

# FEMININITIES AND MASCULINITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE: ANALYSIS OF THE SPECTACLE CAMINHO DA SEDA, BY SÃO PAULO'S RAÇA DANCE COMPANY

*FEMINILIDADES E MASCULINIDADES NA CENA CONTEMPORÂNEA:  
ANÁLISE DO ESPETÁCULO CAMINHO DA SEDA – RAÇA CIA. DE DANÇA DE  
SÃO PAULO*

*FEMINIDADES Y MASCULINIDADES EN LA ESCENA CONTEMPORÁNEA:  
ANÁLISIS DE LO ESPECTÁCULO CAMINHO DA SEDA – RAÇA CIA DE DANZA  
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**Keywords:**

Dance.  
Body.  
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**Abstract:** The analysis of a dance spectacle considered as a cultural manifestation that reflects aspects of a society can be seen as continuity of the creative process. Based on Pavis (2010) and Siqueira (2006), this study examined the spectacle Caminho da Seda, by São Paulo-based Raça Dance Company, focusing on representations of femininity and masculinity through video and photos. We observed elements that maintained traditional images and aesthetic standards of dance, but pointed out representations contrasting with some stereotypes of sex roles, thus reflecting on stage as a mix that introduces new constructions about body and movement of the contemporary dance scene.

**Palavras chave:**

Dança.  
Corpo.  
Feminilidade.  
Masculinidade.

**Resumo:** A análise de um espetáculo de dança, considerado uma manifestação cultural que reflete aspectos da sociedade, pode ser vista como continuidade do processo criativo. Baseado em Pavis (2010) e Siqueira (2006), este trabalho analisou o espetáculo Caminho da Seda, da Raça Cia. de Dança de São Paulo, visualizando representações de feminilidades e masculinidades por meio de vídeo e fotos. Observaram-se elementos que mantêm tradicionais imagens e padrões estéticos da dança; entretanto, destacaram-se representações que contrastam com alguns estereótipos de papéis sexuais, refletindo no palco uma mistura que instaura as novas construções de corpo e movimento da dança na cena contemporânea.

**Palabras clave:**

Danza.  
Cuerpo.  
Feminidad.  
Masculinidad.

**Resumen:** El análisis de un espectáculo de danza, considerado una manifestación cultural que refleja aspectos de la sociedad, se puede ver como una continuación del proceso creativo. Basado en Pavis (2010) y Siqueira (2006), este trabajo analizó el espectáculo Caminho da Seda, de la Raça Cia. de Danza de São Paulo, visualizando representaciones de feminidades y masculinidades a través de videos y fotos. Se observaron elementos que mantienen imágenes tradicionales y patrones estéticos de la danza; sin embargo, se destacaron representaciones que contrastan con algunos estereotipos de roles sexuales, reflejando en el escenario una mezcla que instaura las nuevas construcciones de cuerpo y movimiento de la danza en la escena contemporánea.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Dance has the power to evoke, transmit and reinforce desires and fantasies. In dance, ideas and feelings about gender<sup>1</sup> and sexuality take shape, provoking and influencing spectators' attitudes and opinions, since, through the body, dance is also a vehicle for communication and expression. This can happen as a denunciation or through hidden messages and innuendo. Some examples are explicit in dance, such as homosexual representations and the breaking up of stereotypical male and female roles. On the other hand, some themes and acts appear disguised, as cases representing a fraternal rather than a passionate relationship. Therefore, many scenarios have "hidden" facts that go unnoticed by those who do not consider dance as more than entertainment.

Considering that social relations are produced and acted out through the body, and not only inscribed in it, dance can also be viewed as a way of speaking to the body and as a sexual rite, often reflecting choreographers' and dancers' character, dilemmas, stimuli and personal experience. It is known that many dancers and choreographers are gay or bisexual, but this was revealed very slowly due to social history with its censorship and repression. Ballet's conservatism led those choreographers to continue doing "beautiful dances" for ballerinas rather than dealing with the real world, that of non-fantasy. During the feminist movement, when new models for gay activism were advanced, more ballets began to appear with themes that addressed duets of love and homosexuality more emphatically; from that point on, for example, many choreographies accepted the inclusion of exclusively male *pas de deux* and *pas de trois* (HANNA, 1999).

