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Diasporic Dialogues in Black Concert Dance: Racial Politics, dance History, and Aesthetics

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Diasporic Dialogues in Black Concert Dance: Racial Politics, dance History, and Aesthetics

by

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Dedication

For Oya, who moves my life…

To Gustavo Mello e Mowumi Oliveira Melo, for all love and support….

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Abstract

Diasporic Dialogues in Black Concert Dance: Racial Politics, Dance History, and Aesthetics

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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This report examines diasporic dialogues in Black concert dance focusing on dialogues between Brazil and the United States and analyzes how racial politics and cultural exchanges contributed to shape a Black aesthetic in Brazil. Since the beginning of the 20th century, both the presence/passage of US Black dancers/choreographers in Brazil and the presence/passage of Brazilian Black dancers/choreographers in the United States enabled the formation of socio-political networks among artists and cultural cross-fertilization between these countries. Katherine Dunham's visit in Brazil and Mercedes Batista's visit in the United States during the 1950s were formative of a Brazilian black concert dance and had left a lasting imprint in black modern dance in the U.S. as well. This report attempts a close reading of the dialogues between Dunham and Batista that shaped the dance techniques and repertoire that make up black modern and postmodern dance in the African diaspora.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1

For those of us interested in an African diaspora that is characterized by an unfinished motion of peoples, cultures, and politics, the study of global and local inter-cultural dialogues is fundamental to an analysis of the hybrid/syncretic/transnational formation that is contemporary Black diasporic society. In this study, I examine African diasporic dialogues in Black concert dance, with a focus on dialogues between Brazil and the United States in relation to Africa. In early 20th century Brazil, the traditional Eurocentric structures of theater and dance reflected the socio-political Black experience of racism, exclusion, and invisibility, and propelled the development of a countercultural Black aesthetic in theater and dance. This Black aesthetic was delineated not only by the national experience of blackness, but also by transnational dislocations within the African diaspora.

In terms of dance, the presence of US American dancers and choreographers in Brazil, and *vice versa*, enabled the formation of social-political networks and cultural cross-fertilization between the two countries. This cross-fertilization was diasporic in the sense that it entailed connections among US and Brazilian dancers and choreographers, emphasizing their contact with African traditions in the African continent and in other places across the diaspora, including the Caribbean archipelago. In this literature review, I look at the scholarship on the African diaspora, racial politics in Brazil, and Black

aesthetics in light of my investigation of the implications of African diasporic dialogues for contemporary Black dance aesthetics and politics in Brazil and the United States.

This literature review is divided into three sections. The first section covers texts focusing on *African diaspora dynamics: flows and counter-flows*. I use African diaspora theories to understand the *diaspora* as a "fluid geography" (Gilroy, 1993), which is a cross-cultural movement in which contributions come from different places simultaneously. In this regard, I seek to illuminate the fact that Black dance in Brazil has been influenced by African culture and US Black dance, and has reciprocally influenced US Black dance and African culture. In the second section, *Racial politics in Brazil: resistance and dance history*, I look at the literature on Brazilian racial politics, with a focus on social-political issues that influenced semi-voluntary and voluntary emigration to the United States and immigration from there between the 1940s and the 1970s. Moreover, I consider historical approaches of Black concert dance in Brazil. The third section, *Black aesthetics: 'beauty', spirit, and memory* draws upon scholarship on Black aesthetics to look at the aesthetic bases of Black dance in the United States and Brazil, with relationship to African dance.

AfrAFRICAN DIASPORA DYNAMIC: FLOWS AND COUNTER-FLOWS

For the purpose of my research, the term *African diaspora dynamics* reflects the articulation of Anthony Belford's and Rudolph Laban's definitions of *dynamics* and several scholarly considerations of the *African diaspora*. The association of these two terms indicates a treatment of *diaspora* not as established places, cultures and identities, but as spaces, cultures, and identities that are still in formation and transformation: a diaspora that is in *shape-flow* (Hackney, 1998). The concept of *shape-flow* denotes the way the body interacts and changes in relationship with the environment. Through this concept, Peggy Hackney suggests that shapes are not static; they are always moving and adapting to or relating with the environment. Even when a body assumes an apparently stable shape, micro-particles are moving internally. Through this lens, it will be possible to examine *African diaspora* conceptualizations and cultural transfers as a set of *dynamics*.

Depending on the field of study, *dynamics* can be approached in different ways. The two scholars referenced in this research come from the fields of mechanics and performance/dance studies, respectively. In both cases, *dynamics* is related to activity, motion, and change. In mechanics, *dynamics* is linked to external forces that propel changes in systems of bodies, while in dance, the concept is related to an inner-perspective of mobilization. According to Anthony Belford (1995), in mechanics, *dynamics* refers to the analysis of forces applied to an object in motion. In this case, the study of *dynamics* is frequently associated with forces that are endogenous to a given

system or object, and the focus is on the causes and effects of the application of those forces.

In contrast, in the dance/performance field, Laban defines *dynamics* as "a system for understanding the more subtle characteristics about the way a movement is done with respect to inner intention" (Laban & Lawrence, 1947). He identifies four basic factors that contribute to the quality of the movement produced by *dynamics*: weight/force, space, time, and flow. Each of these factors holds two polarities – strong/light, direct/indirect, quick/slow, and freeing/controlling – which vary according to the body's intent. To illustrate this concept, I contrast the gesture of extending one's arms to embrace something with that of extending one's arms to push something. In the action of embracing, the factors of weight/force, space, time, and flow are engaged respectively as light, indirect, slow, and controlling. To execute the action of pushing, on the other hand, the factors are engaged as strong, direct, fast, and freeing. The variation in factors of *dynamics* determines different actions. In a broader perspective, varied combinations of the factors related to *dynamics* generate differences among bodies' ways of moving in the world.

These different ways of moving in the world, mobilized by both external and internal forces, are fundamental to my examination of the *African diaspora*. As Joseph E. Harris asserts, "The African diaspora assumes the character of a dynamic, continuous, and complex phenomenon stretching across time, geography [space], class, and gender" (1993: 4). In *Global dimensions of the African diaspora*, Harris identifies three main aspects of *diaspora* that are discussed in the literature: the patterns and process of global

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dispersion; the emergence or formation of cultural identities; and perceptions of the homeland (Koser, 2003; Harris, 1993). Harris' three aspects summarize the six characteristics of *diaspora* identified by William Safran (1991) in *Diasporas in Modern societies: myths of homeland and return*. Safran seeks to expand upon Walker Connor's conceptualization of *diaspora,* which refers only to people who live outside of their original homelands. Safran's central concept, on the other hand, is that of a minority community that shares certain characteristics with others who have been dispersed: dispersion from an original 'center' to at least two 'peripheral' regions; retention of a collective memory; rejection or only partial acceptance by the host society; idealization of the homeland as a place to return; restoration of the homeland as a commitment; and creation of an ethno-communal consciousness (Safran, 1991:83-84). Safran's six characteristics – and Harris' three aspects – often overlap and should be examined in a more fluid sense. The aim here is to illuminate displacements in space/time and the emergence of new identities. These two aspects of diaspora are indirectly permeated by varying perceptions of Africa.

The first aspect of the *African diaspora* considered in this research is that of a "process of global dispersion" (Koser, 2003; Harris, 1993), or continuous dislocation. Hamilton (2007) is an important reference for this subject due to his exploration of the relational processes of the *African diaspora,* and his focus on "structural change and the redistribution of populations" throughout *diaspora* (2007: 2). Hamilton describes *diaspora* as a global and social formation, and examines it through a "circulatoriness phenomenon" (Hamilton, 2007: 2). The *circulatoriness phenomenon* enables the

observation of movements of people in the *African diaspora* across time and space, specifically considering the increase in geographical displacements since the fifteenth century.

According to Joseph E. Harris (1996), the slave trade made these movements "essentially global," although he hypothesizes that voluntary dislocations of African merchants, sailors, soldiers, athletes, and artists throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia occurred prior to the fifteenth century (Harris, 1996: 9; Wilson, 1997: 119). Moreover, Harris considers Africa itself to be part of the *diaspora,* which means that Africa has always been changed and reshaped by those who have been dispersed. In *Austin School Manifesto: an approach to the black or African diaspora,* Edmund Ted Gordon reinforces Harris' idea by asserting that racial construction and "anti-black interpellation […] have created and continue to create" not only blackness, but also Africa, impelling the "dispersal of people with African descent across the globe" (2007: 93).

Expanding upon Hamilton's and Harris's emphasis on a global perspective of *diaspora displacements*, I look at other scholars' considerations of *African diaspora* movements at both the global and local scales (Davies and M'Bow 2007, Gordon and Anderson 1999, Shepperson 1993). Carole Boyce Davies and Babacar M'Bow argue for the exploration of global and local geographies of the *African diaspora* in order to achieve economic benefits for their nation-states and have access to global achievements (2007: 28). These authors argue that in several cases in which localities adopt global economic and political systems, the results are not beneficial to them due to the local

incapability of sustain certain structures. Indeed, the process of embedding global systems into certain localities destroys "pre-existing cultural and geographical natural boundaries" (Davies and M'Bow, 2007: 28), which results in a difficult situation for such regions. The dilemma of *global* versus *local* dwells in this structural incompatibility. In order to follow patterns assumed to be globally beneficial or prejudicial, internal struggles are waged and have divergent implications. Thus, it is important to look at the *African diaspora* beyond the process of global movement; local and national political struggles must be considered as well (Gordon and Anderson, 1999: 294; Clifford, 2005: 308).

With respect to global, local and national political struggles, Paul Gilroy (1992) asserts that the history of the *African diaspora* is "continually crisscrossed by the movement of black people – not only as commodities – but engaged in various struggles toward emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship, as a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (Gilroy 1992: 193). Furthermore, Gilroy questions the direct, independent relationship between the *African diaspora* and Africa. Indeed, he initiated a polemic around the ethnic essentialism embodied in definitions of the *African diaspora*, describing it as a new formation, or as a *Black Atlantic*. Gilroy uses the metaphor of a "rhizomorphic, fractal structure of transcultural, international formation" (1993: 4), which is employed more as a possibility of imagining cultural recreations than as an invocation of diasporic cultural retentions that imply a return to a homeland.

