
**Original verse by Tio Tom**  
**arr. Gregorio Hernandez and Oba Ilú**  
**Rumba-abakuá**

Soloist: Gregorio “El Goyo” Hernandez

Chorus: Amauri Fernández, Lazaro Hernandez, Jeny Dalman, Mayasín

Percussionists: Kiki (tumbadora), Korominas (tres-dos), Angelito (quinto), unidentified  
on kata

Ensemble Dancers: Chino, Isnavi, Willi, unidentified dancers

Key:

[xxxx] = unintelligible

G = Guide

C = Chorus

[#] = number of repetitions of the guide and chorus

Form: rumba-guaguancó: Intro + AB

Introduction: Diana

Verse: Canto [A]

Chorus: Mambo [B] (call and response, dancing: couple)

Form: rumba-abakuá Intro + AB:

Introduction: Diana

Verse: Inua [A]

Chorus: Marcha [B] (call and response, dancing: male solo)

**La Noche Esta Como El Día**

***Diana [Introduction, sung on vocables]***

**Soloist:** Elembile belem belem belem.

bilem bilem belem.

Belem belem

Ana nana nana nana

Nana nanana.

Eirere eirere

Ananana nana ananana.

Guiro!

Erere!

[0:19]

**Chorus:** anana na nana.

A [e] anana na nana

O oyo oyo

Guiro (5x)

*Verse or Canto [A section]:*

[0:37]

**Soloist:** La noche esta como el dia

Dentro de cuarto e famba

Todo se vuelve de alagria

Porque ha llegado el moura

**Etie momi moura tete moura yene bibi**

**Aroro gobio momi eriero moinua**

**Kama!**

[0:55]

**Chorus:** Akama yusongo.

Guiro! (4)

**Soloist:** La noche esta como el dia

Dentro de cuarto e famba

Todo se vuelve de alagria

Porque ha llegado el moura

[xxxx] anabiaka

[xxxx] mamari amba

[1:19] Obonekue sangili

mosongo a sokobon iyamba

Bario!

[1:29]

**Chorus:** Akama yusongo.

**Soloist:** Guiro!

Bonko butame asokoro makua

Jeye mokua afe afe

Ererire embori acua

Guiro!

[1:54]

Isue eribo ya profa ñongon temio  
Jeye sito awarariansa  
Awana bakoko yamba  
Kanfioro nankuko biabanga efo

Embele mambelen bele efi efo  
Embele mambelen bele efi efooooo

**Montuno [B section]:** The call and response section during which dancing occurs. Here the “call” is referred to as a guide, and the “response” is referred to as the chorus. The soloist selects the guide song and then after the first time through he or she may improvise on the first part of the phrase. The first time through the guide song, the soloist gives a call at the beginning of the line to alert the chorus; he or she sings the chorus (usually a couplet) once through and repeats the second line twice. The chorus repeats back the couplet. On subsequent iterations of the guide song, the soloist only sings it once. When he or she changes it again, the procedure is repeated, a call to alert the chorus to the change and the second line sung twice. As the tempo increases in the montuno the guide songs get shorter. The last ones are just one word, or a couple of syllables.

[2:17]

**Guide:** E! Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba  
awana bakoko yamba  
awana bakoko yamba  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba.

[2:28]

**Guide:** Oyoyoyo e yamba o!  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba.

**Guide:** Efi yereka krukoro,  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba.

**Guide:** [xxx]  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba.

**Guide:** Bonko eriero eriero makua  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua

awana bakoko yamba.

**Guide:** Oyoyoyo yamba ore,  
awana bakoko yamba.

**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua,  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**3:03** [Jeny: íreme!]