For a long time, the typical ideal image of romantic love, male dominance and female submission was repeated in dance: in the *pas de deux*, the ballerina is sustained, carried and manipulated by the male dancer in the traditional *pointe*. In that situation, dancers seem to magnetize one another in a relation that is not only spatial, but also a relation of subjective forces, of dance forces that Langer (2006) termed "virtual powers", which become apparent in a frame of space and time, even if implicitly.

According to Foster's (1996) analyses of those images in ballet, those desiring bodies, which do not carry the same physical valences, participate in different forms in a choreography, presenting distinct gender behaviors. Men and women dance according to a specific type of relationship, doing more than creating a sculptural form of the union between those iconic roles. Usually, the female is the object of desire and adoration of the male, who, in his turn, dances as if she were a dream or a hallucination he sees during a few moments. Not enjoying equal visibility, he becomes her assistant, a necessary background for her to shine and, although she draws attention to herself, he is the one who "orchestrates" and enables her performance.

Foster recalls (1996) that these gender-related characteristics and divisions continue to define the identity of ballet, which does not detach itself from the cultural and aesthetic remnants inherited from the nineteenth century. In addition to classical ballet companies, even more avant-garde companies share distinct gestural vocabularies for male and female dancers,

<sup>1</sup> While sex refers to biological questions of anatomy, physiology and genetics, gender or sex role denotes its social, cultural and psychological correlates: "the standards, expectations and behaviors appropriate to being a man or a woman within a given society" (HANNA, 1999, p. 32). But the term *gender* itself, initially related to female activism studies of the 1960s and 1970s, whose intention was to "denounce women's situation of domination in relation to man" (GOELLNER, 2007, p. 17) is not univocal; it can be approached from different domains, allowing us to advance on a "broad and important academic production whose centrality is the first assertion that not only (biological) sex establishes differences between men and women, but also social, cultural and historical aspects" (GOELLNER, 2010, p. 207).

in which there is a mixture of movements from the modern, post-modern and jazz traditions, but with the use of pointe shoe, for instance, needed to assist female dancing, thus revealing and ensuring gender-marked differences (FOSTER, 1996).

The primary means of expression in dance is the body. On stage, since dance is something that an spectator watches, conservative ways to observe it appear and that conservatism partly refers to an implicit acceptance of traditional ideas about the nature of femininity and masculinity seen as something normal, innate and essential in sex, as a matter of obvious common sense, as a universal given. According to Burt (1995), that wrong and simplistic line of thought still present in the traditionalism of our society often sees gender as something whose nature does not need to be questioned and that cannot be changed. Worse, the reality of how men and women are is accepted, so there is little incentive to analyze gender representations. Louro (2010) also mentions that many consider sexuality as something that we “naturally” have, which is inherent to human beings, so that there is no point in arguing about its character and its social and political dimension. Perhaps that is why there are few descriptions and analyses about those representations in dance in literature.

Having made these considerations, this study aimed to analyze the spectacle *Caminho da Seda*, in an attempt to find representations of femininities and masculinities in that work of contemporary dance. Premiered in 2002 at the Gala Evening of the Joinville Dance Festival, it was choreographed by Roseli Rodrigues (1955-2010), who founded and directed São Paulo's Raça Dance Company. The choice of *Caminho da Seda* for this study was based on the fact that it raises historical, cultural and social aspects that are relevant to analyze regarding moving bodies, sex roles and the presence of nudity in choreographic passages that blend jazz with contemporary dance, pointing to equalities and differences that remain and innovate in representations of the feminine and masculine in today's dance.

## 2 THE ANALYSIS OF SPECTACLES AS A METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

According to Siqueira (2006), theatrical dance professionally performed as spectacles is also a form of cultural manifestation, and analysis is an important part of an artistic work, as well as continuation of the creation process. Thus, based on Pavis (2010) and Siqueira (2006), observation, description and analysis were conducted on the performance involved in *Caminho da Seda*.

Burt (1995) points out that each spectacle is different and invites spectators to look at dance in distinct ways, in which pleasure in a spectacle is determined by the gender of those who watch it as well as their social origin, ethnicity, age and other identifying traits – with sexuality being particularly important. Knowing that a work is able to touch, disturb, sensitize and evoke imagery in different ways for each person, sometimes meeting human reality, we must recognize that our perspective on the object of analysis was subjective, not always bearing total neutrality, and that our cultural perceptual habits direct us to appreciate details or outlines.