The "rhizomorphic" formation represents the capacity to create roots in new places, drawing upon the image of a tree that can develop branches in different directions while maintaining direct connection with the original root. This vision does not necessarily invalidate the possibility of community formation, but in this case, community consciousness and solidarity are generated in new spaces. Gilroy astutely argues that, from the shared experiences of exclusion and racism in host nations, a common African diasporic political consciousness flourishes, which "maintain[s] identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside with difference" (Clifford, 1997: 251).

While *Pan-Africanism* was a "manifestation of solidarity among Africans and peoples of African descent" (Padmore, 1956:117) whose ties were created through an ideal of direct relationship with the African continent (1993:159), the concept of *Black Atlantic* is a claim for a community created outside of Africa to resist exclusion and discrimination in host places. Gilroy identifies the *African diaspora,* or *Black Atlantic*, as a product of "the West" and its economic, political, and social interests and ideologies. The *Black Atlantic* is a "counterculture of modernity" (Gilroy, 1993: 5), and refers to the emergence of black politics opposed to the western creation of the "outsider" or the "other." Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelly (2000) expand Gilroy's concept by exploring the *Black Atlantic* not merely as a "counterculture of modernity," but as an integral element of the formation of the modern world. From this point of view, the *African diaspora* was created to reinforce values of white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism, and to justify colonialism. In Patterson and Kelly's terms, "One reason that

New World Black culture appears 'counter' to European narratives of history is that Europe exorcized blackness in order to create its own invented traditions, empires, and fictions of superiority and racial purity" (Patterson and Kelly, 2000:13).

The *Black Atlantic* perspective – which understands the common diasporic experience as being formed through enslavement, racialization, exploitation, and socio-political and economic exclusion, as well as resistance to those injustices – is adopted here instead of the Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric perspectives. Although the Afrocentric perspective is "a critique […] of the process and extent of the dislocation caused by the cultural, economic, and political domination of Europe" (Asante, 1994: 260), its ethnic essentialism is questioned when the *African diaspora* reveals that race construction affects not only African descendants, but also black communities born in host spaces. The idea of a physical return to Africa, advocated by Garvey during the 1930s in Jamaica (Davies and M'Bow, 2007: 34), is replaced by the idea of decentered and lateral connections (Clifford, 2005: 306). In this regard, Gilroy's perspective expands beyond ethnic limitations and allows us to look at diasporic routes. Following Frank Andre Guridy's lead, in this research the aim is to illuminate the "formation of diasporic communities in world history." Guridy explores a "diaspora in action" by focusing on ways that "Afro-diasporic linkages were made in practice" through continuities and dialogues (2010: 5).

While Guridy offers a favorable perspective on *African diaspora dialogues*, he also presents a limitation. The author focuses on cultural transfers from Cuba to the United States and *vice versa*, which situates his research at the predominant axis of

cultural studies: Africa–Americas. I identify the necessity of decentering and amplifying the territorial understanding of the *African diaspora*. As Khalid Koser (2003) asserts, there is a common assumption that the United States is the central location for the construction of politicized and engaged thought around the *African diaspora*. This assumption unconsciously marginalizes other places across the *diaspora* and positions them as receptors, or as peripheral areas. In contrast, several authors have transcended the geographical limits of a predominantly African-American cultural studies to explore South and Central America and the Caribbean (Andrews 1992, Nascimento 1992, Gordon and Anderson 2009, Tinsley 2008), Europe (Gilroy 1993, Mercer 1994), and the Mediterranean (Hunwick 1992). In order to enable a more complex understanding of *African diaspora dynamics*, all these diasporic spaces and their particularities must be considered.

Rather than reify the organization of the world into central and peripheral areas, I borrow Bogues' model of multiple centers emerging and enabling dialogic cultural relationships (2009: 215). I also draw upon Ulf Hannerz's post-modernist tendency to investigate "multicentrality, entangled flows, and counter-flows" (Hannerz, 1997:13). Hannerz uses the concept of "decentralization" (Lash and Urry, 1994: 4) in support of Arjun Appadurai's assertion that "the new global organization of the culture cannot be understood in terms of center-periphery models, even when those models admit the existence of multiple centers" (Appadurai, 1990: 6).

Challenging the center-periphery model, I adopt Hannerz's idea of cultural flows and counter-flows. In *Transatlantic Transformations,* Omi Joni Jones (2002) illustrates

this idea by analyzing the effects of political and social transformations on Yoruba spirituality in Nigeria. She argues, "Yoruba spirituality now lives outside of Yorubaland which helps to ensure its continued development" (2002: 634). This development includes both the transformations of spirituality in the New World due to the influence of Nigerian Yoruba religions, and the transformations or reformulations of Yoruba spirituality in Nigeria due to the influence of the New World. This exchange characterizes movements of flow and counter-flow. In Jones' terms, "a reverse diaspora is established with the mutual exchange of ritual practices between New World Yoruba practitioners and indigenous Yoruba" (2002: 635).

These "crosscurrents of mutual influences" (Harris, 1993: 51) are an interesting way to introduce scholarly considerations of identity formation. In this research, I adopt an understanding of the *African diaspora* as "both a process and a condition" to open up space for the possibility of more fluid, hybrid and syncretic identities, without ignoring the specificity of African descendants' experiences (Patterson and Kelly, 2000: 20). According to Patterson and Kelly, as a process, *African diaspora* identities have been continuously remade as results of cross-breeding that happens "through movement, migration, and travel, as well as imagined through thought, cultural production, and political struggle" (2000: 20). On the other hand, as a condition, the "*African diaspora* itself exists within the context of global race and gender hierarchies which are formulated and reconstituted across national boundaries and along several lines" (Patterson and Kelly, 2000: 20).

It is possible to reinforce this concept of the *African diaspora* as a process and as a condition through the aforementioned concept of the *circulatoriness phenomenon,* which seeks to map the process of identity reformulation as a result of *African diaspora dynamics*. Hamilton refers to both process and condition when he asserts that *circulatoriness* "illustrates how identities change as they are changed" by structural transformations across the *African diaspora* (Hamilton, 2007: 2). Identity reformulation is discussed by post-modernists such as Stuart Hall (1994) and Kobena Mercer (1994), who assert that the reformation of cultural identities results from *African diaspora dynamics*, allowing for hybrid and syncretic identities that are constructed in displacement and dwell simultaneously in diverse places.

Hall describes cultural identity in two senses. First, as one "shared culture ", which refers to people who hold the same history and ancestry, even living in different geographical areas, and second, as a "matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'" (Hall, 1994: 394). As a *shared culture*, the author refers to a common history and cultural code that are not revealed by an ethnic origin rooted in Africa, but by a re-elaboration of the past in the present. In this regard, Hall offers an encounter with a "rediscovered essential identity" (Hall, 1994:393). On the other hand, looking at cultural identities as *becoming* and *being*, Hall refers to the existence of a historical reference that runs through time. The historical or original reference is not static; it is in transformation. As Hall asserts, "The original Africa is no longer there. It has been transformed" (1994: 399) as well.

In *Lose your Mother*, Hartman also suggests that Africa is in transformation, and demystifies the image of an original homeland to which African descendants might

return. In line with Elliot P. Skinner (1993), Hartman employs the condition of the "stranger" in regard to African Americans who neither belong to the New World nor to the idealized homeland. Skinner discusses historical attempts by African Americans to physically return to the African continent, and emphasizes that both Africans and African Americans had difficulties in adaptation. He observes that "those sizable groups who returned from the New World [to Africa] during the slave period often established political hegemony over the local people" (Skinner, 1993: 30). Returnees felt themselves culturally and socially superior to the local Africans, which was probably a reflex of the "Christianizing" and "Civilizing" project of Black American colonists (Davies and M'Bow, 2007: 26). Africans believed that African Americans had become embedded in the capitalist system, and had become as dangerous as whites, working more for their host lands' benefit than for Africa's protection from white American exploitation (Harris, 1993:35-36).

Embracing this difficulty or impossibility for *African diaspora* identities to fully belong to a physical and fixed land, I offer Tinsley's (2008) metaphor of the fluidity of water to examine the *African diaspora* identity formations in non-fixed spaces. Slave ships and water are pointed by Tinsley as "the first thing[s] in unstable confluence of race, nationality, sexuality, and gender" (2008: 191). Tinsley asserts that queer relationships started to be forged in that emplacement in which materialized bodies created same-sex affective and erotic relationships in order to help themselves to survive the brutality of the middle passage (Tinsley, 2008: 192). The creation of human beings ties in unstable spaces and in motion as a form of resistance is adopted here to illuminate

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unlimited manners of resisting to oppressions. Davies and M'Bow (2007) for instance, highlight the Afro-Brazilian culture and religions as strategies adopted by black people in Brazil to resist oppressions and to help them to make achievements in relation to "culture, ethnicity, displacement, and citizenship" (2007: 24).

To conclude, I engage Clifford's (2005) offering of a special look at Mercer's "antiessentialist" perspective of *African diaspora* identity. Mercer believes that "diaspora consciousness is entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue" (Clifford, 2005: 319).

RACIAL POLITICS IN BRAZIL: RESISTANCE AND DANCE HISTORY

An examination of race relations in Brazil during the 20th century comprises two phases: the emergence of the concept of Brazil as a *racial democracy* and the revision or dismantling of that concept (Andrews, 1996: 483; Winant, 1992: 174). Antônio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães (2001) offers a concept of *racial democracy* that denotes a denial of the "existence of biological, political, social, and cultural differences" between African, indigenous, and European descendants and a belief in the incorporation of "original differences into a unique syncretic and hybrid" national identity (2001:1). The discourse of Brazil as a *racial democracy* emerged from Gilberto Freyre's social studies during the 1930s. In contrast to Freyre's discourse, geographical and social studies in the 1950s started to challenge the *racial democracy* trope by documenting persistent disparities in Brazilian society (Andrews, 1996; Winant, 1992).

