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**O CORPO DE TEXTOS BRINCANTE: UM ESTUDO DAS/NAS FRONTEIRAS DA
LINGUAGEM ACADÊMICA**

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LINGUAGEM ACADÊMICA

Tese de doutorado apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês da Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo, como parte dos requisitos para obtenção do título de Doutor em Letras.

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Para Sabrina, a cientistaventureira mais encantadora.

Para todas as crianças de 0 a 99 anos de idade.

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RESUMO

Esta tese questiona a suposta inaptidão da gramática científica em abordar temas inefáveis ou inexprimíveis. Adotando uma postura decolonial, o trabalho contesta a noção de que algumas linguagens e discursos têm uma inerente (in)aptidão em lidar com certos assuntos, marcando one, quando e porque a hegemonia das formas de comunicação na academia se tornam fragilizadas, no momento em que se colocam na presença de linguagens e discursos não prontamente reconhecidos como acadêmicos. Assim, propõe-se uma discussão que interroga as categorias ratificando o valor acadêmico de descrições, explicações e argumentos com referência a suas qualidades verbais (léxico, sintaxe etc.), com o objetivo de avaliar até que ponto gramáticas que pressupõem onto-epistemologias diferentes daquela ligada à leitura e escrita grafocêntricas têm potencial de contribuir para uma redefinição dos modos em que o conhecimento científico pode ser construído. A análise debruça sobre um conjunto de formações/arranjos discursivos marginais, cujas formas linguísticas não são consideradas científicas pelos padrões acadêmicos modernos: o brincar. A partir de sua observação, o trabalho responde questionamentos a respeito dos problemas éticos que resultam da implicação entre corpos e linguagens em contextos acadêmicos e a distribuição do poder comunicativo entre variadas formas de semiose e onto-epistemologias. A Pedagogia dos gestos é o *modus operandi* adotado para geração e análise de dados, o que permite que a resposta às perguntas de pesquisa aborde o tema da inefabilidade de um modo que enfatiza a significância da fisicalidade e suas atmosferas de sentido. Os principais resultados indicam que: a) ao lidar com assuntos inexprimíveis, a ciência moderna conduz uma exploração velada e colonial do brincar através da linguagem acadêmica hegemônica; b) essa exploração está fortemente ligada à constituição histórica da linguagem acadêmica como tal, o que acarreta variados graus de suscetibilidade e dependência de diversos tipos de interferências semióticas externas; e c) o discurso científico não está blindado contra todas as formações/arranjos discursivos marginais e “não-acadêmicos” da mesma forma, pois alguns (como aqueles que emergem no brincar) têm poder relativo de deslocar a comunicação acadêmica de seu modelo onto-epistemológico atualmente empregado, portanto, não logrando sucesso em sustentar fronteiras absolutas e permanentes que o possam insular.

Palavras-chave: Gramática científica; Inefabilidade; Comunicação decolonial; Pedagogia dos Gestos; Brincar.

ABSTRACT

This thesis questions the supposed ineptitude of scientific grammar at addressing ineffable or unspeakable issues. Adopting a decolonial stance, the work contests the notion that some languages and discourses have an inherent (in)aptitude to tackle certain subjects, marking where, when and why the hegemony of the forms of communication in the academy become fragilised, while in the presence of languages and discourses not promptly recognised as academic. A discussion is proposed that interrogates the categories ratifying the academic value of descriptions, explanations and arguments with reference to their verbal qualities (lexicon, syntax etc.), with the aim to assess to what extent grammars that presuppose different onto-epistemologies than that of graphocentric reading and writing may contribute to a redefinition of the ways scientific knowledge can be built. The analysis is centered around one set of marginal discursive formations/arrangements whose forms of language are not considered scientific by modern academic standards: play. By observing it, the work answers questions about the ethical issues resulting from the implication between bodies and languages in academic settings and the distribution of communicative power in varying forms of semiosis and across onto-epistemologies. The Pedagogy of Gestures is adopted as the *modus operandi* for data generation and analysis, which enables the response to the research questions to approach the issue of ineffability in a way that the significance of physicality and its atmospheres of meaning are emphasised. The main results indicate that: a) when dealing with unspeakable matters, modern science carries out a concealed, colonial exploitation of play through hegemonic academic language; b) this exploitation is strongly connected to a historical constitution of academic language as such, which entails varying degrees of susceptibility to, and dependence on, different kinds of external semiotic interference; and c) scientific discourse is not shielded against all marginal, ‘non-academic’ discursive formations/arrangements in the same manner, for some (such as the ones that emerge from play) have relative power to dislocate academic communication from the onto-epistemological framework it currently employs, thus not being successful at sustaining absolute and everlasting frontiers that can insulate it.

Keywords: Scientific grammar; Ineffability; Decolonial communication; Pedagogy of Gestures; Play.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

Ground zero

This thesis is primarily concerned with how Higher Education (HE) contexts in Brazil have been changing and how they have *not* been changing over the last decade. Let me begin to unwrap this by providing some numbers referring to my local HE institution.

In 2010, when I first stepped foot into the University of São Paulo (USP), out of the 11,057 spots for undergraduate courses that this institution offered, 25.8% corresponded to students coming from the public educational system through quotas¹ (USP, 2016, p. 5). In 2014, when I finished my undergraduate studies, that proportion had increased to 32.3% (*ibid.*), of which approximately one third (30.3%) were PPI² candidates (*ibid.*, p. 21). In 2020, 47.8% of enrolled students had formerly attended public schools, with 44.1% of those being PPI's (CRUZ, 2020).

These figures point to a significant change in the composition of the undergraduate student body at a university in Brazil that has traditionally been considered to cater for just a few who come from privileged backgrounds. Nevertheless, what these measurements hide is the fact that no matter however much the inflow of people previously excluded from prestigious, public HE institutions may now be making places

¹ I will not get into the particulars of how the quotas model works at USP, since that is beyond my main point here, as I will explain momentarily.