Analyzing dance as a reflection of society can show us how part of gender values, hierarchies and positions are occupied. Recognizing that we live in a complex and diverse world, dance also reveals itself like that, reflecting time and people. Therefore, through a spectacle, moving bodies may show cultural and social aspirations and dissatisfactions.

As part and expression of culture and society, theatrical dance is art bearing symbols and meanings that transcend the merely visual aspect of the spectacle, and it can reaffirm or transgress codes and values. It can be said that artistic creation becomes increasingly a symbol of the acts of life, which unfolds in a new physical and social environment. In a dance performance, then, we must consider that the body represents itself and the world, acting it out (GIL, 2004). Bodies and movements that are constructed tell us stories, reveal problems, raise discussions, reflect contexts and involve values and prejudices, and therefore are a form of communication and expression carrying complexities. Thinking dance as a non-verbal code is important to understand what is expressed on the scene, where all movement, together with costume, object, scenery and lighting resources, transmits messages to the audience. Therefore, the work must be flow in order to generate some kind of exchange and communication (SIQUEIRA, 2006).

According to Langer (2006), such intuitive appreciation of dance is as direct and natural as the enjoyment of any other art; however, the analysis of its artistic effects might be a little difficult. An analysis can be harder when the object analyzed is choreographic, emerging through movements in which dancers are bodily followed in their evolution and the spectacle, in its dynamics. Therefore, in addressing contemporary gestural works, it is appropriate to combine multiple analyses in reading dancers' bodies, according to Foster (cited by PAVIS, 2010, p. 58):

In dance, knowing how to read begins with the act of seeing, hearing and feeling how the body moves. The dance reader must learn to see and feel the rhythm in the movement, to understand the three-dimensional body, to be sensitive to its anatomical capabilities and its relationship with gravity, to identify gestures and shapes made by the body and even to reinvent them when they are made by different dancers.

To evaluate the effects produced by a work means to be able to experience its energetic charge and discharge, which is produced in those who watch it, and the analyst's task is to "feel the work's aura and make it be felt" (PAVIS, 2010, p. 216). Of course, the varied forms of reproduction of the work of art will never reach the aura in its absolute, or, as Benjamin (2010) prefers, its *hic te nunc* (here and now). Interpretation reproduces and analyzes the work only as an effort at inferential comprehension rather than full deduction of sensitive data, which would be fruitless. Therefore, determining a female or male identification in a performance is not always easy, but we can infer if it "takes sides" with women or men.

From the concept of triangulation proposed by Goldenberg (2004, p. 63) which "[...] aims to cover the maximum amplitude in description, explanation and understanding of the subject matter", the use of more than one instrument could provide greater understanding and trust on the information sought, thus providing more clarity about the data.

Aiming at such complementariness in research, the tools used to capture the visual and rhythmic dimension of the scene and subsequently reflect on the performance were primarily video and photos. Several tools can be used, but in this case, they were adapted to the circumstances and needs of the moment.

Used when resuming the spectacle, restoring its real time and general movement, video is the most complete media resource for gathering a lot of information. Even when the recording is made from a fixed point with a single camera, it "[...] is a testimony that restores the thickness of signs and allows the observer to capture the style of representation and keep the memory of threads and uses of various materials" (PAVIS, 2010, p. 38).

The analysis based on photographs is also interesting because they are “the tangible trace of what has been” (PAVIS, 2010, p. 37), offering an insight into the work – and not necessarily knowledge of the object photographed. Photos, like video, relieve our memory, providing reference points for a description, and the analyst’s task is to signify those photos, considered both as a document and as an autonomous work of art, striving “to ‘de-aestheticize’ artistic photos by highlighting their documentary dimension while appreciating the photographic aesthetics in order to imagine what that view reveals about the object produced” (PAVIS, 2010, p. 37).

The use of those images “offers a restricted but powerful record of temporal actions and actual – concrete, material – events” (LOIZOS, 2002, p. 137). The use of information and visual data can benefit the analysis of sometimes complex issues that appear in research. Therefore, being as important as moving images, still images became “facts” that could not be ignored.