Stanley R. Bailey identifies four stages of Brazilian race relations: *antiracialism*, *challenging antiracialism*, *racialism*, and *challenging racialism*. Bailey formulates the concept of *antiracialism* by comparing racial politics in Brazil and the United States. In the United States there existed a clear segregation between whites and nonwhites, or a *racialism*. Brazil, on the other hand, was quite different in that racial segregation was not practiced (Bailey, 2009: 22). However, Bailey points out that the concept of *antiracialism* does not imply that "racial dynamics are completely lacking," which would be described instead as "nonracialism" (2009: 23).

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While Guimarães (2001), Andrews (1996), and Bailey (2009) offer important examinations of racial politics in Brazil in the post-Freyrean period, I borrow from Kabenguele Munanga (1999), Dávila (2002), and Telles and Bailey (2013) to look at racial politics in Brazil prior to Freyre in order to illuminate the impact of the *racial democracy* ideal on Brazilian society and culture. At the end of the 1800s and beginning of the 1900s, Brazilian theorists embraced miscegenation in order to avoid the racial degeneration of Brazil (Munanga, 1999). In contrast, European eugenicists believed in the racial inferiorization of the mestizo and other mixed races. This perspective invalidated any possibility of future modernization for Brazil, since the population originated from the racial mixture of Europeans, Africans, and Indians (Munanga, 1999).

Brazilian scientists adopted the concept of miscegenation based upon eugenic ideology and the Lamarckian theory of heredity (Telles and Bailey, 2013:1563; Dávila, 2002: 53). According to Jerry Dávila, "Eugenia is a scientific attempt of 'meliorate' a human being population through the upgrading of hereditary traits" (2006: 31). Meanwhile, Lamarck asserts that behavior and the environment intervene in racial identity development. Brazilian scientists therefore sought a proactive miscegenation by "promoting whitening through the mixture" of Brazil's racial groups (Skidmore quoted in Telles and Bailey, 2013: 1563, Dávila, 2002: 52-54). Fostered by these ideas, Silvio Romero, Euclides da Cunha, Alberto Torres, Nina Rodrigues, João Batista Lacerda, Edgar Roquete Pinto, and Oliveira Vianna developed their "theories of race in Brazil" (Munanga, 1999: 52; Winant, 1992: 174).

Silvio Romero, João Batista Lacerda, and Oliveira Vianna believed in the creation of a new race, which would flourish from the cross - breeding of European, African, and Indian descendants. They advocated for the formation of "typical Brazilian people" as a process through which African and Indian origins would naturally be eliminated through declining African fertility, European immigration, and intermarriage (Clearly, 2009: 6; Telles, 2002: 418). The process of whitening, or "arianization" (Andrews, 1996: 486), was to culminate in the disappearance of non-white races. Thus, the superior race (white) would prevail (Munanga, 1999:52). While these three theorists predicted the whitening of the Brazilian population, Nina Rodrigues supported the blackening (*enegrecimento*) of the population (Munanga, 1999: 56-57). It was Rodrigues' belief that "white blood" would become extinct when the races mixed, and that African and Indian racial traits would prevail which would amount to him an inevitable *racial degeneration*.

As a result of these theorists' arguments for a whitening of the Brazilian population, in the post-abolition period (1850-1932), "an estimated four million Europeans immigrated to Brazil […] [and] dominated the industrial and artisan labor supply at the expense of blacks and mestizos exclusion of this market" (Guimarães, 2001: 2). In that period, the existence of a geographical and racial issue, which referred to the recognized division of races and ethnic variation, produced an absence of cultural uniformity. These issues were acknowledged by politics, social scientists, and modernist and regionalist artists who developed the notion of "socially successful mestizos," which envisioned social and racial mobility for the mestizo population (Guimarães, 2001: 2; Telles, 2002: 418). The "whitening" of the population became a strategy of

uniformization (2002: 3). Theorists such as Vianna and Rodrigues created different categories to classify mestizos, qualifying them as superior and inferior according to their educational background, land ownership and skin color (Munanga, 1999: 67). Colorism was one of the determinant factors in the process of transition of social status. A light skin Black person could be, naturally considered white by the society, specifically when this person had receive high education.

This possibility of racial mobility is fundamental for this research because it enables the recognition of challenges confronted by non-white people in undertaking collective action in Brazil (Winant, 1992). The whitening ideology, based on "mark and color" instead of origin, facilitated flexibility in racial categorizations, which, according to Telles and Bailey (2013), caused the "denying of black and indigenous identities and culture, masking of racial discrimination and hierarchies, and weakening racial and ethnic distinction, necessary for antiracist mobilization" (2013: 1560). The hegemony of the discourse of *racial democracy* led to similar interpretations of inequality by both the dominant and disadvantaged social groups. As a result, Brazilians of all social groups largely denied the existence of structural causes for social, political, and economic inequality. They also denied the existence of systematic white privilege (Telles and Bailey, 2013: 1568).

One of the consequences of this denial is the engagement of Black people in the whitening ideal in order to avoid the effects of racial discrimination (Munanga, 1999: 101). It is my belief that this tendency to reject African or Indian ancestry and cultural traditions emerged in the period of Gilberto Freyre's idea of a Brazilian *racial democracy*

and Getúlio Vargas' nationalism. Nationalism was a strategy adopted by the Brazilian president to oppose emerging discourses that attempted to reveal the existence of racial issues in Brazil post-abolition (Telles and Bailey, 2013: 1564; Guimarães, 2001: 3).

Besides the concept of *racial democracy*, Freyre advocated also for an idealized Brazilian national identity as a result of an 'harmonious' environment created between the master's house and the slaves' house, or between the master – a white man – and the slave – a black woman (Munanga, 1999). In *Casa Grande e Senzala,* Freyre positioned the black woman as a reproductive laborer in the creation of a new race, and reinforced the belief that patriarchy was the main structure for social hierarchy. Freyre "attempt[ed] to reproduce the familial-type relationships within broader societal institutions" (Clearly, 2009: 9). Moreover, Freyre transferred the focus of the discussion from race to culture, and allowed the incorporation of black and indigenous cultural elements into the national identity. Freyre advocated the dissolution of racial difference, opening up space for the valorization of African-derived cultural elements. For Freyre, the national identity flourished when whites improved through the incorporation of Black and indigenous cultural elements, so long as they maintained their white skin color and other central traits.

In this regard, Freyre inadvertently promoted the emergence of Black popular culture. In Rio de Janeiro, for instance, Black people started to occupy the center of the city, which was an exercise of social-political power. During the first decade of the 1900s black people were moved to peripheral areas of the city and were prohibited from entering the central city. Even in the periphery, Blacks were victims of harassment and

police violence when they insisted on practicing their artistic and religious traditions. Nevertheless, "cultural production be [came] an ideological tool" and a strategy for survival for Afro-Brazilians (Afolabi 2009: 1). Niyi Afolabi asserts, "Afro-Brazilians cope and regenerated themselves through creative and cultural strategies that have their political implications even when they are not forcefully or apparently articulated" (Afolaby, 2009: 1).

In the early 1920s, Afro-Brazilians created the *samba* as a way of resisting oppression, constructing a sense of community to maintain their traditions, and expressing their demands. Beginning in 1932, when Black people were first allowed to be authorized to participate in the *Carnaval*, the *samba* was "transformed into [one of the] symbols of the national identity" (Bailey, 2009: 10), and Black communities gained greater social recognition (Dossiê, 2007: 9). Nevertheless, Black people still faced disadvantages in education, economic resources, and access to political power during most of the year, and *Carnaval* was soon transformed into an attraction for tourists, which stripped the event of its political potential (Dossiê, 2007: 21; McLucas, 2005:87; Afolaby, 2009: 5).

In the 1940s, there was an important author, activist, and artist who questioned the myth of *racial democracy* and initiated a movement that ushered in the period of *challenging antiracialism*: Abdias do Nascimento. Despite Nascimento's considerable contributions to the Afro-Brazilian community in socio-political arenas, I emphasize here his contributions through and to the performing arts, specifically his contributions to Black dance in Brazil. Nascimento "used his leadership of TEN [*Teatro Experimental do*

Negro] to bring about social transformation through consciousness and rootedness in African mythology and culture" (Afolaby, 2009: 13). Leda Martins (1995), who exclusively studies Black theater in Brazil, refers to the TEN as an "originating object that even with internal contradictions for a period managed to break down the Brazilian stage curtain" (1995: 77). TEN was founded in 1944, after the organization of the *Frente Negra Brazileira* in São Paulo and the convening of the Afro-Brazilian Congress in the 1940s (Afolaby, 2009: 12; Costa, 2007: 211). Nascimento was involved with socio-political and cultural events, and TEN not only "marked a reaction in opposition to the absence of black actors on Brazilian stages," but also contributed to lifting Black people from marginalization and ignorance (Costa, 2007: 211). Nascimento's contributions to Black Brazilian dance are connected to his partnership with Mercedes Batista and to his inclusion of Katherine Dunham in the Afro-Brazilian Congress in 1950 (Costa, 2007: 218; Silva Junior, 2007: 7; Paixão, 2012: 140; Silva Junior, 2007: 33).