² PPI stands for '*pretos, pardos, indígenas*' (black, brown, indigenous), which accounts for three of the ethnical groups recognised by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). In the context of entrance exams at USP, the cluster PPI is used to refer to a subdivision of the so-called 'social quotas' provided by the university for candidates applying from the secondary public educational system.

such as USP statistically more diverse, the language of academia has hardly undergone *any* change in order to embrace difference at the structural level of semiosis. I am not the first to raise this issue, since it has been touched upon by initiatives such as Thiago Torres's YouTube channel *Chavoso da USP*³, as well as the Instagram page *Funkeiros Cults*⁴.

While *Chavoso da USP* speaks – among other topics – about his experience of attending USP without letting his ‘quebrada’ lifestyle be subsumed, *Funkeiros Cults* excerpts from canonical literary and scientific texts are translated into ‘peripheral’ vernacular and placed beside photographs of young men in ‘funkeiro’ attire holding books. From my perspective, both these initiatives are calling the general public's attention to how social struggles are also semiotic struggles in that there is a tension over which cultural behaviours (and their respective symbols) belong in academic environments.

However, despite the commendable efforts displayed by those projects, I cannot help to reflect on how impenetrable – or, even worse, untouchable – the academic language used by Brazilian universities such as USP continues to be. This becomes particularly evident to me, when I consider that both the *Chavoso* and the *Funkeiros* projects have been proposed on social media, where they are able to provide nothing but erratic manifestations of antagonism in face of the exclusion of the social group they represent from acclaimed places of intellectuality. In other words, they end up accepting the terms used for the hierarchisation of different people, even though they confront the effects of hierarchisation. Their work simply posits that origin does not prevent one from accessing legitimised knowledge institutions, but it fails to directly interrogate the categories that separated knowledges and languages of different people in the first place.

In that respect, my proposal here in this space called a ‘doctoral thesis’ (which I will very soon outline in greater detail) involves a confrontation of the presuppositions sustaining the separation of knowledges and languages as ‘academic’ and ‘non-academic.’ I am, therefore,

³ *Chavoso da USP* has more than 54 videos and 210,000 followers. The channel can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKWus46Vy8gwf1rRLu4II0w>. Accessed on May 28, 2021.

⁴ *Funkeiros Cults* has more than 259 posts and 238,000 followers. The page can be found at <https://www.instagram.com/funkeiroscults/?hl=pt-br>. Accessed on May 28, 2021.

instigated by the same phenomenon that motivates *Chavoso's* and *Funkeiros's* work, but I choose to take a different route than theirs, as I am mostly concerned with dismantling the criteria of exclusion rather than the fact of exclusion itself.

I will at this time provide a small glossary containing the main concepts from which I derive these initial remarks of mine. Because they traverse the whole of my research work here and will recurrently come up at different stages of the thesis, for now they are merely introduced and will later on be unpacked further and further in layers of meaning.

COLONIALITY. The concept refers to the form of domination that remained in existence after the end of colonialism in the Americas, which is predicated on a combination of capitalist-extractivist mentality and civilisational intent that sustains processes of violence through hierarchisation and inequality, expressed by such categories as race, class, gender, culture, language, and knowledge being historically created and used to separate life into zones of being/non-being and to justify notions of 'natural' inferiority of certain peoples and/or social groups (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSGOUEL, 2007, p. 13). In communication, coloniality is reinforced by such notions as 'intelligibility,' whereby universalising a monocultural/monolingual form of metalanguage favours hegemony in that linguistic deviation from normativity is deemed not only as leading to incomprehension, but above all as a sign of a lack of knowledge in absolute terms and, therefore, of non-life (SOUZA, 2019, p. 17). This homogenisation of metalanguage is seen, for instance, in the acceptance of modern scientific discourse as a strong, final way to speak about life, which entails a simplification all existential problems to fit into the register of a single-minded politics of enunciation (SANTOS, B. S, 2010a, p. 528). Those unable or unwilling to communicate precisely according to the terms prescribed for linguistic expression acquire/retain the status of inhumanity (FANON, 1986, p. 17), which is used as a reason to ostracise multiple social groups and, as a consequence, undermine social mobility by using a single, dominant form of semiosis as gatekeeping criterion for participation in a wide variety, if not all, political processes.

LOCUS OF ENUNCIATION. In broad terms, it can be defined as the geo-political and body-political location of a subject that communicates (GROSFOGUEL, 2011, para. 7), which anchors the subject's language and knowledge historically/ideologically, thus allowing for the multiplication of theoretical ideas by means of interaction with situated ways of thinking (SOUZA, 2019, p. 27), as well as marking the incompleteness and non-universality of any theory (FIGUEIREDO; MARTINEZ, 2019, p. 4). Coloniality, however, proposes that a discourse's authority's being recognised – especially in the context of modern science – depends upon the concealment of the body that produces theory, in order to erase its ethnic, racial, gender and sexual marks. This coercion reinforces further acts of violence, since the linguistic profiling of the 'impartial' locus of enunciation of modernity does not engulf all subjects equally, presupposing various degrees of ineptitude of certain bodies at producing communication, for they are placed at different points in the continuum of the zone of non-being (NASCIMENTO, 2021, p. 60).

IDEOGENESIS. The process of generating ideas. With the erasure of the locus of enunciation by the colonial framework of modern science, ideogenesis tends to a specific kind of standardisation that is coupled with Cartesian rationality. While normatisation itself is not endemic to coloniality, for every existing culture has historically converted reality into its own categories and units of knowledge. (SAID, 1979, p. 67), modernity brought about a hierarchisation of knowledges based on their relative compatibility with a form of reason that dismisses affect as deleterious to thought and, as a consequence, considers itself as having a privileged gaze upon life and reality (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, 2007, p. 81). This has imposed a homogenisation on how thought takes place and how ideas are generated, inasmuch as reason is seen as a universal phenomenon in both substance (i.e., the ideas it produces) and structure (i.e., the means whereby ideas are produced). At the base of this homogenisation is an essentialist, narrow view on what humanity means, against which difference is measured as 'deviation' (SOUZA, 2017, p. 268). As such, ideogenesis becomes subordinated to a restrictive definition of how legitimate knowledge is supposed to be generated and circulated. For instance, ideas that are passed on orally or visually are seen as more 'provincial' than those in graphocentric written form (*ibid.*, p. 263). Therefore, since graphocentric writing is the preferred medium of communication, ideas can only acquire a status of episteme if they: (a)

are predicated on a removal from the collective dimension of embodied experience and thought; and (b) conform to the linearity of modern syntax that governs the shape that descriptions, explanations and arguments can assume, in order for legibility/understanding to be supposedly guaranteed. Thus, a self-referential model of literacy becomes an effective exclusion tool (MIGNOLO, 2007, pp. 37-38).