But one must consider the fact that theatrical arts, when photographed or filmed, lose the significant support of presence. A video will never be like a spectacle. On approximations to the scene, other movements that take place on stage at the same time are not captured, and the notion of the whole is lost. Similarly, if the camera is farther away to film the entire stage, details are lost, and one must recognize that the language of video differs from dance, creating new reading and form of contact with the work (SIQUEIRA, 2009).

The program of the spectacle, as a promotional material element that accompanies it, was also consulted, since programs often contain more than technical information, advancing to facilitate spectators’ reception, to make them understand what they watch. Among several possible pieces of information, the program also provides the spectacle’s intertext: texts and artistic sources to which the performance refers, with affinities that have inspired the choreographer.

A methodological choice for visualization, description and analysis of the spectacle was its division into eight parts based on changes of music and costumes. With the adoption of a table used as part of this methodology, the elements included in the description were costumes, movements, choreographic elements/objects, lighting and music, since they were aspects that signal a general view of the spectacle. However, the spectacle was analyzed from the elements explained in the following discussion: costumes, bodies, movements, and representations of femininities and masculinities.

### **3 REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMININITIES AND MASCULINITIES: COSTUMES, BODY AND MOVEMENT IN *CAMINHO DA SEDA***

The spectacle was inspired by the Silk Road, which connected East and West through caravans and large vessels in order to trade fabrics, seeds and precious materials. According to the program, that bridge “has also given rise to transmission of knowledge, ideas and cultures, being the scene of countless stories, battles and romances. A bridge to reality... a pathway to mirages”. Since the work refers to a route that connected two points by sea and by land, in vessels that also made slave trade, many parts feature the aesthetic movement of jazz, the company’s first style, merged with more contemporary features adopted by the choreographer and revealed on stage.



Here we begin an attempt at approximation between the effects of costume, body and movement in the spectacle, trying to relate them to femininity and masculinity representations we viewed.

### 3.1 About costumes

Created according to the specific requirements of the spectacle, the costume style is naturalistic, combined with the circumstances and characteristics of the work on a trade route of textiles, which are present both in the choreographic objects/elements manipulated and in trousers and skirts. These, unlike classical ballet's bouffant skirts, are long and wide in several parts of the spectacle, therefore becoming lighter and participating in the movement.

Those trousers and skirts are especially enhanced by dancers' turns and the marked movement of their hips. Many of those turns, which occur often throughout the spectacle, come to life through the fabrics used as costumes, just as the movement of the hips is also evident in certain parts, when the movements refer to African dance, with strong and vibrant beats, in equal representations by male and female dancers.

There are aspects of costumes that relate to the so-called female universe, which are present when we visualize both male and female dancers. For example, when they all wear red pants similar to skirts, the costumes reverse the stereotype image according to which men do not wear skirts, but pants. In that spectacle, pants only facilitated some moves, but they look much more like skirts than loose pants, so that this subtle difference, caused by an extra seam in the costumes, was only noticed when the analysis turned exclusively to it, after the work had been watched several times. That is, the image according to which men do not wear skirts because they are feminine seems to have been deconstructed in this relationship with costumes in the spectacle.

The costumes also provided evidence of bodies, especially when the male dancer wore beige pants and the female wore beige *collant* with legs/overalls, both tight to their bodies. Although neutral, especially for its color and simplicity, that costume wore by both participated in the action of dancing, becoming an extension of the body and dissolving itself in the scene as whole, thus valorizing all body unfoldings, being wore by the body while it wore it. It can be said that as this costume showed the bodies, it revealed similarities, such as the issue of strength and flexibility, but it also allowed identifying differences between male and female bodies, such as female dancers' larger hips, and males' larger waists and shoulders.

We must also consider the use of hair props. Used during most of the spectacle, they make dancers' heads equal as they hide their hair, which distinguished dancers in parts of the performance in its various sizes, colors, cuts and textures.

On the absence of costume, total or partial nudity has appeared often in contemporary dance. In this case, regarding moments of breast exposure, it is important to consider that equal costumes do not mean equal representation, since female dancers are more similar to males when wearing tops. That is when non-costume is expressed, since, when they wear tops, they are all alike because costumes hide an anatomical difference: breasts. However, nudity in *Caminho da Seda* does not seem to bear an erotic, strange or disturbing function; it is rather part of the spectacle's aesthetic. Therefore, that sexual, excessive and subversive body

mentioned by Banes (1999) in the description of avant-garde works of the 1960s seems not to be sought in the spectacle in question.

