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Challenging performances of hegemony in Tango: liberation through pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore ideas of liberation in relation to the present tendencies of *gender representation* in Tango. I argue that the traditional pedagogic model, observed in Johannesburg, tends to perpetuate hegemonic discourses mainly through terminology in which gender binaries, codes and subjectivities are normalized. Such representations reduce, or even reject, plurality and diversity by sustaining specific power dynamics, necessarily related to the role of men and women. Tango is characterized by certain aesthetic elements described in this thesis, and here I prioritize the analysis of its role as a social dance, in the category of couples' dances. I argue that couples' dances are embedded in historically and socially constructed stereotypes; thus, the dynamics observed in balls are not capable of reflecting present gender complexities and identities.

To do so, I first present a critical reflection of the history of couples' dances and Tango, along with my own lived experience as a movement facilitator. Then, I present descriptions of the first phase of the research, the Performance as Research (PAR) project in which I aimed to deconstruct hegemony by challenging gender fixities. The PAR included creative processes, interviews, performance, media and textual production, and the main outcome was related to the pedagogy of dance, presenting the DE-GENDERED MODEL of teaching-learning.

In the second phase of research, or what I call the fieldwork, I engaged with different methods, such as dance meetings based on investigative approaches, body mapping, micro-performance, group discussions and questionnaires to collect data together with a group of 9 participants. I made sense of all the information collected during PAR, and, given by participants during fieldwork, by correlating theories of performance, critical pedagogy, gender and queer studies, with the purpose of including collaborative pathways of embodiment.

Key words: *Tango, gender representations, collaboration, pedagogy of dance, diversity.*