Mercedes Batista made a large contribution to the affirmation of Black identities in Brazilian concert dance. According to Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos, "Mercedes is the pioneer of the black dance in Brazil" (2005: 40). In addition, she inspired a large number of Black dancers in Rio de Janeiro, where she was the first Black dancer to integrate the *Corpo de Baile do Teatro Municipal* ballet company in 1948 (Silva Junior, 2007: 20). Nevetheless, Mercedes' experience as a professional dancer was greatly affected by racism and prejudice. Choreographers and artistic directors rarely selected Mercedes to be part of their casts. Disappointed by the experience of racism in the company, Mercedes started to work with TEN. Through TEN, she met the African-American

dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham, who had traveled to Brazil with her dance company in 1950 to participate in the Afro-Brazilian Congress. After an audition in Brazil, Mercedes went to New York for 18 months to study with Dunham. According to Melgaço, this contact between Mercedes Batista and Katherine Dunham "certainly set the tone of the Mercedes' work in Brazil" (2007: 24). Three years later, Mercedes founded the *Companhia Folclórica Mercedes Batista.*

Paulo Melgaço Silva Junior offers an important account of Dunham's time in Brazil, highlighting the emergence of the black social movement in that period. There were several factors that contributed to this movement. UNESCO (United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture) conducted research that used ethnographic methods to uncover the existence of racial tensions, prejudice, and a lower social position for African descendants. These findings helped to dismantle the *racial democracy* myth. Meanwhile, Forestan Fernandes' effective leadership of São Paulo's schools contributed to an attack on Freyre's ideas. Frequent meetings organized by artists from the *Teatro Popular Brasileiro*, *Orquestra Afro-brasileira*, TEN, and *Teatro Folclórico brasileiro* (*Brasiliana)* also contributed to the movement (Bailey, 2009: 28, Clearly, 2009: 13, Winant, 1992: 174; Silva Junior, 2007: 24). Silva Junior (2007) and Andrews (2011) argue that Dunham's 1950 trip through Brazil contributed to the emergence of the black movement. Upon her arrival in Brazil, Dunham was not allowed to stay at the *Hotel Esplanada* in São Paulo. When she denounced the incident publicly, it had consequences. Dunham was internationally known, and this incident forced the Brazilian government to recognize that there was racism in Brazil. This led to the passage

of Brazil's first anti-discrimination law, the Afonso Arinos Law (Andrews, 2011: 491).

Another Black American dancer, Josephine Baker, also visited Brazil during the 1950s,

which further contributed to the development of the black dance movement (Falcão dos

Santos, 2005: 39). Baker performed in the *Teatro Cassino Beira-mar* in Rio de Janeiro,

but little information exists about her trip and specific contributions to the Brazilian

dance.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Brazilian dance companies whose works were

rooted in Afro-Brazilian culture and traditions started to participate in international tours.

This mobility allowed Brazilian dancers to perform, study, and live in other countries

across *diaspora* (Santos, 2005: 40). It is my belief that dancers were propelled by the

desire to improve their lives both socially and economically, and the aim to achieve

technical and artistic advancement. The first Brazilian companies to travel internationally

were *Teatro Folclórico Brazileiro* and *Ballet Folclórico de Mercedes Batista* from Rio de

Janeiro, and *Olodumare*, *Ballet Brazil Tropical* and *Viva Bahia* from Bahia (Santos,

2005: 41). These dislocations of Brazilian dancers across the world intensified during the

1960s and 1970s under the influence of the civil rights and black power movements

(Paixão, 2012). Among the Brazilian artists who traveled to study and eventually

emigrated, specifically to the United States, I focus on Mercedes Batista, Jelon Vieira,

Loremil Machado, Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos, Eusébio Lobo da Silva, and Elísio Pitta

(Oliveira, 2013: 66). For the purpose of this research, I draw upon accounts of these

artists' lives and careers written by Santos (2005, 2006), Silva R. (2010), and Silva E.

(2004).

I add to these Brazilian artists and authors an African American Brazilianist: Clyde Morgan. Morgan's perspective of his time in Brazil, and Santos' (2005) and Silva's (2010) perspectives on his contributions to Brazilian Black dance are fundamental in tracing the line of Black dance development from Bahia to São Paulo and Minas Gerais. In 1962, Morgan was invited to teach in Rio de Janeiro after a tour through some West African countries (Morgan, 2009: 120). He developed a notable pedagogical and choreographic work at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), where he taught and choreographed using elements of Jose Limon's modern technique, West African dance, and Afro-Brazilian popular and ritualistic dance (Santos, 2005: 41). Morgan allowed students to incorporate elements of their Afro-Brazilian traditions in academia for the first time. Moreover, Morgan facilitated their contact with US Black modern dance by showing videos of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, among others (Santos, 2005: 43). Morgan also had significant contact with Brazilian popular culture, and with the *Candomblé,* an Afro-Brazilian religion, in Bahia. Morgan drove his research fieldwork in a Candomblé's house in order to create his piece, *Porque Oxalá usa ekodidé* (Morgan, 2009: 114).

BLACK AESTHETICS: "BEAUTY", SPIRIT, AND MEMORY

The relegation of African diaspora dance aesthetics to the realm of the primitive or folkloric is a consequence of western paradigms disseminated around the world (Canclini 2008, Chaui 1986, Gottschild 1996). On this topic, Thomas DeFrantz (2005) discusses the concept of "black beauty" in African-derived dance performance (DeFrantz, 2005:100). DeFrantz points out that very few aesthetic studies have been done in the field of western contemporary dance, and argues that this lack of scholarly attention limits the development of the subject of dance in general, and especially the subject of Black dance. Moreover, DeFrantz points out that aesthetic theories tend to follow universalized values and exclude African-derived aesthetics from the realm of 'beauty' (2005: 94). Elaine Scarry (1999), discusses the attempt to adapt Black performance to western visions of 'beauty.' Scarry asserts that "people seem to wish there to be beauty even when their own self-interest is not served by it" (DeFrantz, 2005: 94).

One of the consequences of the exclusion of Africanist aesthetics from the realm of beauty is the relegation of those aesthetics to the realm of the folkloric. Van Rudolph Laban (1975), for instance, provides an important and controversial example of racism and the stereotyping of African-derived dance. Despite his significant contributions to the modern dance, in *A Life for Dance* Laban expressed his belief in the superiority of European dance aesthetics over African dance aesthetics:

> I doubt whether the Negro is capable of inventing any dance at all. If one hopes to find any kind of Negro dance culture here, one is in for a big disappointment. A gift for dance-invention as well as the higher development of the other arts and sciences seems to be the privilege of other races. The Negro adopts our stand-up collar and top hat, and uses them

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grotesquely, remodelled to fit his own feeling. Where music is concerned he seems to possess an inborn talent, but only for rhythmic, melodic, unsophisticated expression" (Laban, 1975: 133).

Kariamu Welsh-Asante (1996) and Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) astutely note that the African-derived aesthetic is "approvingly exotic to unexposed European audiences" (Welsh-Asante, 1996: xv). Welsh-Asante argues that colonialism and slavery have contributed to the assumption that European traditions and aesthetics is universal. Thus, in the 20th century, African traditions and African dance were reported by western studies of African dance as "licentious, savage, and heathinistic" (1996: xv). According to Gottschild, traditional European dance aesthetics valorize the spine as the center of movement, and control of the arms and legs. The spine is usually erect to indicate elegance and royalty. In contrast, Africanist dance aesthetics valorize the democratic equality of body parts, polyrhythm, polycentrism, and the relationship with the earth as signs of integration between body and nature, body and mind and body and spirit (Gottschild, 1996: 7-8). These Africanist premises were subtly incorporated into western contemporary dance, but were not acknowledged. Gottschild offers an important analysis of how racism worked to erase the presence of Africanist aesthetics in classical and modern dance, which instead privileged Europeanist aesthetics and white bodies (Daniel, 2008: 353).

With respect to the folklorization of African-derived concert dance and secular dance, Nestor Canclini (2008) and Marilena Chaui (1986) offer relevant contributions to Brazilian and Latin American cultural studies by attempting to deconstruct conceptual barriers put in place by classical folklorists. According to Canclini, there is substantial fluidity between popular culture and high culture, hegemonic and subaltern, and

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traditional and modern. Canclini asserts that the traditional is in transformation, rather than isolated in time and space. Therefore, modern developments do not suppress the traditional, but interact with it. In this respect, I borrow from Chaui the idea that popular culture incorporates counter discourses or counter-hegemonic elements (Chaui, 1986: 22). Chaui describes popular culture in a close relationship with mass culture referring to cultural productions that reflect the taste of general audience. She asserts that it is not disconnected from the dominant culture. Instead, popular culture is part of the hegemonic culture, even when it is created to resist to modern standards and dominant discourses (1986: 24).

Welsh-Asante makes a comparison of traditional African dance and "'Art', 'Creative', or 'Contemporary' dances of present-day Africa and also from the Classical Ballet and contemporary modern dance of the West. According to Asante, while modern and contemporary "'Art dance' is motivated by theatrical considerations and performed primarily for the entertainment of others" (1996: 44), traditional African dance is motivated by theatrical and "sociological, historical, political, and religious considerations" (1996:44). These existence of these various motivations behind African dance has had an important influence on Black dance in the US and Brazil. The Black dance attempts to attenuate the difference between traditional African dance and concert dance.

Peggy and Murray Schwartz (2011) provide an example of an African American artist whose dance performance was theatrical, sociological, historical and political. Pearl Primus "danced to protest the conditions of African Americans," and revealed a

particular perspective of the African diaspora dance during the 1940s and 1950s. In *The Dance Claimed Me,* the authors emphasize that Primus, as a dancer, anthropologist, and educator had a significant impact on American culture during the 20th century. Primus "was not in harmony with the institutions within which she lived, whether in the United States and Africa, in academia and professional world of dance" (2011: 9). Her practice emerged from this tension between the patterns embedded in a modernist society and her resistance to those structures.

Primus' words, published in *Dance Magazine* in 1968, expressed her opposition to the hegemonic ideology: "Dance as part of art is universal and must not only communicate but must communicate for all. Dance is in my opinion in America is a lang [sic] but speaks only to sects – Graham – Weidman – Limon cults …" (Schwartzs, 2011: 80). Although Black dancers such as Primus and Katherine Dunham proved a link between the African diaspora community and modern concert dance, their role remains largely unacknowledged by modern dance world and dance scholars. Yvonne Daniel (2008, 2010) asserts that they were "victims of triple discrimination: first against dance as an intellectual enterprise, then against creative women intellectuals, and also against anything that was African derived (research or personnel)" (Daniel, 2010: 25-26).