### 3.2 On the body

While in some parts of the spectacle there is equality wrapped in gestures and bodies of all dancers – provided by similar costumes, differentiated only by a beige top – there is a body difference in the group that is hardly equal, regarding heights and spans. Most men are taller than women, and that is visible at times when they all join at the center or when they are arranged in two rows: we soon realize that the back row of men is well higher than the front row of women. Even if we try equality or a single vision to the eyes, we have to consider the difficulty of matching biologically determined physical characteristics. Thus, costume can even hide an anatomical difference regarding breasts, but that is more difficult to achieve regarding dancers' height.

Female representation on the body happens when female dancers move their shoulders and consequently breasts move. Dancers use that anatomical difference, which immediately relates them to the female universe to which they are linked.

Many parts of the spectacle reflect liberation movements of the 1960s, with both sexes dancing with the same physicality. As in the choreographies of Senta Driver<sup>2</sup> and others postmodernist choreographers, either sex could physically perform any movement, specially because women in the group are apparently strong in their own measures, heights, physicalities, even if they do not lift, carry or drag their peers all over the stage as men do in most parts.

At one point of the spectacle The male dancer's tight pants and the female's tight overalls provide equality and valorization of his body lines, flexibility and contractions, and when she enters the stage, they do some equal and some different movements in which she appropriates his body, taking it as her support, and they appear to be one until they leave, when he takes her as his support. Ballet is inverted here, both for the increased use of the ground and for new ways of support and contact of one body with the other, under new limits of the body and one's relations of domination over the other.

This alludes to Contact Improvisation recommended by Steve Paxton<sup>3</sup> and it is quite widespread in the contemporary dance scene, especially in cases of delivery and support of body weight without distinct active and passive, dominant and submissive roles, thus providing a more equal form of representation. However, those aspects do not tend to cancel representations of women and men exposed in bodies, even with the supposedly equitable function seen in the movement and perhaps in tights *collants*.

In contemporary dance, some groups are more open to bodies that deviate from traditional standards, for example, overweight people, people with disabilities, among other features. That reaffirmed the stereotype on the dancing body in general: beautiful, thin, strong,

2 The works of Senta Driver (1942) often reverse the traditional functions of sexual role: her dancers are strong, lifting and carrying their partners, whether male or female, from side to side of the stage. "Driver does not think it is possible to tell whether a man or woman has choreographed a dance. She rejects the relevance of sexual role in the use of a person's body or mind; each sex is capable of intellectual, aesthetic and physical achievements" (HANNA, 1999, p. 305).

3 Paxton (1939) devised this practice full of the contesting spirit of 1960s counterculture. With more equal gender representations, which destabilize and de-naturalize assumptions about images of men and women in dance, possibilities, risks and force capabilities are redefined, providing opportunities for dancers being physically close to other men and women, not through confrontational or sex-based sense (BANES, 1998).

healthy, flexible, lightweight, i. e. following the rules of what would be desirable for men and women in contemporary society and dance – features most likely acquired during the group's hard physical and technical preparation work.

### 3.3 On movement

Except for the end of the spectacle, which has only one female dancer on stage, as in Merce Cunningham's<sup>4</sup> choreographies, for example, no dancer occupies a leading position at the center and in front of the stage – something common in classical ballet. In the work in question, all movement representations positioned in space, whether male or female, take place in basically the same way, through many relays in positions, and all points on stage are equally important.

One aspect related to the male universe, highly developed by Ted Shawn<sup>5</sup> and whose stereotypical characteristics are strength, bravery and power, takes place during movements that dancers perform on the ground, turning around themselves in an inversion of ballet forms, as well as in big jumps, perhaps showing their physical feat, similar to that of modern ballet dancers such as Vaslav Nijinsky,<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov.<sup>7</sup> Would those jumps in dance be a search for reassurance? A search for masculinity in dance? In Santos's (2009) work about hip-hop, which could be related to several other dance styles, including contemporary dance in question, it is the exposure of masculinity and virility in difficult movements that requires strength, skill, endurance, and agility from the performer, thus announcing heterosexuality and thus imposing the audience's respect and admiration. However, in the spectacle in question, this could be more related to the use of specific movement techniques linked to physical differentiation in the constitution of women and men.