AESTHETICS AND AISTHESIS. Aesthetics refers to the shape of the relation between Self and things and between things themselves (VECCHI, 2010, p. 5), while aisthesis refers to the modes of perception and regimes of emotion that allow for the categorisation of lived experience and, as a consequence, the maintenance of a given aesthetical relation (RANCIÈRE, 2011, p. x). An example would be the conventional, essentialist separation between science and art, according to which the former is 'objective' and the latter, 'subjective.' Based on a work's (in)capacity to perform language in compliance with a model of Cartesian rationality, certain cultural productions are ascribed scientific *or* artistic value. That has to do with how specific forms of semiosis (such as graphocentric language systems) are perceived as 'more reliable' when it comes to attaining legitimate knowledge, while others (such as dancing) are perceived as untrustworthy, since they do not hold back affect and, as a result, afford the hidden body of modernity to become visible in enunciation. Another widely accepted criterion for determining whether something is a piece of science or art would be to look at who has produced it, since certain individuals and/or peoples are considered aprioristically capable of scientific/artistic thought (RANCIÈRE, *op. cit.*, p. ix). This is in direct correlation with the logic of coloniality, because aisthesis is constituted with respect to the relative socio-economic value of a given social activity (some being deemed 'more important' than others), as well as its author's position in society (with only some occupying places in which, by definition, intelligible – and, therefore, legitimate – knowledge is produced that has compatibility with the universalist standard) (RANCIÈRE, 2005a, p. 11). Colonial aesthetics, then, represents the domain where: (a) the inevitable inequality between bodies and between their embodied experiences is converted into a hierarchisation (with a separation of inferior and superior bodies); (b) the perception of difference is naturalised as evidence of a lack in the constitution of an observable form of subjectivity; and (c) unbending restrictions to social mobility are promulgated.

ETHICS. This notion is evoked when the physical co-presence of Being and Other is marked by radical separation, noticed even in the sensible expressivity of a hand shake (LEVINAS, 1993, p. 102). Ethics, in this sense, is related to embodiment and the perception of difference not as something reducible to the known terms of the Self, that is, as a variation thereof. In semiotic terms, this translates into the impossibility to decipher communication according to a hegemonic language, for whose rushed use can promote mutilations of the Other's existence (DIAS, 2017, p. 20). Instead, a penetration into the realm of metalanguage is required, where existing categories of thought can be questioned and new categories can be created (PIMENTA, 1990, p. 281). For this reason, in an ethical encounter, the Other is presented as a mystery (LEVINAS, 1989, p. 43), but one that causes apprehension in face of the responsibility that Self may have, even if unintentionally, over a circumstance of violence that the Other may go through (LEVINAS, *op. cit.*, p. 82). Therefore, Self's response cannot be dictated by the abstraction inherent in moral or juridical codes (*ibid.*). After all, even though some of the grammars sustaining ideogenesis may gain greater aesthetic prominence than others, they cannot ever be universalised, for they are in a relation of mutualism with the locus of enunciation. As a result, ethics is incompatible with *lazy reason*, which materialises in four situations: impotence (when subjects do not act upon needs that are exterior to their Being, for they believe themselves incapable of doing anything about it), arrogance (when subjects do not act, because they see themselves as unconditionally free and, as a consequence, do not feel the need to demonstrate their freedom by acting), metonymy (when subjects claim their form of rationality as the only viable one, thus not committing to the discovery of other forms of rationality), and prolepsis (when subjects do not commit to thinking about the future, because they consider it to be already known, based on the current state of affairs and the belief that the subjects' form of rationality can predict in automatic fashion what will happen) (SANTOS, B. S., 2002, pp. 239-240).

With that in mind, let me now indicate that the general objective of the present thesis is to question and explore the limits of what has been called 'academic language.' I propose to do so with the disposition of the *decolonial option*, which Mignolo (2017, para. 8) defines as

[detachment] from that overall structure of knowledge in order to engage in an epistemic reconstitution. Reconstitution of what? Of ways of thinking, languages, ways of life and being in the world that the rhetoric of modernity disavowed and the logic of coloniality implement.

As I understand it, ‘detachment from’ entails a particular kind of response to coloniality that is different from the antagonism seen, for instance, in projects such as *Chavoso da USP* and *Funkeiros Cults*, as mentioned above. Mignolo (2007, p. 31) provides useful considerations that can help in understanding why that is the case:

Una de las razones por las cuales los movimientos de descolonización “fracasaron” es que, como en el socialismo/comunismo, cambiaron el contenido pero no los términos de la conversación y se mantuvieron en el sistema del pensamiento único [...]. Lo que quiero decir es que ese “otro mundo” que empezamos a imaginar ya no puede ser sólo liberal, cristiano o marxista, ni una mezcla de los tres [...].

From this quote I extract the notion that the rectification of social injustices depends on more than redistribution or reparation alone, for an axiologic reform (i.e., an onto-epistemological reform, or a reform at the level of the entanglement between reality/knowledge) is needed all the same. In the case at hand, by showing the great ability of people from the ‘Quebrada’ to deal with academic texts with the same dexterity as anyone else (something emphasised by *Funkeiros*) and without having to change who they are and what they look like (something emphasised by *Chavoso*), both initiatives end up buying into the overall logic of how knowledge is expected to be constructed at a university. The structural exclusions that were consistently amplified (if not made completely ubiquitous) by universalising the expectations of what characterises the phenomena of reading and writing academically will remain unquestioned, even if reading and writing are carried out in HE context of today with a slightly different ‘accent’ than before.