**Guide:** Miyereka krukoro,  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba.

**Guide:** Yayo e yayo mae,  
awana bakoko yamba.  
**Chorus:** Erume erume india abakua  
awana bakoko yamba.

**First dancer enters.**

[3:12]

**Guide:** Eeee awana yumba - betongo naroko

**Betongo naroko, betongo naroko efo**

**Chorus:** Awana yumba betongo naroko.

**Guide:** Oyayo yamba ore,  
Betongo naroko.  
**Chorus:** Awana yumba betongo naroko.

[3:33]

**Guide:** Afia rufie afiaru íreme  
betongo naroko.

**Chorus:** Awana yumba betongo naroko.

[9]

**4:30 Dancer #2 (Pedro Menocal) enters**

[4:39]

**Guide:** Eeee! A E yayo guangantemio efori komon  
**Komo guangantemio.**

**Chorus:** yayo guangantemio.

[18]

[5:29] **Guide:** Jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

Abasi lorikama e jeye muñangere  
**Chorus:** Jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

[8]

**6:15 Amauri Fernández enters and Menocal finishes.**

**Guide:** O yoyoyo yamba ore  
Jeye muñangere  
**Chorus:** Jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

**Guide:** O yoyoyo yamba ore  
Jeye muñangere  
**Chorus:** Jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

**6:36 Professional dancer in purple shirt enters**

**Guide:** Jeye mumbankere kerewa  
Munbankoro kanfioro  
Mumbankere kerewa  
Munbankoro kanfioro

**Chorus:** Mumbankere kerewa  
Munbankoro kanfioro

[7]

**7:26 Dancer from CFNC enters.**

**Guide:** Munbankoro kanfioro  
Munbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** Mumbankere kerewa  
Munbankoro kanfioro

**Guide:** O yoyayo mae  
Munbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** Mumbankere kerewa  
Munbankoro kanfioro

**Guide:** Eee! efi nankerewa  
kerewa nitongo.  
**Chorus:** Efi nankerewa

[6]

[8:03] **Guide:** jeye yamba ore

**Chorus:** efi nankerewa

[6]

**8:25** G: Eeee! yayo yayo yayo ibiabanga endemefi

Yayo sangafimba yayo

C: sangafimba

G: yayo [6]

C: sangafimba

G: yayo mae [1]

C: sangafimba

G: yayo [10]

C: sangafimba

8:59 G: yayo mae [2]

C: sangafimba

**9:00 the last dancer finishes**

G: yayo [2]

C: sangafimba

**9:05** GUIDE Jeye! A E, E A

C: A E, E A

Efi abarako yereka mokongo machebere. [9:15]

Transcribed by Amauri Fernandez and Elizabeth Batiuk, 7/11/11

**Abakuá folklore set piece  
by Gregorio Hernández**

Performed with Oba Ilú 4/10/11  
Hotel San Alejandro, Marianao  
Havana, Cuba

**NKAME: invocation, recitation**

**Hernández:** Eyi bariba riba nkama  
**Chorus:** Wa!

**Hernández:** Eyi bariba riba nkama  
**Chorus:** Wa!

**Hernández:** asoiro enkaño erie abasi  
**Chorus:** ya yo

**Hernández:** asoiro enkaño nsuabasi abasi  
**Chorus:** ya yo

**Hernández:** Asere entiñon embremiyo enbanuran chenepon cheneri  
Asukuru quantiyen,  
Antrokofoco omkoiren asokoro makua.

Abasi bongo entiyenberomo  
Enseniyen bongo itia ororo,  
Asan kantion amnantion bensuao,  
Asere obon iyamba bongo mofe  
Bongo asoroko  
Ekue yamba o, ekueñon achanganike famba  
Amfamfana muñi nanciriyo.

Itia ororo ekueñon mosongo iyamba.

Isunekue enduve kiko awnamoto  
Otarague kondo,  
Efion kima empanai empanamoto  
akuriñon sanga abakuá.

Mokongo masause mokongo abasi  
siaramo obijuraka embori,  
Akereke abasi nankoboro.

Obon ncrikamo  
Obon entui.

Abasongañua makaterere,  
Empego mogobion akaribongo abasi,  
Mosongo moto awan eribo saekue eribo

Mosongo obon iyamba.  
asere indio obon arakankbia muñon  
Akanaran Efo okobio mukarara  
Etie momi Efi Buton Muñon Obane  
Etia etia erende awanamam kondongo

Asere krukoro,  
Ekoría enyene abakuá iwanke momi  
abasi lorikama.

**INUA: canto, songs based on melodic formulas of responsorial singing.**

**Guide: Eyeyeye eyeyeye**

**Chorus: Aaa aaa aaa**

G: Oyayo yayo  
C: Oyayo oyayo oyayo

G: Eye eye eyeye eyeye yayo  
Asere indiobon mayenebon obonekue erumiñan  
**Etie momi ekoria abakuá ewemio**  
**Abakuá unpairan tete yeripondo**  
abasi uñere ekon anambero.