Still on these representations about the universe socially and culturally dictated to each sex, in a specific part of the work we see a female trio that assists and manipulates each other in the movements. Despite breaking up stereotypes since the three are helping each other, with no presence of males, music is soft and subtle – features that socially fit in the female universe and pattern, even because they are dancing with their breasts naked. Even so, movements are strong, energetic and vibrant, and they could also be performed by men.

Many times throughout the spectacle, male dancers raise females, who go from the ground to their shoulders. We could ask: are males enabling females' movements? Perhaps they are, but in addition to a lot of physical strength and technique by males, it is undeniable

4 Cunningham (1919-2009) stated that dance's aesthetic and formal qualities were more important than the difference between genders, which he neutralized in the content and expressiveness of his choreography. His composition method eliminates any romantic view of the male role, just as his dancers rarely try to appear ethereal; and although his style is elegant and has characteristics of ballet, the role of a dancer at the front and center of the stage, surrounded by the corps de ballet does not necessarily exist: all areas of the stage and dancers are equally important (GITELMAN, 1998, ANDERSON, 1978).

5 After the period of decadence of the male dancer, Shawn (1891-1972) was among those who initiated the development of a heroic masculinity, which then became much appreciated, evoking an athletic and masculine ideal in most of his works. With its all-male company, Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers, he aimed to do away with taboos that prevented the development of dance among men, even though he remained within the hegemonic standards rather than confronting them: when he allowed female dancers in his company, he was inspired by the purely historical division of female and male activities, in which movements were designed in different ways for each sex. Men's movements would be great in space, extending their bodies, as in the case of warriors; women's in turn, would be closed, with fists and hands exemplifying activities such as sewing or lulling a baby (BURT, 1995, GITELMAN, 1998, GARAUDY, 1980).

6 Nijinsky (1890-1950) was a key figure in the reintroduction of male ballet in the twentieth century. Gil (2004) comments on his jumps: they were so high that they gave the impression of body suspension. He initiated and developed representations of masculinity that dominated ballet and, to some extent, modern dance throughout the century. Choreographing ballets related to gays and androgyny, Nijinsky's roles often allowed him to express (conventionally female) sexuality and sensitivity with extraordinary (conventionally masculine) strength and dynamism (HANNA, 1999).

7 From the 1960s on, when stars like Nureyev (1938-1993) and Baryshnikov (1948) began to make money and earn prestige, heterosexual men felt encouraged to dance and achieve status. Nureyev expanded and emphasized the male role in contemporary ballet, and he also played female roles. Merging animal agility with human kindness, "a pioneering example of bravery as a dancer, he seemed like certain athletes – bold, brilliant, temperamental, audacious – without being heterosexual" (HANNA, 1999, p. 212).



that female dancers could not perform those movements if they were not technically prepared for it as well, and if they were not fit and especially strong to do so. Those movements were also achieved at the expense of their efforts. Therefore, resented reciprocity is present in dance between skills and physical valences developed by both sexes, with which males do help females, but are also helped by them.

The illusion of lightness and absence of effort, typical of ballet, are present when female dancers are manipulated by males. But it could also be said that, as in George Balanchine choreographies,<sup>8</sup> those ballerinas are strong and do not need the support of men, which could be given by other women. There are choreographic passages where men help women in most of their movements, but in a way that both compose forms together, being not only supports, but rather extensions of their bodies, thus valuing lines and shapes, which in this case could also be made by another female dancer.

There are also moments in which women are supported on men's bodies on the one side and leave on the other, pass between their legs, enjoy their body for the beauty and performance of their movements, apparently manipulating male dancers. Men also have their moments relying on women's bodies and being assisted in moving, even if less often throughout the spectacle. In that movement, especially in females, we perceive, as Hanna said (1999), that everything has been seen from every possible angle in modern dance: legs, thighs, buttocks, breasts. But it is reiterated that the aesthetic function of beauty becomes so ubiquitous that sex appeal goes unnoticed.