Instead, what I believe is most needed at present would be to actually submit academic language at its deep, discursive level to the strategy of *border thinking*, defined by Grosfoguel (2011, para. 37) as

[not] rejecting modernity to retreat into a fundamentalist absolutism, [...] [but] subsum[ing] / redefin[ing] the emancipatory rhetoric of modernity from the cosmologies and epistemologies of the subaltern, located in the oppressed and exploited side of the colonial difference, towards a decolonial liberation struggle for a world beyond Eurocentred modernity. What border thinking produces is a redefinition/subsumption of citizenship, democracy, human rights, humanity, and economic relations beyond the narrow definitions imposed by European modernity.

For this reason, in order to pursue my general objective as stated above, I will not resort to a simple critique of opposition, since acting up against the limitations imposed by academic language would hardly afford me any opportunity to visualise and discuss the categories that sustain such limitations.

From those, I have selected one in particular to analyse, because it lies at the structuring level of discourse. This limitation refers to how academic language actively avoids engaging with *translation*. According to Souza (2019, p. 19):

[...] the need for translation implies the need to know what one does not know. Translation, like the knowledges interconnected horizontally in an ecology, rather than signifying a total transference of meaning, implies incompleteness and ignorance and the need to overcome both; translation refers also to the fact that overcoming both of these in order to attain the desire of completeness, is beyond realization. However, these difficulties in translation do not indicate incommensurability; they do indicate the need for constant exchange and for the persistence in the continuous work of translation.

In other words, by refusing to work with translation, one of the limitations of the language of modern science is that it does not seek to complement its blind spots, but rather relegates to the arts, or religion etc. the subjects that defy its capacity for meaning-making. I refer to these as **the ineffable** or **the unspeakable** of the academy, which will be the central phenomenon in relation to which the borders of academic language will be questioned and explored in this thesis.

Having defined that as my focus point, I now pose the specific objectives of my research:

- to contest the notion that some languages and discourses have an inherent (in)aptitude to tackle certain subjects;
- to mark where, when and why the hegemony of the forms of communication in the academy become fragilised, while in the presence of languages and discourses not promptly recognised as academic;

- to interrogate the categories that ratify the academic value of descriptions, explanations and arguments with reference to their verbal qualities (lexicon, syntax etc.);
- to discuss to what extent forms of construction of descriptions, explanations and arguments that presuppose different onto-epistemologies than that of graphocentric reading and writing may contribute to a redefinition of the ways scientific knowledge can be built.

My goal with the above listed directives is to gather material for the support and defense of the idea that despite the fact that scientific discourse pushes away a variety of other forms of language, among those not all are equal, for some have relative power to dislocate academic communication from the onto-epistemological framework it currently employs. In other words, academic language is not shielded against all marginal, ‘non-academic’ discursive formations/arrangements in the same manner, since its historical constitution entailed varying degrees of susceptibility to, and dependence on, different kinds of external interference.

Due to the complexity of this claim, I will center my analysis around just one set of marginal discursive formations/arrangements whose forms of language are not considered scientific by modern academic standards. This marginal ‘entity’ will not be treated as a mere *topic* that needs to be accounted for, and instead will integrate the thesis at the level of its structure, interacting with hegemonic forms of academic language and, as a consequence, reframing the analysis as the text progresses. This will enable me to show that, even within the conservative environment of colonial institutions such as universities, the history of modern scientific parlance prevents it from being successful at creating absolute and everlasting borders that can insulate it.

At the beginning of the next chapter I will specify what this marginal ‘entity’ is and why I have resorted to it. For the time being, I present the following research questions, which will accompany me throughout the thesis and help me to keep track of my specific objectives:

1. In face of the unspeakable of the academy, how do varying forms of implication between bodies and languages within the academy impact on the overall distribution of communicative power?
2. What are the conditions of interaction between participating bodies and languages in academic contexts, once ineffability starts to be enunciated in different forms of semiosis?
3. What ethical issues emerge from treating the ineffable discursively with multiple (academic and so-called ‘non-academic’) languages in communicative situations that are by definition ascribed scientific value?
4. What are, after all, the general intricacies pertaining to the semiotic dimension of an onto-epistemic reform of the ingrained modern/colonial politics of enunciation in science?

The thesis is divided into two parts. ‘Part I’ is where I initiate my argument in the usual fashion of academic texts, whereas in ‘Part II’ the reader will notice a shift in the manner in which my theorisation is built, now encompassing academically marginalised forms of language. These parts are interdependent in such a way that the claim I set out to prove here cannot be properly appreciated without the joint consideration of both of them. However, it is recommended that ‘Part I’ be read before ‘Part II.’

‘Part I’ contains two chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Reaching for difference in academic language,’ regards a marginal linguistic ‘entity’ whose constitution causes it to have very pervasive discursive formations/arrangements that can destabilise even scientific parlance and the models of knowledge construction they stand for. Chapter 2, ‘The Pedagogy of Gestures: a “backdoor” modus operandi for writing,’ recuperates and discusses in greater detail the semiotic resources that are invisibilised when said ‘entity’ undergoes concealment in academic circles.

‘Part II’ contains not chapters, but episodes of data analysis, which I bring to the thesis as a way to thicken the theorisation from ‘Part I.’ Let it be noted that ‘Part II’ is not simply a repetition of ‘Part I’ in different terms, but rather a fertility infusion that is supposed to make an initial theoretical substratum richer, as the reader goes about each of the four episodes. There is no fixed order to approach the episodes, for which

reason their titles have been associated with a symbol instead of a number. Also, their pages show independent number sequences from the rest of the thesis, that is, all of them begin on page 1. After completing all the episodes in whichever order the reader finds most suitable, the two final sections – called ‘Points of (transitory) arrival’ and ‘As two roads diverged, which one have I taken?’ – get back on track to wrap up the discussion that my thesis proposes.