**SALUDO [songs of greeting]:**

G: asere asere asere  
asere abakuá o e

C: asere asere asere  
asere abakuá o e  
asere asere asere  
o yayo o yayo  
asere asere asere

G: Eyeye Biankomo biankomo biankomo  
C: Aaaa Biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
Biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
O yo yo

G: Obiapa Broapa Cuchiyerema e  
C: Aaaa Obiapa Broapa Cuchiyerema e  
Obiapa Broapa Cuchiyerema e  
Ooo ooo ooo

G: Asere asere asere Bonko Echemiya e  
C: Asere asere asere Bonko Echemiya e  
Asere asere asere  
Asere asere asere Oyayo Oyayo  
Asere asere asere

G: Ekon erima ekon erima o

C: Aaaa Ekon erima ekon erima o e  
Ekon erima ekon erima o e  
Ooo ooo ooo

G: [Eyeye yeye eyeye yoyo]  
C: Aaa aaa aaa

G: Oyayo kama  
C: Oyayo oyayo oyayo oyayo

**Verse:**

G: Muñanga ekue ita mananyuao  
Muñanga ekue ita mananyuao  
Efori komon yereka [bario!] efori isun sanckobio  
Monina y bonko  
Obonsiro ekue awarariansa ngomo

G: e ye awarariansa awarariansa ngomo

C: a awarariansa awarariansa ngomo e  
awarariansa awarariansa ngomo e  
Ooo yo oyo

G: eye eye eye  
Awariandaria kondo

Fernández: eye ye yayo

G: muñanga ekue yereka yerekemio  
Ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba  
Efori komom efori isun san(c)kobio  
Jeye Obon siro tansiro ekue awarariansa ngomo  
Eye ye ye awarariansa awarariansa ngomo

C: a awarariansa awarariansa ngomo e  
awarariansa awarariansa ngomo e  
Ooo oyo oyo

**G: jeye! bario! A** [a call signaling a change]

**VERSE:**

C: A E [Hernández: kama!] isun arae  
[Hernández: bario!] A E [Hernández: jeyeye jeyeye jeyeye kama!] isun arae

G: jeye!  
C: O ekue o ekue isun ara

Guide [Fernández]: otankuo bekonsi isun antan mofe  
C: a otanko bekonsi isun antan mofe  
Otankuo bekonsi oyayo oyayo otanko bekonsi

**MARCHA / MONTUNO** this section in the call and response similar to the montuno in rumba. The Calls are referred to as guides (G) and the responses are referred to as choruses (C). The singer usually improvises on the first phrase of the guide song. These improvisations are in bold. Changes in the guide song are labeled, and the performer usually marks the change with some sort of call at the start of the new guide.

G: E asereko muñanga asereko muñanga  
Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **oyoyo yamba ore** asereko muñanga  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **yayo wanankemio** asereko muñanga  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **efori mayene efori** asereko muñanga  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **oyoyo yamba ore**  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **yayo Ekue yayomae** asereko muñanga  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **afiarufie íreme** asereko muñanga  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

G: **eye yayomae** asereko muñanga  
C: Asereko muñanga asereko muñanga

**Change:**

G: eye Ita Mananyuao el bongo mafimba  
El bongo mafimba el bongo mafimba  
C: ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba

G: eye yayo mae el bongo mafimba  
C: ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba

G: awana krukoro el bongo mafimba  
C: ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba

G: eye yamba ore el bongo mafimba  
C: ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba

G: oyoyo anabiaka el bongo mafimba  
C: ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba

G: el bongo mafimba el bongo mafimba

C: ita mananyuao el bongo mafimba

**Change:**

G: jeye jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

Abasi lorikama jeye muñangere

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: oyoyoyoyo yamba ore

Jeye muñangere

Chorus: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: okobio efori komon jeye muñangere

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: [xxxx] kama!