Paulo Melgaço da Silva Junior (2007) provides another important example of a dance artist whose work was motivated by the socio-political struggle against exclusion and discrimination. Mercedes Batista, inspired by and in partnership with Abdias do Nascimento, danced to affirm the Afro-Brazilian aesthetic. Batista's technique was particularly inspired by Katherine Dunham's technique and her "fieldwork in Jamaica,

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Trinidad and Tobago, Martinique, and Haiti (1936-37)" (Daniel, 2010: 23). Batista and

Dunham were both motivated by African and African-derived religions. Despite their

backgrounds in classical ballet and modern dance, the choreographers borrowed elements

from African religious dance. Dunham was influenced by *Vodou* from Haiti, and Batista

borrowed elements from *Candomblé*, an Afro-Brazilian religion (Daniel, 2010: 24; Long,

1989: 63). In *The Divine Horseman: the living Gods of Haiti*, Maya Deren (1953, 1970)

provides analysis of *Vodou's* philosophy, aesthetics and religious principles, which

contributes to an understanding of Dunham's engagement with this religious tradition.

Aesthetically, Batista's Afro-Brazilian dance technique is very similar to that of Dunham

(Silva Junior, 2007; Long, 1989).

Most Brazilian dance companies during the 1960s were motivated by the

experience of exclusion and the desire to affirm the Black aesthetic as 'beautiful' (Paixão,

2012). The US civil rights movement influenced Black dance aesthetics in Brazil. In this

literature review, I borrow DeFrantz's approach of : 1) viewing Black dance performance

as a survival strategy for African Americans in racialized spaces; and 2) questioning how

African-derived dance can contribute to a discourse of 'beauty.' DeFrantz explores the

concept of "black beauty in motion" (2005: 96), which has implications for both the

perception of social and political circumstances and the engagement of the spiritual and

the spontaneous in dance performance. He uses the term "flash of the spirit" (Thompson,

1983) to refer to "fullness in the execution of gestures" and vitality expressed in

movements (2005: 96 - 98).

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For Yvonne Daniel, the spiritual is the presence of an intangible, inspiring energy that connects the human with a "suprahuman body" (2008: 348). Daniel describes the *suprahuman body* as a "human body transformed by the spiritual incorporation." A special energy that animate the body, which Gottschild describes as "ephebism" (1996: 15). According to Gottschild, ephebism comprises energy, force, vitality, and attack, and it recognize kinesthetically "feelings as sensation" (1996: 15), which is here interpreted as an expression of feelings and spiritual energy. This notion of spiritual incorporation raised by Daniel and Gottschild, is not necessarily referring to possession. This notion is in line with M. Jacqui Alexander (2005) and Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos (2006), who see the spiritual as part of quotidian life. In African and Afro-derived philosophies, the spiritual is a constant presence in human lives, rather than an entity that appears only in specific religious practices or doctrines. From this understanding, choreographers such as Clyde Morgan, Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos and Mercedes Batista derived much of their artistic style and practice from *Candomblé,* including the religion's gestures, codes, movements, and customs.

The inclusion of elements of Afro-Brazilian secular and sacred dance in their artistic productions is a peculiar characteristic of Black dance companies, specifically in Brazil (Lima, 2010; Naranjo, 2010). In *Danças de Matriz Africana: antropologia do movimento*, Jorge Sabino and Raul Lody (2011) examine principles of movement and philosophy in Afro-Brazilian secular and sacred dances as well as Daniel in *Dancing Wisdom: embodied knowledge in Haitian Voudou, Cuba Yoruba, and Bahian Candomble.*

Santos (2005) points to other important US contributions to the Brazilian Black dance aesthetic: *Alvin Ailey American dance theater* 's dance production : *Revelations*. Santos had the first contact with *Alvin Ailey American dance theater*'s work during the 1960s through Clyde Morgan's classes in Bahia. Later, Santos had the opportunity to study at *the Alvin Ailey Dance School* (Santos, 2005:43-44). Santos was particularly inspired by the *Alvin Ailey American dance theater*'s Black female dancer Judith Jameson, who performed a work called *Revelations*. Thomas DeFrantz (2004) positions *Revelations* at the center of an Africanist aesthetic developed in the United States and disseminated across the diaspora. For DeFrantz, one of the lasting themes of this work is its identification of blackness with 'beauty,' which started to be considered in *Alvin Ailey American dance theater's c*reative processes and to be absorbed by other dancers and choreographers (2004: xvii). Other Brazilian dancers and choreographers were inspired by the Lester Horton's technique and Alvin Ailey's work, including Jelon Vieira, director of the *Dance Brazil*; Elisio Pitta, director of the *Companhia C*; and Zebrinha, choreographer of the *Balé Folclórico da Bahia* (Gottschild, 2003; Paixão, 2012).

Black aesthetics entail discussions around not only the techniques used in physical training, but also the dancing body. For the purpose of this research, I draw upon Brenda Dixon Gottschild's concept of the "black dancing body" and Alexander's and Santos' understanding of the "body as a site of memory." Gottschild illuminates the mutability and capacity of bodies to deconstruct stereotypes and stigmas. The Black dancing body is a body in motion, in transformation, and connected with the spiritual and the soul (Gottschild, 2003: 289). Santos explores the diversity of bodies, as observed in

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Bill T. Jones' work (Zimmer, 2003: 30). According to Elizabeth Zimmer (2003), Jones always chose to work with a diverse group of people in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and physical characteristics, which amplified and democratized the possibilities of acting as a dancer. An important aspect of the dancing body Jones provides is the desire to see individuals not executing movements but being the movements. "My role is to help dancers bodies become open and responsive, to be at one point an empty vessel and at the next, completely filled, to be able to inhabit the movement and become it." (Jones quoted in Zimmer, 2003: 30).

Chapter 2

Katherine Dunham and Mercedes Batista: Black Concert Dance in the African Diapsora

Criola não tem sapato, ô Criola
Criola não tem sapato, ô Criola
Dança de pé no chão, ô Criola
Dança de pé no chão, ô criola

(Criola não tem Sapato by Congo da Irmandade do Rosário de Justinópolis)

> Creole does not have shoes, Creole
> Creole does not have shoes, Creole
> Dance with feet on the ground, Creole
> Dance with feet on the ground, Creole

Balé de pé no chão: a Dança Afro de Mercedes Batista, a documentary about Mercedes Batista's life and career, begins with this popular Brazilian song. Through simple verses, this song tells a story of dispossession and resistance. This song tells a story of struggle for the survival of African history, memory, and traditions across the African Diaspora. Fostered by this struggle, in this chapter I focus on the contact of Katherine Dunham and Mercedes Batista. Dunham was an American anthropologist, dancer, choreographer, author, educator and social activist. She is acknowledged as the matriarch or the queen mother of black dance and had her own dance company and had a sucessful carrer in the United States, Europe and across the African Diaspora. Batista is a Brazilian dancer and choreographer considered the mother of Afro-Brazilian dance. She established a dance company and developed a technique based on her background in classical ballet, modern dance (Dunham Technique), and Brazilian ritualistic and popular dances. Through

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a close look at Katherine Dunham's contact with Brazilian culture and her relationship with Mercedes Batista in the 1950s, I argue that these dancers-choreographers' lived experience of blackness in the African diaspora propelled the development of a Black concert dance aesthetic in Brazil. Moreover, I assert that the mutual artistic exchange between Dunham and Batista has left a lasting imprint on modern dance in both Brazil and the United States. Batista's technique and choreography incorporates elements of Dunham's work, and Dunham's technique and repertoire reflects dialogues with Batista and Brazilian culture. In light of this conclusion, I pose two questions: How have racial politics and the lived experience of Black people in the African diaspora influenced the development of a Black dance aesthetic in Brazil? How have the artistic dialogues between Dunham and Batista shaped the dance techniques and repertoire that make up African diaspora modern and postmodern concert dance?

Dance and movement are languages to discuss racial politics, the contrast between hegemonic discourse and lived experience, and art as a strategy for resistance, affirmation of identity, and social inclusion. By engaging with the verses "Creole does not have shoes, oh creole. Dance with feet on the ground" (Santiago & Santiago 2005), I offer two distinct but related ways of reflecting on the concept of dispossession. First, I discuss dispossession as the social, political, historical and economic disadvantage caused by colonialism and slavery. Second, I consider dispossession as a way of affirm African heritage and defy cultural hegemony. During slavery and after, African dances were practiced without shoes because slaves were not allowed to possess them. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1966), Frantz Fanon uses the presence or absence of shoes to

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describe the two towns into which the world was divided by colonialism: the "town of the colonizer" (European) and the "town of the native" (African and indigenous). Fanon asserts:

> The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones [...] The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. (Fanon, 1963: 39)

Fanon emphasizes the dispossession and social, economic and political disadvantage of the native. Shoes serve as a metaphor for human health care and human survival. As part of a generalized European cultural hegemony in the arts, the use of specific shoes was an important element in the gentrification of dance technique. Along with high monthly fees charged to students, strict rules governing dress and shoes prevented blacks from participating in classical ballet and other forms of concert dance at the turn of the 20th century in Brazil.

Figure 1: Mercedes Batista

When Mercedes Batista began studying dance in 1945 at the National Theater Service in Rio de Janeiro, the classes were free. The National Theater Service offered classical ballet and folkloric dance classes given by Eros Volusia, a Brazilian dancer whose practice reflected the diversity of Brazilian identities (Silva Junior, 2007: 14). As a Brazilian creole from a poor family, however, Batista still found it difficult to afford dance shoes. Batista said, "I made my own shoes with the scraps of fabric that my mom,

a dressmaker, did not use in her work. But they only lasted for one day" (Santiago & Monteiro, 2005).