The lines that the reader sees to the left of the page, which originated from the five entries of the glossary above, represent the running themes of *coloniality*, *locus of enunciation*, *ideogenesis*, *aesthetics and aisthesis* and *ethics*. They run through the entire textual journey of both ‘Part I’ and ‘Part II’ and will be expanded on at certain ‘stops’ along the way, where a visual cue will be given to the reader.

CHAPTER 1

Reaching for difference in academic language

*Alguma coisa acontece no meu coração
Que só quando cruza a Ipiranga e a avenida São João*

(Caetano Veloso & Gilberto Gil)

Difference has always existed in academic language, but it has been consistently run over by the bulldozer of modernity/coloniality, which attempts to homogenise scientific communication by throwing the unspeakable out throw the window in environments such as universities. What I want to show with my thesis is that the historical constitution of modern science is structurally dependent on the ineffability of the (linguistic) difference it repeatedly makes an effort to erase. Moreover, the dependence is so great that the exclusion cannot ever be final. As a consequence, from a decolonial perspective, there is always potential to dislocate scientific communication from the onto-epistemological framework it occupies.

To prove my point, I will mark some of the aspects that make academic language susceptible to the interference of discursive formations/arrangements that, although rejected by the graphocentric logic of modernity/coloniality, are ingrained in the semiosis of science and, therefore,

cannot be fully dismissed. It is, after all, a proper conundrum, since the complete annihilation of those aspects of difference that I will point out would, in turn, result in the subsequent annihilation of the foundations of modern science as it is.

I have grouped those aspects as a single set of marginal discursive formations/arrangements or, as I called it before, a marginal discursive ‘entity.’ In the following pages of this chapter, I will define and characterise that ‘entity’ and I will show that its horsepower has been used to erect modern science as such, and it outrightly continues to be used today, even though the marks of that dependence/exploitation are subjected to deliberate, cynical concealment. The impossibility for science to separate itself from that ‘entity,’ I will argue, makes the latter potentially capable of destabilising scientific parlance and the models of knowledge construction they stand for.

1.1 Play as a marginal ‘entity’ to science

The set of marginal discursive formations/arrangements that I will analyse in relation to the above mentioned conundrum will be referred to as **play**. I am using this word here to designate specific ways in which language can be used that lead to a combined effect of fun, marvel and intrigue. In communities that classify their individuals into roughly two groups (children/adults) according to their behaviour, playing is expected to take place and is widely socially accepted only until a certain age, but seldom afterwards, unless in prescribed situations where it is welcomed under different regulatory terms than those of ‘normal everyday life’ (e.g., carnivals, fancy dress parties etc.).

In Western societies under the influence of modernity/coloniality, manifestations of play that happen outside of those parametres are likely to be considered ‘childish,’ which implies an essentialist view of semiotic behaviour that is culturally substantiated by perceptions of maturity as being associated, among other criteria, with a ‘seriousness’ of character that supposedly represents higher intellectual capacity. Thus, according to modern/colonial standards, because science is by definition ‘serious stuff,’ it becomes exclusively an ‘adult thing’ (at least, as far as

the *production* of science is concerned) that repudiates playing on the grounds that it has no intellectual value that may be useful for scientific inquiry.

I will now devote the next few pages to showing that the implied argument about science being intellectually more mature than playing is, in fact, a hypocritical fallacy created by modernity/coloniality so that science could disguisedly exploit the unique benefits of playing for knowledge construction, particularly with regard to approaching the unspeakable.

Let me begin the dismantling of the above mentioned modern/colonial argument on a slight anecdotal note that will be useful to bring together the different theoretical references necessary for the task at hand here.

The first son of a couple who own a small accounting business, I grew up as a white middle-class boy that could enjoy the tropical climate of our state in his calm suburban neighbourhood. This meant that after school hours, playing outside was the norm, usually with my younger sister and possibly one or two of our 22 cousins, who would come visit us regularly.

As I recall it, most of our time playing was spent not on pre-made games (such as video-games and board games, for instance), but rather on ‘open situations’ that could turn into fun. Truth be told, for I was a bit of tyrant towards my sister and cousins, always talking them into playing along with my fantasies. I despised playing sports, but I loved grabbing my father’s camcorder, setting up a stage by shifting around house furniture and utensils, and pretending we were a film crew. Playing always had a sense of fun in engaging with imaginative transformation and storytelling done with gadgetry and contraptions.

Fast forward some ten years, when I met Gustavo Miranda. He had just moved in to Brazil, and was living in a nearby apartment just across the street from the theatre school. Mine was the first group he would teach. His class was called ‘Dramaturgy of the actor,’ a phrase I didn’t even bother to look up on the Internet.

A part of me was contaminated by that blind excitement that takes over when you are about to meet someone as remarkable as Gustavo – well, at least they said he was quite famous in his native Colombia, where he had constructed a reputation for improv theatre as somethings quite big, even for common audiences.

Another part of me was going in with that ‘what will be, will be’ attitude of not knowing the subject matter to be taught, because the theatre activated something really spontaneous within me, a sort of burning lightheadedness I got from just knowing I would be on stage. I was electrified by instant readiness, or so I reckoned, until Gustavo brought me back down to Earth.

With a sinking feeling in my chest, I froze in despair in front of all my classmates, as he told me I spoke too much while in scene. It was hard to reconcile myself not so much with his having uttered such words, but mostly with the fact that I had jumped to my feet so quickly, when he asked for a volunteer to begin the improvisation exercise.

‘This dependence on words is no good,’ he said in slow-paced Spanish at first, but then suddenly shot at me a sequence of very straightforward sentences in resumed regular speed: ‘One cannot forget their body while speaking. Where’s your body? You look like a pole standing there, when you just blah blah blah blah blah.’ That last sentence perfectly conveyed the distaste that my action had provoked, since he now had bulging eyes and twisted lips that put across his ironic words side by side with a right hand suspended in the air that opened and closed swiftly, imitating my never-ending jaw movements.