At several moments, there are demonstrations of confidence by male dancers when women surrender to their arms and therefore seem much lighter, as if they floated, showing – beyond the stereotype of a man who manipulates a woman – complicity and help in movements. If this is associated to classical ballet, we could also see associations to modern dance, in which, unlike this ethereal image of women, the ground level is often used, stressing horizontality instead of verticality.

Besides the motion of tilting one's head back, as Isadora Duncan<sup>9</sup> used to do to feel the desire running all over her body, there are also many trunk inclinations, twists, contractions and flexions, reflecting strong and dense movements, the opposite of Romantic era lyricism. But there are also times when a male dancer extends his arms to a female who does the same and they come together in a *pas de deux*, keeping the roles in which he offers his hand and enables her to perform better, especially in turns and leg rises.

#### 4 FINAL REMARKS

In that spectacle, traditional dance pictures mixed to recent figures established new body and movement constructions of the contemporary scene, reflecting on the stage the beauty of

8 In the period of modern ballet, Balanchine (1904-1983) was one of the choreographers of the Ballets Russes, the dance and opera company founded in 1909. In a time of changes in sex roles, he transformed his legacy when he wrote some ballets in which women were strong and independent, hardly needing men's support.

9 It was with Duncan (1877-1927) and her break with ballet that the romantic stereotype of the female dancer began to be undone. Belonging to the first generation of modern dance, saying that the body should express itself free of anything that constrains it, since it is the most noble in art, Duncan caused shock by dancing in transparent tunics and bare feet, which was considered as bold as nudity. She despised advanced dancing, since she said that the only legitimate subject for art was personal feeling, and she established the basis of modern dance and a new gestural language through "the adequacy of movement to an artistic project and liberation from conventional codes that imprison the body, not only in existing forms of dance, but also in society in general" (DANTAS, 2007, p. 150-151). Therefore, freeing the body and its expression was a demand made both by the feminist movement and this new dance that began to emerge. Thus, her aim was that the movement gained the body as a whole, not being restricted to the legs. According to Garaudy (1980), she also thought of the wish she could feel and convey, in simple but passionate acts.

the mixture of conventionally female characteristics, related to sensitivity and sexuality, with conventionally male ones, such as strength and dynamism.

Furthermore, costumes can be enhanced by dancers' movement in equal representations about movements. On the other hand, equal costumes do not mean equal representations, since, in this case, equal costumes provided evidence of the anatomical difference between sexes, in the case of breasts – in a nakedness that, again, does not welcome an erotic role in the aesthetics that makes up the work as a whole.

There are aspects of costumes, such as skirts, which are related to the universe said to be female and that, when wore by male dancers, deconstruct an image. Other costumes, when adjusted to the bodies, stress them, revealing technical anatomic similarities and differences that can hardly be equaled. That sex difference is used by female dancers in relation to shoulder movements, in which breasts also move. That female representation does happen to male dancers, who, in turn, use their strength to take advantage of specific movement techniques such as jumps, which are higher.

In many parts of that spectacle, both sexes dance with the same physicality, because women in the group are apparently also strong and use it to facilitate the work of the male dancers when the latter raise, turn or drag them. There is much appropriation of bodies and different forms of support and contact between them, demonstrating new limits of bodies and domination relations that end up equaled, with no fixed rule about movement of one sex that is dominated and one that is submissive, thus providing a more egalitarian form of representation, although differentiated by bodies.

Thus, in the whole spectacle, costumes, bodies and movements caused the maintenance of some roles, but similar representations of female and male stood out, contrasting with some sexual role stereotypes and aesthetic standards, in attitudes that have accompanied dance in contemporary scene, and also in *Caminho da Seda*.

It seems possible to say that, nowadays, both creation and artistic perception occur more abruptly, and the connection established between artists, their work and the public tends to occur at once, right away. There is not much time to absorb and reflect on a work of art, as numerous others emerge all the time. The imagery moment that marks contemporary times reaffirms the acceleration of time, as when Peixoto (1999) says that nothing seems more impertinent than asking images and sensory stimuli to be slower. Speed and impermanence come as contemporary marks and also spill, of course, in art. In this sense, we realize how important documenting a spectacle can be. Revisiting the work, analyzing details and building inferences seems a fair and important, although always incomplete effort. That effort encourages further discussions about the production process, and the history carried by each work expands the boundaries of perception and proposes aesthetic dialogues based on the sensitive data presented by dancers and choreographers.

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