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: jeyeyeye muñangere jeye muñangere

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: yeyeye yayo mae jeye muñangere

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: yeyeye yayo mae jeye muñangere

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

G: ekue efi mayene efori jeye muñangere

C: jeye muñangere jeye muñangere

**Change:**

G: **jeye ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana**

C: **ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana**

G: [xxxxx] -e ñongo e benkomana

C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: oyo yamba ore ñongo e benkomana

C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: apapa carabali ñongo benkomana

C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: a e yayo mae ñongo benkomana

C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: apapa carabali ñongo benkomana

C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana  
C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: oyo yamba ore ñongo e benkomana  
C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: e ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana  
C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: e ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana  
C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

G: a e yayo mae ñongo benkomana  
C: ñongo benkomana ñongo benkomana

**Change:**

G: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: oyoyoyo yayo mae soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: e yayo mae soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: yoyoyo yamba o e soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: [xxxx] íreme soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

G: soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
C: brikamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Change:**

G: [xxxx] e iyae iyae o(bon)tanze  
iya kondondo  
C: iya kondondo  
[16x]

**Change:**

G: jeye yamba o erumanyere, erumanyere erumanyere

C: yamba o erumanyere

[10x]

**Change:**

G: e aya tumbaore

C: **aya**

[21x]

G: ekue entuma [4, 13]

C: aya

21 = **Change:**

G: **jeye** e a e

C: **e a**

G: a e

C: e a,

**All: Efi abarako yereka mokongo machevere.**

Gregorio Hernández and Oba Ilú at Atrillo Park  
August 23, 2011  
Memorial Rally for Quintín Banderas

Performance based on abakuá folklore set piece

**Hernández:** Jeye ye ye jeye yo yo  
o yayo kama!

[A boy in the audience: o yayo kama!]

eye eeye eye yayo  
asere indio obon mayene obon  
obonekue eruminan  
etie momi ekori abakua ewemio  
abakua umpairan etete eripondo  
abasi uñare ekon anamendo.  
**asere asere asere asere abakua o e.**

**Chorus:** asere asere asere asere abakua o e.  
asere asere asere  
oyayo oyayo  
asere asere asere

**Hernández:** Eye eyeye Biankomo biankomo biankomo  
**Chorus:** aaa biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
Biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
O oyo oyo

**Hernández:** Eye eyeye Biapa broapa cuchiyerema  
**Chorus:** Aaa Biapa broapa cuchiyerema e  
Biapa broapa cuchiyerema e  
O oyo oyo

**Hernández:** Jeye asere asere asere bonkó enchemiya e  
**Chorus:** Asere asere asere  
Bonkó enchemiya e  
Asere asere asere  
O yayo o yayo  
Asere asere asere

**Hernández:** Eee ekonerima ekonerima o  
**Chorus:** aaa ekonerima ekonerima o e  
ekonerima ekonerima o e  
o oyo oyo

**Hernández:** Jeyeeee jeyeyeye oyoyoyo yoyo  
**Chorus:** aaa aaa aaa

**Hernández:** O yayo kama!  
**Chorus:** O yayo O yayo O yayo

**Volunteer #1:** Jeyeyeye yeyeyeye krukoro  
abakua krukoro  
jeye uriatan beko [caminando]  
Bario!  
**Chorus:** Uritan beko!

**Volunteer #1:** Munanga musagare  
Yamba o Yamba  
Odan efi nankuko  
Awanaribe benkama  
O Yamba o Yamba o Yamba  
Munanga musagare

**Volunteer #2:**  
Weye jeye yeye jeye yoyo  
**Chorus:** aaa aaa aaa

**Volunteer #2:** o biankomo yayo  
**Chorus:** oyayo oyayo oyayo

**Volunteer #1:** eye yuansa sere yuansa baroko  
Coro: eye yuansa sere yuansa baroko  
ngomo anabiokoko embarachitube  
o ekue aberitan inoko  
queyeeeye eye  
aberitan inoko aberitan o e  
**Chorus:** aberitan inoko aberitan o e  
aberitan inoko o yayo o yayo  
aberitan inoko

**Fernández:** queye eye eye eye  
Mosongo moto  
Ekoría enyene abakua yayo  
Chekendeke enbario itafondoba  
Ekoko anabiokoko añunamtemio ngomo  
Embario chitube yayo queye agabia agabia o tanze