I have chosen to share with the reader these personal scenes, because they show that the same child who was avidly playing with objects around his house had grown up and become somewhat unable to activate his body in play anymore, while on stage. He had instead fallen into ‘lecture mode’ with the likeness of a standing pole.

This helps to conceptualise the kind of play that I am addressing here. I look at playing less like Derrida and more like Huizinga, combined with Arendt, Vygotsky and Vattimo. Let me explain why.

Derrida (2002, p. 353-354), when discussing how Structuralism framed meaning-making, argues that

there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse-provided we can agree on this word-that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.

This quote suggests that the Derridean view of play is related to a de-centering of meaning, that is, the impossibility of ascribing a concrete single reference to signs. In this sense, play refers to the never-ending movement between signs that is caused by their different functions. Think, for instance, of a person flicking through a dictionary in search for a word and then, while reading its definition, encountering many others that they do not recognise and, thus, have to search for individually to understand the initial definition they were looking for. Or maybe someone like me, writing a thesis, and debating with myself about whether I should write 'axiologic' or 'axiomatic' in a particular sentence, and realising that since both are adjectives, the differentiation of their particular meanings depends on a comparison between the singular situations they appear in and the relation they strike with the other words around them in different sentences.

The main point, however, is that Derrida's definition of play is centered on language per se. He explains how the mechanism of semiosis works, but does so in terms that the speaker is not taken into account. In other words, Derrida maintains the modern/colonial concealment of the body. He conceptualises flows of meaning based on the idea of language as non-locus, something that is, in fact, inexistent. His description of the overall structure of meaning as movement between signs is correct, but his theory does not address the fact that those flows are always determined by embodied communication behaviours. This means that the whole network of signs is not accessible to all, or that fluidity/fluence is not ever total. Embodied experience prevents a speaker from relating certain signs to one another in the process of meaning-making, due to a variety of reasons that involve the tension between a subject's biological, cognitive, affective, sociological, historical, political, cultural and spiritual conditions at a given moment when an utterance is produced.

Derrida, then, mentions the absence of a centre or origin, because his theory is committed to the notion of meaning as undecidable in terms of a one-to-one correspondence between signifier-signified-reference. What I am saying, instead, is that in a framework committed to the decolonial option, like mine, the recognition of embodied experience is paramount for the study of meaning, which means that the reference is never absent. Therefore, meaning is always present, always anchored to how a subject literally moves around places. The flows that Derrida proposed are always present, but always changing in relation to the altering physicality of bodies dislocating through space and time, which implies that: (a) the locus of enunciation is central to determining meaning; but (b) the locus of enunciation is volatile, due to a body's movement, which in turn causes modifications in the body's biological, cognitive, affective, sociological, historical, political, cultural and spiritual dimensions and favours leaps between signs in certain directions more than others.

In this sense, my view on play distances itself from his when he proposes that

[p]lay is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Play is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence. Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around. (DERRIDA, 2002, p. 369)

As I see it, the very existence of play as an observable phenomenon indicates the irrevocability of presence, the presence of a body that exists concretely, but cannot be described in terms of a fixity of behaviour, or an essence, for it can be observed from many different standpoints: biology, cognition, affect, sociology, history, politics, culture and spirituality. Moreover, when an observer adjusts their gaze to focus on one of these aspects, the others go unnoticed. This is different from Derrida's idea of 'radical play' mentioned above, since it implies that there could be an absence of play (i.e., a fixed one-to-one meaning, a closed circuit, an impossibility of flow between signs...) which would entail the absence of Being.

To me, instead, both the absence *and* the presence of Being are co-existent. The possibility of play is coincident with Being, I agree, but verifying this possibility is a matter entirely dependent on the physicality of presence, that is, perceivable embodied existence. This means that:

(a) aisthesis (i.e., modes of perception and regimes of emotion that allow for the categorisation of lived experience) is also central to determining meaning; and (b) ethical behaviour is more about the meta-critical dimension of meaning-making than the appliance of abstract, universal codes, inasmuch as it involves questioning the aesthetical criteria leading to a certain perception of Being as existent in terms that are not reducible to a hegemonic language that supposedly encompasses life as a whole.

With that in mind, I now go to Huizinga (2000, p. 7):

Do ponto de vista da concepção determinista de um mundo regido pela ação de forças cegas, o jogo seria inteiramente supérfluo. Só se toma possível, pensável e compreensível quando a presença do espírito destrói o determinismo absoluto do cosmos. A própria existência do jogo é uma confirmação permanente da natureza supralógica da situação humana. Se os animais são capazes de brincar, é porque são alguma coisa mais do que simples seres mecânicos. Se brincamos e jogamos, e temos consciência disso, é porque somos mais do que simples seres racionais, pois o jogo é irracional.

This quote suggests that while logic – or, at least, a monologic logic, or a logic predicated on a single onto-epistemology – may try oversimplify and overdetermine the possibilities life, playing (i.e., *jogo/brincar* in Huizinga's terms) proposes 'irrationality,' which I interpret as the openness to think in ways that do not absolutise normative logic. For this reason, I understand that his theory proposes play as freedom from fixidity. And despite an idea of flow of meaning is also implied here, Huizinga contextualises play as something that motivates a destabilisation of a universalist onto-epistemology, which is different from Derrida in that it presupposes embodied subjectivity. This can be confirmed when we see that Huizinga declares the entanglement between play and the social, cultural and affective dimension of lived experience:

O jogo é fato mais antigo que a cultura, pois esta, mesmo em suas definições menos rigorosas, pressupõe sempre a sociedade humana; mas, os animais não esperaram que os homens os iniciassem na atividade lúdica. É-nos possível afirmar com segurança que a civilização humana não acrescentou característica essencial alguma à idéia geral de jogo. Os animais brincam tal como os homens. Bastará que observemos os cachorrinhos para constatar que, em suas alegres evoluções, encontram-se presentes todos os elementos essenciais do jogo humano. Convidam-se uns aos outros para brincar mediante um certo ritual de atitudes e gestos. Respeitam a regra que os proíbe morderem, ou pelo menos com violência, a orelha do próximo. Fingem ficar zangados e, o que é mais importante, eles, em tudo isto, experimentam evidentemente imenso prazer e divertimento. Essas brincadeiras dos cachorrinhos constituem apenas uma das formas mais simples de jogo entre os animais. Existem outras

formas muito mais complexas, verdadeiras competições, belas representações destinadas a um público. Desde já encontramos aqui um aspecto muito importante: mesmo em suas formas mais simples, ao nível animal, o jogo é mais do que um fenômeno fisiológico ou um reflexo psicológico. Ultrapassa os limites da atividade puramente física ou biológica. É uma função significativa, isto é, encerra um determinado sentido. (HUIZINGA, 2000, p. 5)

In this sense, play is always collective. As such, it involves biology and cognition, not as autonomous, but rather as political domains, mediated by social, cultural and affective relations. Nevertheless, Huizinga is unable to analyse this political capacity inherent in play. In many passages, his writings suggest his awareness of the political, but he doesn't ever delve into it. See the following quote, for instance:

[O] jogo é uma função que facilmente poderia ser dispensada, é algo supérfluo. Só se torna uma necessidade urgente na medida em que o prazer por ele provocado o transforma numa necessidade. É possível, em qualquer momento, adiar ou suspender o jogo. Jamais é imposto pela necessidade física ou pelo dever moral, e nunca constitui uma tarefa [...] Liga-se a noções de obrigação e dever apenas quando constitui uma função cultural reconhecida, como no culto e no ritual. Chegamos, assim, à primeira das características fundamentais do jogo: o fato de ser livre, de ser ele próprio liberdade. Uma segunda característica, intimamente ligada à primeira, é que o jogo não é vida "corrente" nem vida "real". Pelo contrário, trata-se de uma evasão da vida "real" [...]

Visto que não pertence à vida "comum", ele se situa fora do mecanismo de satisfação imediata das necessidades e dos desejos e, pelo contrário, interrompe este mecanismo. [...] É pelo menos assim que, em primeira instância, ele se nos apresenta: como um *intervalo* em nossa vida quotidiana. Todavia, em sua qualidade de distensão regularmente verificada, ele se torna um acompanhamento, um complemento e, em última análise, uma parte integrante da vida em geral. Ornamenta a vida, ampliando-a, e nessa medida toma-se uma necessidade tanto para o indivíduo, como função vital, quanto para a sociedade, devido ao sentido que encerra, à sua significação, a seu valor expressivo, a suas associações espirituais e sociais, em resumo, como função cultural. Dá satisfação a todo o tipo de ideais comunitários. (*ibid.*, p. 10)

As I understand it, this suspension of normativity and evasion from quotidian life that are motivated by play is precisely what constitutes the domain of the political: the possibility to create intervals where questions are raised, aesthetic models (of necessity and morality) are evaluated and ideas are generated that are not a gestures of conformity to hegemonic ways of existing. In short, a rupture in the continuity of certainties, which is in itself a confirmation of freedom.

The concept of politics that I am using here is based on Arendt's (1998, pp. 7-8) notion of *vita activa*:

With the term *vita activa*, I propose to designate three fundamental human activities: labor, work, and action. They are fundamental because each corresponds to one of the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man. Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself.

Work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not imbedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an "artificial" world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all. The human condition of work is worldliness.

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically the condition—not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*—of all political life. Thus the language of the Romans, perhaps the most political people we have known, used the words "to live" and "to be among men" (*inter homines esse*) or "to die" and "to cease to be among men" (*inter homines esse desinere*) as synonyms. But in its most elementary form, the human condition of action is implicit even in Genesis ("Male and female created He them"), if we understand that this story of man's creation is distinguished in principle from the one according to which God originally created Man (*adam*), "him" and not "them," so that the multitude of human beings becomes the result of multiplication. Action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behavior, if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing. Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.

Playing is political because it is a form of Arendtian action: its embodiment attests to the plurality of life, that is, the fact that subjects are not in any way reproducible and, as a consequence, their very existence as such creates the gaps in hegemonic normativity. When a child finds an oddly shaped rock and starts talking to it as if it were something else, onto-epistemological axioms and subsequent predications of what a child can be and do, as well as what a rock can be and do, are being put to the test, due to the perceived difference between the bodies of the child and the rock. Regarding this free albeit implicit interrogation of what collective effects difference can produce, Vygotsky (1998, p. 135) explains:

No brinquedo, a criança sempre se comporta além do comportamento habitual de sua idade, além de seu comportamento diário; no brinquedo é como se ela fosse maior do que é na realidade. Como no foco de uma lente de aumento, o brinquedo contém todas as tendências do desenvolvimento sob forma condensada, sendo, ele mesmo, uma grande fonte de desenvolvimento.

When I read Vygotsky's words, I think of how much playing can be political in that the artifacts involved in it (*brinquedos*, to use his terms) are non-human subjects of difference that instigate human subjects to think not according to abstract models of age and behaviour, but in situated ways that can promote even unexpected 'leaps' from pre-established, dominant frameworks of aesthetical relations, as well as the patterns of ideogenesis that accompany them.

However, the Arendt who came up with *vita activa* as conceptualised above would disagree with me. Due to her fascination with Roman society, she sees action as dependent on a specific kind of use given to words, that is, the rhetoric of *logos* (i.e., public, rational speech, cf. ARENDT, 1998, p. 27). It is clear that she doesn't understand *logos* as a monolithic entity, for she emphasises natality and individuality as ways in which *logos* – and, consequently, communication – will never be completely uniform. Thus, we could say that for Arendt rationality is universal not in shape (i.e., how something is expressed), not in content (i.e., what is uttered), but in form (i.e., the means of communication).