As a young dance student, Batista probably did not imagine that she would later create a dance technique that would give up the use of shoes as way of destabilizing European cultural hegemony – a technique rooted in African traditions, and informed by diasporic routes. In African cosmology, the contact of feet with the ground enables contact with the divine power of nature and the earth. In contrast, European traditions valorized the pomp and splendor of the costumes, including the use of shoes to exalt wealth and royalty. To create an Afro-Brazilian dance technique, Batista gave up shoes in order to claim her African ancestry. Batista's work is a product of her connections with Afro-Brazilian popular culture and dance, her experiences as a member of *Balé do Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro[1]*, her artistic and activist work with *Teatro Experimental do Negro[2] (TEN)*, and her collaboration with Katherine Dunham. Batista's relationship with Dunham played a special and significant role in influencing her work, and was therefore highly influential for black concert dance in Brazil in general.

Eurocentric structures propelling a *new aesthetic*

Despite differences in the countries' histories of racial politics, the social-political conditions of black people from the 1940s through 1960s in Brazil and the U.S. hold many similarities. Stanley R. Bailey (2009) describes the difference in racial politics

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[1] The *Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro* opened in 1909. The dance company was created after 1931.
[2] *Teatro Experimental do Negro* is a Black theater company founded by Abdias do Nascimento in 1944 in Rio de Janeiro with focus on artistic values, culture and social life of Black people in Brazil.

between the two countries, arguing that the U.S. has a history of *racialism*, or racial segregation, in the post-abolition era, while Brazil has a history of *antiracialism*. According to Bailey, racialism "characterizes a context where the popular belief holds that everyone belongs to discrete racial groups that determine social interaction" (2009:23).

Certainly, the legal segregation of public spaces such as schools, restrooms, transportation, and restaurants through Jim Crow laws (1876-1965) in the U.S. contributed to this ideology. Consequently, Black people were at an extreme disadvantage in terms of socio-economic and educational opportunity, in addition to the physical violence suffered through practices of lynching. The Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, respectively, were fruits of Black people's organizing to resist racism and change oppressive laws. The transparency of the racial divide in the U.S. likely contributed to the development of a Black socio-political consciousness and the movement for civil rights (Andrews 1996, Winant 1992, Telles and Bailey 2013).

On the contrary, Howard Winant (1992) and Telles and Bailey (2013) contend that antiracialism contributed to disarticulation among blacks in Brazil. Because antiracialism "recognizes color differences but not as the basis of social group formation" (Bailey, 2009:23), class and national identity were considered more influential than race for social group formation in Brazil. As a consequence, the tension between "action and nonaction" (Twine in Afolabi, 2009:1) among Afro-Brazilians facing racism prevented the coalescing of a unified Black social-political movement. The desire for social mobility, the avoidance of a life of discrimination and exclusion, and the process of

whitening to which Black Brazilians were subjected in 1930s and 1940s Brazil drove a great number of Blacks to reject a Black self-identity (Munanga, 1999:101; Telles and Bailey, 2013:1568; Guimarães, 2001:2).

Some mulattos[3] were allowed to casually achieve the status of white, and to partially enjoy some of whiteness' privileges. This dynamic delayed the formation of a black social movement in Brazil (Winant, 1992; Telles and Bailey, 2013). Nevertheless, during the 1940s black activists outside of the mainstream intellectual and academic arenas were attempting to dismantle the hegemonic discourse of Brazil as a *racial democracy[4]* (Andrews, 1996). Brazilian writer and activist José Correia Leite argued, "In the nation of mestizos only blacks have the courage to denounce racism" (Andrews, 1996:489). Such efforts marked the inception of a movement of socio-political consciousness among Blacks.

Artists such as Abdias do Nascimento and Solano Trindade, founders of the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN) and of the *Teatro Popular Brasileiro[5]*, respectively, were instrumental in the creation of artistic networks across the African diaspora, and in the mobilization of Black people to engage in social-political struggles against racism (Bailey, 2009:28; Clearly, 2009:13; Winant, 1992:174; Silva Junior, 2007:24). Katherine Dunham was an important player in these international solidarity

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[3] Theorists such as Oliveira Vianna and Nina Rodrigues refer to a class of "superior mulattos" who were identified as whites, especially when they had access to land ownership and higher education (Munanga, 1999:67).

[4] A denial of the "existence of biological, political, social, and cultural differences" between African, indigenous, and European descendants and a belief in the incorporation of "original differences into a unique syncretic and hybrid" national identity (Guimarães, 2001:1).

[5] A Black popular Theater company founded by Solano Trindade in São Paulo in 1954.

networks. An interview with Dunham published on July 9, 1950, in São Paulo's *Correio da Manhã* newspaper is an example of the constant tension in that period between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses in Brazil. In the interview, Dunham discusses the necessity of creating Black theater and Black press in a country of miscegenation, in which, according to Gilberto Freyre[6], the relationships between masters and slaves were harmonious. Dunham's critical observation was misinterpreted by the journalist who interviewed her, Yvonne Jean. Jean wrote that Dunham "disagreed" with the "self-segregation" of blacks (Clark and Johnson, 2005: 317).

As Dunham and Abdias do Nascimento had a close relationship, Dunham later clarified her position in a letter that was printed in *Quilombo*, a newspaper published by and for Blacks. Dunham declared that she had always supported the black movement and Abdias do Nascimento's struggles against discrimination and racism in Brazil, and pointed out that she herself had experienced racism during her visit to São Paulo in 1950. Upon her arrival in Brazil, Dunham was not allowed to stay at the *Hotel Esplanada* in São Paulo where she had reservations. That case of racism, denounced publicly by the Black social movement, led to Brazil's first law against racial discrimination, the Afonso Arino Law. Dunham's critique of the discourse of racial democracy and her provocative comment about Gilberto Freyre's canonical book were not only misunderstood, but their meanings were perverted.

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[6] Freyre, Gilberto. Casa-grande & Senzala. Rio de Janeiro: Global Editora, 1933, 1964.

In this context of racism masked by the discourse of racial equality, two aspects of transnational black solidarity should be highlighted: 1) the development of networks among Brazilian and U.S. theorists and artist-activists shaping an African diasporic social-political consciousness "beyond national boundaries" (Andrews, 1996; Gilroy, 2003) the simultaneity of actions and creative initiatives among Black artists and activists. Andrews illustrates these two aspects of Black networks and collaborations in the African diaspora:

> Transnational flows of ideas, images, practices, and institutions are an inescapable part of historical causation in all modern societies; and they have been particularly in peripheral, Third World societies, which because of their historic dependency does not mean, however, that peripheral societies are the passive recipients of intellectual and political (or, for that matter economic) forces and influences emanating from the core. Rather, they engage in a **complex dialogue** with metropolitan actors, sifting, evaluating, and reworking ideas and assertions imported from abroad into new and often quite original bodies of thought and prescriptions for action. (Andrews, 1996: 484; emphasis mine)

Rather than following a center-periphery model, a robust analysis of the development of African-derived concert dance in the African diaspora must understand that there are complex dialogues between various geographic nuclei, or between "multicenters" (Hannerz, 2011). As Khalid Koser (2003) asserts, due to the United States' history of racialism and segregation, there is a common assumption that it is the central location for the construction of politicized and engaged thought across the African diaspora. This assumption unconsciously ignores and marginalizes other actors, and positions other countries only as receptors of American-made thought and culture. In this perspective, peripheral areas are considered incapable of any invention and innovation;

they are considered mere reproducers. While it remains a relatively sparse literature, several African diaspora scholars have already transcended the geographical limits of a U.S.-centric Black cultural studies to include South and Central America (Nascimento, 1992; Gordon and Anderson, 2009), the Caribbean archipelago (Alexander, 2005; Tinsley, 2008; Daniel, 2011), Europe (Gilroy, 1993; Mercer, 1994) and Africa (Mbembe, 2001; Jones, 2002).

In the field of dance, Katherine Dunham and Yvonne Daniel (2011) assert that multiple nuclei across the diaspora have given rise to African-derived dance. Daniel investigates dance primarily in social and ritualistic contexts. In *Caribbean and Atlantic Diaspora: igniting citizenship* (2011), she develops a deep analysis of the "interface of history, economics, and politics through dance practices" (Daniel, 2011: xvii) in the African diaspora. Daniel also discusses several Afro-Brazilian concert dance artists who disseminate African dance heritage transnationally, including Marlene Silva, Mestre King (Raimundo dos Santos), Jelon Vieira, Augusto Omolú, Rosangela Silvestre, and Augusto Soledade. However, she did not include Mercedes Batista (2011:9). I hypothesize that Daniel either has a geographically specific focus, since most of the dancer-choreographers she cites are from Bahia, or is primarily focused on a specific historical period, considering that most of these artists gained international visibility during the 1960s.

With respect to racial relations and politics in Brazil and the U.S. during the 1940s and 1950s, Katherine Dunham and Mercedes Batista can both be described as artist-activists who resisted the "invisibility and unspeakability" present in the Americas

in that period. Leda Martins (1995), a Brazilian scholar, uses the terms *invisibility* and *unspeakability* to describe the absence of Black characters on the stage, and to explain the deformed portrayal of Black people in the performing arts. "From a Eurocentric perspective," she argues, "the *Negro*, or the other, exists only in contrast with the white 'one'." She continues:

> […] the trajectory of the *Negro* persona defines his invisibility and unspeakability. Invisible because it is perceived and elaborated by the white gaze, through a series of discursive stereotyped marks that denies his individuality and difference; unspeakable because the speech that constitutes this figure is constructed independently of his will and reduces the negro to an alienated body and voice, conventionalized by the Eurocentric theater tradition. (Martins 1995:40; emphasis mine)

While Martins refers specifically to theater, the situation was similar in dance. The presence of a Black body on stage in the early 1900s was rare; it was even more rare to see Black bodies performing something other than stereotypes. Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) reveals how the Black body was understood by white choreographers:

> The italicized qualities are attributes that, by racial stereotyping, have been commonly attributed to dancers of African lineage and used to point out the difference between the black and white dancing body. They were frequently the characteristics that pre-Balanchine white choreographers avoided in their choice of female dancers, not knowing how to use them and, perhaps, thinking that they were traits that made the black ballerina seem 'masculine'[…] white ballet choreographers were not obliged to consider using black dancers. They could excuse themselves by declaring that they were not racists, but that black bodies were inherently unfit for ballet. (Gottschild, 1996:65)

A rejection of Black bodies on stage performing classical ballet or other styles rooted in European traditions was not limited to choreographers, but permeated the entire dance scene. The theaters were white-dominated spaces in which Black bodies were read

as exotic. Their presence was only accepted by the audience if they performed African popular or traditional dances in specific theaters. Outside those limits, Black bodies seemed dissonant to a traditional European theater audience and its definition of "beauty." When Batista joined the *Balé do Teatro Municipal* in 1948, for instance, she suffered from western aesthetic expectations. Batista was not used in choreographies because she was Black and Blacks were not generally accepted as a members of a classical ballet dance company. Batista was hired to integrate the company due to her talent as a classical dancer, but the company's internal politics and disguised racism kept her far from the gaze of the audience.