**Chorus:** aaa agabia abgabia o tanze  
Agabia agabia o tanze e  
O oyo oyo

**Volunteer #2:** Queye eeeye yayo morua  
Queyeeeeeee biankomo biankomo biankomo

**Chorus:** aaa biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
biankomo biankomo biankomo e  
o oyo oyo

**Hernández:** jeye e efi nankerewa efi nankerewa  
Kanfioro nankuko mukarara nankaro  
Jeye!  
Suko nandiwara [kama!] ngomo mukanara  
Jeye! Efi nankerewa kama! Efi nankerewa

Kanfioro nankuko eta muna siro munae  
Chenepon cheneneri  
Kama! Efi nankerewa  
Jeyeye kerewa nitongo suko bakariongo

**Chorus:** kerewa nitongo suko bakariongo  
Kerewa nitongo oyayo oyayo  
Kerewa nitongo

**Hernández:** eee efi nankere efi nanakerewa  
**Chorus:** a efi nankere efi nankerewa e  
Efi nankere efi nankerewa e  
O oyo oyo

**Hernández:** ee kerewa momi suko bakariongo  
Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
Chorus: kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** eta munansiro suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Jeye krukoro suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Suko bakariongo suko bakariongo  
**Chorus:** kerewa momi suko bakariongo

**Hernández:** Jeye! munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro  
munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** [xxxx]  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** abasi lorikama monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** abasi lorikama monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** abasi lorikama monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** [xxxx]  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** yayo yayo morua monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** [xxxx]  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** [xxxx]  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Hernández:** jeyeye yayo e yayo mae monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Fernández:** jeyeye kanfioro nankuko monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Fernández:** baroko munabia tansiro nansiro monbankoro kanfioro  
**Chorus:** munambere kerewa monbankoro kanfioro

**Fernández:** AE efi nankerewa yayo e yayo mae  
**Chorus:** efi nankerewa

**Fernández:** baroko munabia  
**Chorus:** efi nankerewa

**Fernández:** kanfioro nankuko  
**Chorus:** efi nankerewa

**Fernández:** mukanaran nankaro  
**Chorus:** efi nankerewa

**Fernández:** yayo e yayo mae  
**Chorus:** efi nankerewa

**Fernández:** Jeye! Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** chekendeke mosongo yayo soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** Akonsudaria efori nibio yayo soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** Jeye mpabeso nasako soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** soiro mayenefo soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** bero bero bero soiro mayenefo  
**Chorus:** Brinkamo mayenefo soiro mayenefo

**Fernández:** yumba obonekue yumba akamandivo  
**Chorus:** yumba obonekue yumba

**Fernández:** oyo Yamba o  
**Chorus:** yumba obonekue yumba

**Fernández:** Queye Yamba o  
**Chorus:** yumba obonekue yumba

**Volunteer #1:** akamandivo  
**Chorus:** yumba obonekue yumba

**Volunteer #2:** akamandivo  
**Chorus:** yumba obonekue yumba

**Volunteer #2:** akamandivo  
**Chorus:** yumba obonekue yumba

**Volunteer #1:** Queye andaria kosundaria íreme aweremi  
íreme aweremi íreme aweremi  
**Chorus:** andaria kosundaria íreme aweremi

**Volunteer #1:** íreme aweremi íreme aweremi  
**Chorus:** andaria kosundaria íreme aweremi

**Volunteer #1:** íreme aweremi íreme aweremi  
**Chorus:** andaria kosundaria íreme aweremi

**Volunteer #1:** andaria kosundaria yayo e yayo mae  
**Chorus:** andaria kosundaria (17)

**Hernández:** íreme aweremi  
**Chorus:** andaria kosundaria (27)

**Hernández:** Jeyeee efi nanwerewa kerewa nitongo  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** kanfioro nankuko  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** [xxxx]  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** kanfioro nankuko  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández :** [xxxx]  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** kerewa nitongo  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** suko bakoriongo  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** kerewa nitongo  
**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** kerewa nitongo

**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** kanfioro nankuko

**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Emcee:** Bueno, Gracias a todo el pueblo presente gracias a Gregorio Hernández....  
[the choruses continue]

**Kiki:** yayo e yayo mae (17)

**Chorus:** efi nanwerewa

**Hernández:** A E, E A

**Chorus:** A E, E A Efi abarako yereka mokongo machebere.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### **Dance-music interaction and the on-going transformation of identity**

Kinetic conversations show how individual performers use different types of dance-music to negotiate identities central to everyday life and in so doing conserve and transform their identity in relation to particular communities. In each of the foregoing case studies, the main performer drew on histories of social interaction to create an experience of shared significance with one or more members of a community of interpreters. In this way, Cardoso, Martínez and Hernández each conserved their identity in a particular domain and also transform it in accord with particular agendas. For example, Cardoso draws on her training as an athlete and identity as a physically strong woman in her career as a folkloric dancer by performing *columbia*. She transforms her identity as an amateur dancer and as a woman of color in male-dominated folkloric space. For Martínez, ornamenting and extending *salsa cubana* with his performances of folklore allowed him to conserve his identity as folkloric performer and Cuban national in the context of a transnational music scene. His interactions with an extraordinary dance partner break down the traditional gender roles of social dance. Finally, Hernández conserves his identity as a leader among the *abakuá* community and transforms his

identity as a patriot by expressing that through his performance of *abakuá* folklore. Each of the performances demonstrates that identity and aesthetic experience intersect at individual and supra-individual levels. While individual performers may alter the enaction of roles, they rely on the success of the performance to have their identity agenda affirmed. The arousal of emotions and evocation of other responses such as dance-music interactions, engages other participants in a performer's identity negotiation. In this way, dance-music operates to conserve and transform identity in ways that may be illuminated by biological processes that underlie performance interactions and the set of embodied relationships they produce.

For individuals, creative performance operates as reflexive process, by which they engage the intersections and slippages between performance roles and individual identity. Performers work with music, body movement and performance interactions as they negotiate identity and locate themselves in a larger social landscape. Cardoso accomplishes this by adopting a virtuosic solo dance and positions herself to compete with men in terms of the socialist nation's definition of equality on the basis of work and professionalism in the public sphere. Her performances conserve her identity as physically strong and transform her identity as a woman of color from the racialized stereotypes of the *jinetera* to an honorable, if "masculinized" presence. For Martínez, his performance seeks social power through seduction. Cubanizing the transnational dance of *salsa* with quotations of folklore, he also uses a highly intertextual style to miscommunicate with and seduce his partner in a broader dramatic arc that ends with a more open improvisational style, blending social and aesthetic agendas. Finally Hernández tacitly alters the performance of folklore giving pride of place to the *abakuá*

community, demonstrating his membership and his role as a de facto public leader. He positions himself as a patriot and government insider at the same time that he links himself with this controversial community. The intersections of social roles and performance roles come to light in the ways that aesthetic arousal becomes intensified with regard to how performers meet and violate expectations surrounding identity and role. Through the kinetic performance of identity associated with each type of dance music, individuals may negotiate identity. At the same time, kinetic performances of identity reflect the larger social landscape through non-conscious histories as in Bourdieu's concept of *hexis*, as well as consciously articulated performance roles or *concepto*.

In each case, performers pursue individual agendas (Cardoso: professional status, Martínez: male honor linked with sexuality, Hernández: public leader/culture broker) tied to social status and professional standing; in this sense their identity negotiations are linked with everyday life, the lived experience of identity. While all of the performances are successful in some measure, they are different. For Cardoso and Martínez the performance seems to aim in large part as experiencing self in a particular demonstrable way. The experience of self at the heart of Hernández's performance is more ambiguous, but his performance more unequivocally revolves around the community of interpreters with whom he shares the interactions. Their performances comment on, reproduce and transform the identity discourses embodied in performance roles and everyday life.

In the case of the interactive dyad, it can be concluded that performance interactions can lead to a transformation of an individual's knowledge of a particular type of dance-music. In the case of Martínez and his partner, his provocative interactions elicit

various responses in his partner. It can be inferred from the progression of interactions that she alters her style of dancing to accommodate his breaks and stylistic quotations. To the extent that the performance is “about” the partner roles which are manipulated and altered, their performance reveals a succession of kinetic paradigms of interaction in couples dances. Beyond the individual alterations and transformations, this case raises the question or suggests that couples dancing may play a role in the transformation of identities related to (in this case) gender, sexual mores, and racial/ethnic identities.