Figure 2: Mercedes Batista at the Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro

I associate *invisibility* and *unspeakability* with the denial of African-derived dance as "high art." African-derived dance has always been considered folkloric. European paradigms and classical folklorists' dichotomies that emerged before the 1950s and divided popular art from high culture, subaltern from hegemonic, and traditional from modern are now being theoretically contested and replaced by a more fluid understanding of these relations (Canclini, 2008; Chaui, 1986). Nevertheless, Brazilian dance companies rooted in African-derived traditions are still being identified as folkloric, traditional or low art. Instead of reifying these binaries, I draw upon Kariamu Welsh-Asante's (1996) description of traditional and contemporary African dance to examine how these categories are challenged and intertwined in Black concert dance. Welsh-Asante describes the difference between African traditional dance and African contemporary dance, stating that "'art dance' is performed primarily for the entertainment of others," while traditional African dance is motivated also by "sociological, historical, political, and religious considerations" (1996:44). In this sense, Black concert dance in the U.S. and Brazil attenuates the distance between traditional dance and mainstream concert dance.

Dancer-choreographers who contributed to the development of Black concert dance were motivated not only by the desire to be recognized and appreciated, but also by the desire to express and overcome their social-political existential condition. This began with a valorization and appreciation of their histories, traditions, cultures, and bodies. While the virtuosity of body movement is the primary motor of creation in classical ballet and modern dance choreographies, in Black modern dance choreography other elements drive the creation. These choreographic works reflect desires to deconstruct stereotypes, mark a

Black presence on stage, denounce racism, and affirm memory and traditions invisibilized by colonialism.

Invisibility and unspeakeability propelled Black artists to act and struggle against exclusion and racism on U.S and Brazilian stages. Black theater and Black concert dance are extensions of a social identity reformation movement in the west. In this regard, the staging of clear protests against racism and violence – Sotilégio[7] (Nascimento, 1951) and Southland[8] (Dunham, 1951) – and valorization of African traditions and culture challenged a hegemonic discourse in the performing arts: the discourse of European traditions and white bodies. Black artists and audience members alike benefited from the presence of Black bodies on stage. Both groups experienced a sense of identification and a feeling of being represented beyond negative stereotypes, which corresponded with a reformulation of the concept of beauty beyond "a larger context of recognized European and Euro-American artistry" (DeFrantz, 2005: 95).

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[7] Theater performance whose dramaturgic text was written by Abdias do Nascimento. The text creates a methaphor of the Black lived experience in Brazil. Written in 1951 the piece was forbiden of being presented for four years by the coensure committee. (Nascimento, 1997)

[8] "A dramatic ballet in two scenes, Southland had a scenario and choreography by Katherine Dunham, music by Dino di Stefano, and sets and costumes designed by John Pratt. The ballet was premiered in the Teatro Municipal in Santiago de Chile, in January 1951. The ballet climaxes at the end of the first scene with the staging of a lynching in which the black man, after being beaten and burned by an offstage mob, is swung onto the stage, hanging by his neck from a branch of the magnolia tree. Dunham's decision to protest the historical oppression of blacks in the United States in such a way, at such a time and in such a place, cost her dearly." (Virtual Selection from the Katherine Dunham Collection at the Library of Congress).
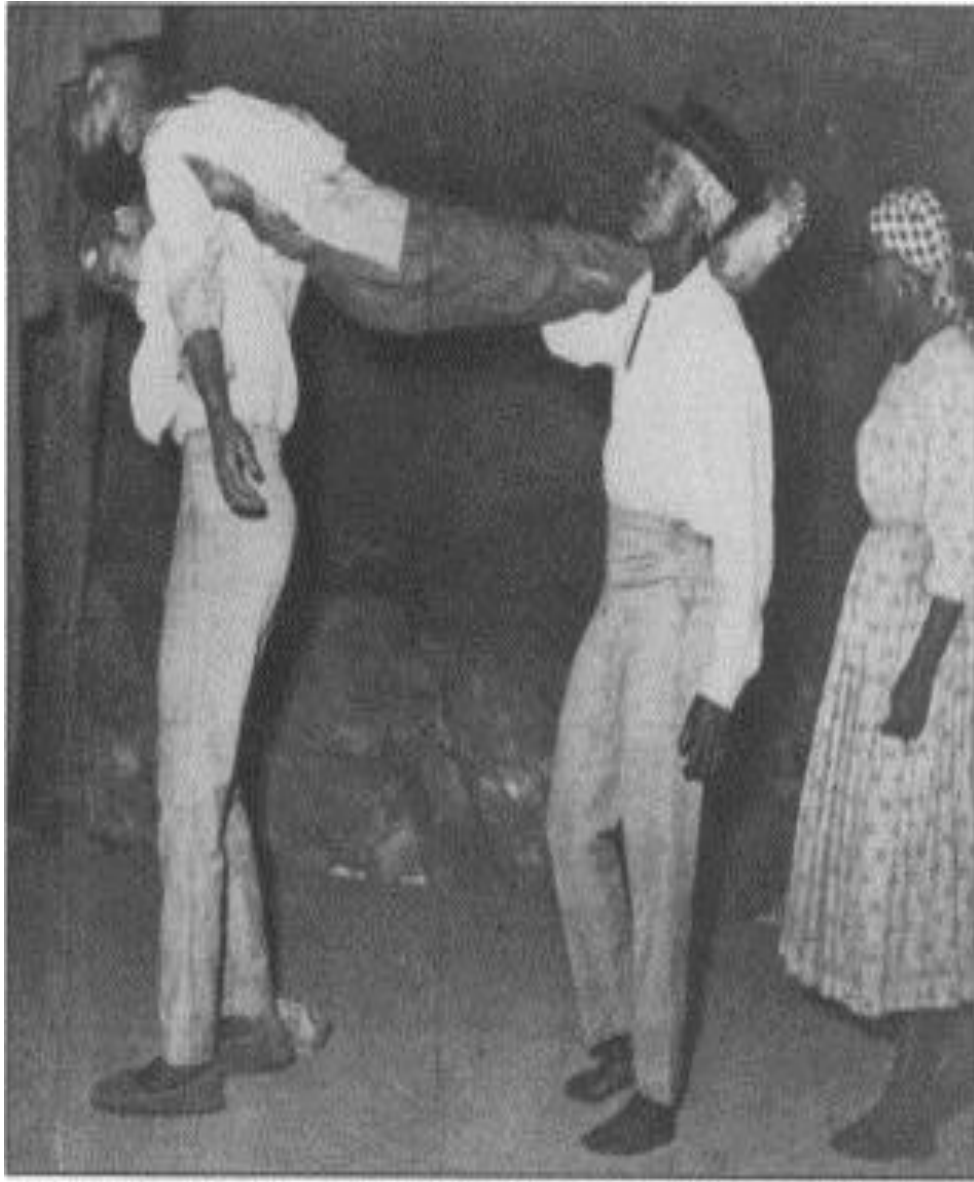
Figure 3: Dunham's dance company in Southland (1951)

Figure 4: Southland (1951)

The valorization of African religious traditions and African-derived "beauty" (DeFrantz, 2005) observed in Batista's and Dunham's works contributed to the empowerment of African descendents across the diaspora. Dunham believed that dance is a way to express culture, history, meaning of life, community, family and roots – rather than just being a means for personal pleasure. According to Dunham, the connection with African cultural matrices enabled Black people "to know more about themselves and the world to know more about them" (Berger, 2007). And this possibility transgressed the stage; it extended to the audience and society. According to Thomas DeFrantz, the space in between the Black performer and the audience enables social transformation:

> Because the visible evidence of 'black' highlights other social identities, and its performance prizes spontaneity and flexibility while referring to a particular black ground, its presence achieves a simultaneous stabilizing and distending effect. Black performance can enable social change by confirming its transformative possibility. In this final feature, we find the possibilities of 'beauty' as a productive aspect of performance. African American dance can choreograph gestures of 'beauty' recognizable to African American audiences, a possibility denied in almost any other modern American location. Here, concert dance may predict social change through the staging of 'beauty' as an action. (DeFrantz, 2005: 97)

A new aesthetic in Brazilian concert dance

Based upon an understanding of how racial politics and the lived experience of Black people in the African diaspora influenced the development of a Black concert dance aesthetic in Brazil, in this section I reflect on the dialogues between Dunham and Batista. It is my belief that the contact between these dancer-choreographers contributed to the formation of Black modern and postmodern concert dance in Brazil, and had

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reverberations in the United States as well. Their mutual contributions entail: socio-political consciousness formation of the Black community through dance; elaboration of dance techniques rooted in African and African diasporic traditions, which ushered in the possibility of new methodologies in dance training; and a relationship with the spiritual and the religious in concert dance composition. These characteristics permeated the work of subsequent dancer-choreographers, who developed their artistic identities inspired by a dance style that contemplated their aspirations and complaints – a dance rooted in African traditions and propelled by the experience of blackness in the African diaspora.

Reminiscent of the supportive alliance between Dunham and Abdias do Nascimento during the 1950s, in 1944 Nascimento and the TEN developed a project that involved teaching theater techniques and dance alongside basic education and political consciousness formation. In that period, the majority of Black people had restricted access to art, education, health care, and housing. Consequently, they were dispossessed of opportunities and hope for social mobility and professional development. Nascimento created a Black theater company and a social-political program. Dunham and Batista also worked to prepare Black people not only to become artists, but to confront racism and discrimination. Through dance, they addressed resistance, cultural diversity, human rights, liberty, power, and revolution. Rita Rios, an ex-dancer of Mercedes Batista's dance company, asserts: "For me, the African dance is an expression of the Negro willing to emancipate the body in terms of revolt" (Santiago & Monteiro, 2005). Dunham and Batista taught the meaning and the force behind physical movement. At the Community Arts Based and Education Program, founded in 1967 in St. Louis, Dunham taught her

students how Black people across the diaspora struggle for dignity, in order to inspire them in their own daily life struggles (Charlotte Ottley in Berger, 2007).

In 1952, Batista created the *Academia de Danças Mercedes Batista* in Rio de Janeiro, where she offered free classes in classical ballet, Dunham technique and choreographic experiments. Batista stimulated and facilitated Black people's access to careers in dance. She invited maids, cooks, store clerks, janitors, and unemployed black and brown people to take her dance classes, and later to dance professionally in her company. Manoel Dionisio, Gilberto de Assis, Rita Rios, and Charles Nelson all danced with Mercedes Batista, and now teach dance in poor Black communities of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. These artists are committed to children's and adolescents' artistic formation. As part of Batista's legacy, they have disseminated the history of Black dance and engaged with art as a strategy of survival, resistance, and social change.

With respect to Batista's and Dunham's contributions to modern dance technique in Brazil and the United States, I argue that they were pioneers in revealing the possibility of transgress racial prejudice. They showed that physical dance and expressive training can embrace and contemplate the diversity of bodies and cultures. By elaborating their technical approaches, Dunham and Batista encouraged dancers to discover ways to connect with their ancestry, history and roots through dance. The "black dancing body" (Gottschild, 2001) became a common means of resistance and affirmation of a racial identity in the African diaspora.

Dunham's influence among generations of dancers is certainly the result of her artistic and humanistic contributions (Perpener, 2007: 160). Her success in mixing

elements of African-derived dance, classical ballet, and modern dance flew in the face of critiques of her early attempts of integrate classical ballet into her choreography (Perpener, 2001:21). One of Dunham's main struggles throughout her career was to "gain recognition in America's cultural hierarchy" (Perpener, 2001:18). Dunham aimed to take the Black dance "out of the burlesque" and make it part of "High Art." In this effort, Batista's relationship with Dunham was instrumental to her elaboration of a dance technique that blended Afro-Brazilian cultural elements with European-based technique.

Figure 5: African-Haitian dance class: Dunham Technique

Batista was not interested in reproducing ritualistic and popular dances on stage or in her classes. Instead, she was interested in using her background (classical ballet and Dunham Technique) to transform African-derived popular performance into concert dance. This fusion generated the possibility of identifying and expressing African heritage in Brazilian culture, valorizing Black and mulatto people, and helping them to affirm their Afro-Brazilian identities. The Afro-Brazilian dance technique, created by Batista between 1953 and the 1980s, was based on Dunham's technique, but emphasized Brazilian popular culture elements and ritualistic dances instead of Caribbean dances. Batista adapted Dunham's technique to her own culture and made her work peculiar. Other dancers-choreographers in Brazil were inspired by Dunham's work as well. Carlos Morais, Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos, Eusébio Lobo da Silva, and Raimundo Bispo (Mestre King) had contact with Dunham's legacy – some directly, by studying with her in the United States (Eusébio Lobo and Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos), and others indirectly through Mercedes Batista and Clyde Morgan (Carlos Morais and Raimundo Bispo).

The presence of Brazilian dance elements and cultural information is evident in Dunham's stage choreography and in her technique. Among her stage choreographies are at least five pieces whose titles refer directly to Afro-Brazilian culture and dance: *Saudade da Brazil*, presented at the Goodman Theater, Chicago, in 1938; *Bahiana*, presented at the University of Cincinnati in 1939; *Acaraje, Preta do Acaraje,* or *Caymmi[9],* from a

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[9] There are two different references to this stage choreography in Clark & Johnson, 2005: 633-634. In addition, it is a reference from the web.site (http://mysite.verizon.net/darrelkarl/katherinedunhamandhercompany1955.html) which refers to this spectacle as *Preta do Acaraje*.

Hommage à Dorival Caymmi, presented in Arcachon, France, in 1952 and at Broadway

Theater in New York City in 1955; and *Samba, Brazilian Suite,* which was choreographed

in rehearsal in 1954 but was not performed (Dunham, Clark, and Johnson, 2005:633-636).

In addition, Vanoye Aikens[10], a principal dancer and partner of Dunham's, mentions the

choreography *Macumba*, which he describes as "more Brazilian than anything else"

(Dunham, Clark, and Johnson, 2005:284). Aikens says, "It was a flash piece and she was

dressed beautifully" (2005:284). Although Aikens had not described the dance's

movements, his comment emphasizes the engagement with Brazilian dance elements in

that piece. Samba accent, triple steps, circular pelvic movements, and popular characters

permeate the repertoire of choreographies and technical exercises that are characteristic of

Dunham's work[11].

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[10] Vanoye Aikens was a student and member of Dunham's Company from 1943 to 1965. He taught Dunham Technique until 2008.

[11] There are videos with excepts of Vanoye Aikens' master class, Theodore H. Jamison, and Keith Williams' classes available at the following websites: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZvPH5z40ms ; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zH5MayOVo4s ; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSkj-V02RoY .

Figura 6 : Katherine Duham Company in Shango 1947

The connection, inspiration, and relationship of Black concert dance with African-derived religions is a characteristic observed in Dunham's choreography *Shango* (1947), that became a recurrent characteristic of Afro-Brazilian dance in general. *Shango* draws upon the body of knowledge she acquired through ethnographic work and as a practitioner of the Vodou religion in Haiti. During her anthropological research in Trinidad and Tobago, Martinique and Haiti during the 1930s, Dunham developed an intimate relationship with traditional African dance and African-derived religion. This important source of knowledge and learning was passed on to Batista, and was fundamental to the development of her work in Brazil. In contrast to Dunham, Batista never became a practitioner of *Candomblé*, and her first contact with this Afro-Brazilian religion came after her visit to the United States. Batista was extremely inspired by Dunham's choreographic and technical work, but also by Dunham's capacity to penetrate

African culture and dialogue with her ancestry. After returning to Brazil in 1953, Batista started to visit *Candomblé* houses. She attended ceremonies and observed the dances attentively. She incorporated the movements she saw into her repertoire. This close relationship between concert dance and the ritualistic dances of the *Orishas*[12] became a defining mark of Afro-Brazilian modern and postmodern dance.

Engagement with Afro-Brazilian religions in choreographic works can be observed in Brazil in different historical periods and dance companies. In the 1960s, the dance companies *Brasiliana* in Rio de Janeiro, *Olodumaré* in Bahia, and *Viva Bahia* also in Bahia incorporated elements of the *Orishas'* dances in their choreographies. During the 1970s, the dancer-choreographer Clyde Morgan choreographed the pieces *Porque Oxalá usa Ekodidé?* In 1973 and *Oxossi N'Aruanda* in 1976 both with the Contemporary Dance Company of the Federal University of Bahia. In the late 1980s, there are the *Balé Folclórico da Bahia* in Bahia and the *Rubens Barbot Teatro de Dança* that also start to develop their choreographies inspired by Afro-Brazilian religions.

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[12] An **Orisha** (also spelled **Orisa** or **Orixa**) is a spirit or deity that reflects one of the manifestations of God in the Yoruba spiritual or religious system (Wikipedia enciclopedia).

Figura 7: Rubens Barbot in O reino do outro mundo – Orixas 2008

Figura 8: Rubens Barbot 2008

Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos, a dancer-choreographer from Bahia, is another example of this connection with Dunham and with Afro-Brazilian religion in contemporary Brazilian dance. During the 1990s and 2000s, Santos developed a dance teaching methodology based on the *Orishas* mythology. Santos grew up in Bahia, in a family with Yoruba provenance. It was extremely important for her to integrate her religious experience and ancestry into her professional work. In Santos' work, we find reverberations of the 1940s-1950s dialogues between the U.S and Brazil – and specifically between Dunham and Batista.

Reflecting on counter-flows

Despite the fact that there are to few references of Batista's work in the United States' academic literature, I argue that social political and cultural exchanges allowed the shaping of a Black aesthetic in Brazil and in the U.S. Additionally, I assert that Batista's travels through the U.S. helped to diversify and decenter the previous model of African-American Black modern dance, and to invite people to reflect on an African diaspora concert dance. During the 1970s, Batista visited the United States for the second time to teach, perform, and choreograph at the Clark Center of Performing Arts, Dance Theater of Harlem, and Dance American Festival Connecticut College (Silva Junior, 2007: 92-93). Batista contributed to the dissemination of Afro-Brazilian dance and culture across the African diaspora. Certainly what she offered was absorbed by dancers and choreographers, who have shaped modern and postmodern dance in the U.S.

Figura 9: Mercedes teaching at the Clark Center, NY (1972)

In conclusion, the racial relations and lived experience of Black people in both *racialist* or *antiracialist* spaces enable the construction of networks among Black artists and activists across diaspora. In this scenario, a new aesthetic emerged in the 1940s-1950s, opening up the stage for acting, movement, and the transformation of reality through art. By educating, seeking connections between body, history, meaning and roots, and embodying intellectual, physical, and spiritual influences in their dance, Katherine Dunham and Mercedes Batista left an important legacy for modern and postmodern Black concert dance in the African diaspora.

Figura10: Katherine Dunham

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Vita

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