Whether alterations become incorporated as stylistic features within the genre, or of the social roles implicated in the performance seems to depend on an incalculable number of factors. The ways that they might become taken up as alterations to the style or subject positions in the discourse may be traceable. Since creative performances alter performance roles (as part of the process of negotiating identity), (as in the case of Cardoso’s choreographic transvestism) they may or may not have implications for the broader styles of embodiment of identity. Even if only momentarily in the course of dance-music performance, changes to performance roles alter the relationships within the discursive system. In some cases, these shifts may be more widespread, as in the case of Hernández and the *abakuá* community.

To illustrate this we can consider the different outcomes in the case of Cardoso and Hernández in order to consider how they affect the individuals and the communities involved. Cardoso transforms herself through her strong performances. She defies not only the male prerogative to define national culture, but also the sex stereotypes of strong female performances. In so doing, she opens public space for other female performers as well as other non-standard interpretations. In so far as her performance addresses other

*columbianos* it does not, however, change the domain or knowledge of *columbia* per se but expands its range of inclusiveness in some contexts. It operates as an effective variation or adaptation at the level of Cardoso's individual career, but not one that transforms the entire domain. In the case of Hernández, he seeks to redefine folklore, to solidify his role as a leader, and in so doing his performances opens public space to the relatively recently legalized community. Intensifying the public presence of the *abakuá* community and linking it with narratives of nation transforms the community and the individuals that comprise it. Turning members of the community towards public self-definition through cultural performance transforms the community. Not only with respect to the historical role of the *abakuá* in job distribution on the waterfront, but also for the individuals who participate in such performances. By creating such public space in which to enact *abakuá* identity, individual initiates create a different relationship with public space, with other community members. This seems to be a process in which the *abakuá* transform and produce a new way of being in-the-world in public space. In this way, Hernández's individual identity negotiation sets in motion a dynamic with broader implications. The implications of his performance are unrelated in some sense to his immediate agendas.

The way that kinetic conversation transforms social roles rests on the performance interactions and the supra-individual biological processes that facilitate the production of shared embodied meanings. Emotion and movement are entwined and by developing control master performers can produce strong affective effects with movement linked with experiences of self and community. The somatic dimensions of personhood in musical and religious traditions present a somewhat malleable border between conscious

and non-conscious experience. In dance as in music, training and performance provide opportunities for precisely the un-doing of that unconscious relationship to some aspects of gestural routine.

In particular, the functioning of the mirror neuron system not only facilitates imitation and allows individuals to learn and transform particular action and gestural routines, but it also operates to link or join movement, emotion and linguistic meanings. In this way, certain movements and gestures become linked with particular verbal interpretations. MNS also fosters the intensification of arousal that happens when performers alter roles. In the case of the *abakuá*, this intensification occurs when esoteric practices are displayed in public. This can foster imitation and circulation of new gestural routines. The intensification of emotional response (as increased aesthetic arousal) to a performance also acts as an evaluative response affirming the performance.

While it is impossible to predict how new interpretations will transform a dance-music style, its performers or their communities, it is apparent that dance-music events join individual agendas with collective cultural processes. By this I mean creative alterations, which are to some extent (not completely) driven by individual agendas linked with everyday identity and linked with the organization of the social (field of production), become part of the cultural significance of dance-music events in that they provoke arousal in audiences. This process operates on the elusive boundary between conscious and non-conscious experience that makes dance-music and creativity itself such illusive and powerful experiences. The ways that identity and social roles are embodied is featured in each of the case studies. The kinetic dimension of identity intensifies arousal and shapes the shared significance of an event. Alterations may

provoke emotional arousal with audiences and other performers or provoke irritation. In the latter case, it may be a case of bad press being better than no press at all, as some performances might not even provoke responses and thus fail to catalyze a negotiation. For example, Menocal might reject out of hand the performances of *Obini Batá*. Alterations may be ignored, rejected, or taken up and imitated, circulated and adopted as part of a style of performance that becomes established. As was the case with those who codified *columbia*, not just in the style of the CFNC but the individual master teachers who shaped the repertoire of movements and the narrative structure of the performance. Dance-music continues to play a role in the on-going transformation of identity and social space in contemporary Cuba.

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