In this sense, action – and, therefore, politics – is about the multiplicity of rationalities co-existing within the shared world of a given community. Nevertheless, she defines action as pertaining to the domain of verbal language exclusively, whereas I see that playing shows its political potential as action through semiotic formations/arrangements that go beyond logocentric discourse alone, encompassing utterances that have words used not according to the principles of *logos*, as well as other non-verbal languages.

I have two reasons for thinking like that. First, because since in the decolonial option claims for the restitution of the body in theorisations, I understand that the notions of communication and meaning-making cannot be restricted to a single form of semiosis in which the locus of enunciation can be made visible. Second, because, as Vattimo (1995, p. 17) has helped me to understand, *logos* is at the base of theories that rely on dialectical thinking, which approach difference with a 'dissolutive tendency,' that is, an attempt to 'ease off' difference by finding consensual ground in the form of a synthesis (or a transcendence) of pre-existing political antagonism/dualism (i.e., *thesis/antithesis*). This kind of thinking, Vattimo claims, is not actual thinking, because it imprisons difference inside the over-simplifying categories of a fixed syntagmatic relation (i.e., the antithetical relation, or a relation of polar opposition), which prevents true paradigmatic changes, that is, the change in the

overall structure of knowledge and epistemic reconstitution, as also posited by the decolonial option. For this reason, removing from the analysis of communication all the elements that do not refer to *logos* runs the risk of resulting in

[...] il puro ripercorrimiento parassitario di ciò che è già stato pensato, con un proposito [...] [di] rivedere il passato come passato unicamente allo scopo di goderne in una sorta di degustazione antiquariale. [...] Se l'essere non è ma *si tramanda*, il pensiero dell'essere non sarà altro che ripensamento di ciò che è stato detto e pensato; tale ripensamento, che è il pensare autentico (giacché non è pensiero il misurare della scienza o l'organizzare della tecnica), non può procedere con una logica della verifica e del rigore dimostrativo, ma solo mediante il vecchio strumento eminentemente estetico dell'intuizione. (VATTIMO, 1995, p. 23-24, emphases added)

Here Vattimo touches upon something very relevant to my central argument in this study: how scientists think. I said earlier that I wanted to prove that modern science has been erected partly due to the exploitation of insights that wouldn't be possible without play and, as a consequence, has been able to construct ground-breaking knowledge, though without recognising the source and/or the means used to attain it, since playing was stigmatised as the effect of a childish, inferior intellectual disposition.

Let me now address that claim by using Vattimo's words to reflect upon two kinds of scientists that are implied in my argument. The first kind, as I understand it, is the scientist who works towards the verification of the known, using standardised measurements and technically 'organising reality' so as to fit it into pre-selected onto-epistemological categories and models. Recalling some of the concepts presented in the introduction above, I would say that that is the *unethical scientist*, whose reason is governed by laziness inasmuch as it is, at the same time, metonymic (since a single form of hegemonic rationality is established, resulting in a lack of commitment to exploring other forms of thinking) and proleptic (since there is no commitment to thinking about the future, on the grounds that the hegemonic form of rationality supposedly allows for prediction of the future state of affairs).

The second kind, however, is the scientist who, as Vattimo says, works with the instrument of intuition on a regime of *pensiero debole*, which accounts for an attitude of weakening certainties and producing encounters between onto-epistemologies in a territory that is neither

normative, nor disciplinary, where the agreement between participants is not presupposed (VATTIMO, *op. cit.*, p. 11). In order to construct knowledge within these parametres, this kind of scientist plays – while at work – precisely like a child.

I am not the first to point out the similarities between children's play and scientists' work. See, for instance, Gopnik (1996, p. 486):

[It] is not that children are little scientists but that scientists are big children. Scientists and children both employ the same particularly powerful and flexible set of cognitive devices. These devices enable scientists and children to develop genuinely new knowledge of the world around them.

In order to hopefully enhance the conditions for the reader to grasp the magnitude of this idea, I want to clarify that the image I am trying to create here of a child or an adult playing is to be dissociated from stereotypical cultural elements that tend to be attached to the histories of play in different places and at different points in time: wooden toys, plastic toys, board games, video games, ball games, lawn games, playgrounds, circuses, fun fairs, carnivals, fancy dress parties, amusement parks etc. Instead, as Dewey (1966, pp. 118-119) explains,

[p]lay is not to be identified with anything which the child [or adult...] externally does. It rather designates his mental attitude in its entirety and in its unity. It is the free play, the interplay, of all the child's [or the adult's...] powers, thoughts, and physical movements, in embodying, in a satisfying form, his own images and interests.

What I find most striking about Dewey's words is that they situate play's effects very specifically in relation to the body that is thoroughly activated through playing. Not only activated, but provoked. And it responds, which then generates the possibility to raise meta-cognitive questions with regard to the aisthesis of embodied encounters with an unknown texture, substance, object, smell, taste etc.

I would also like to once again stress the notion of freedom. It was present in Huizinga and it reappears now in Dewey. As I understand it, freedom from necessity (i.e., from what is inevitable, what is immutably predetermined) is one important aspect that connects the play that is carried out by children and the play that is carried out by professional scientists. The reason for this was pointed out by Vygotsky, who

contributes with an explanation of how freedom is the foundation of imagination, which I am considering an essential ingredient of the scientific work conducted by ethical, intuitive scientists imbued with *pensiero debole*:

No accurate cognition of reality is possible without a certain element of imagination, a certain flight from the immediate, concrete, solitary impressions in which this reality is presented in the elementary acts of consciousness. The processes of invention or artistic creativity demand a substantial participation by both realistic thinking and imagination. The two act as a unity. Nonetheless, it would be a serious error to identify realistic thinking and imagination or overlook the opposition that does exist between them. The essential feature of imagination is that consciousness departs from reality. Imagination is a comparatively autonomous activity of consciousness in which there is a departure from any immediate cognition of reality. Alongside the images that are constructed in the immediate cognition of reality, man constructs images that he recognizes as part of the domain of imagination. At advanced levels in the development of thinking, we find the construction of images that are not found in completed form in reality. By recognizing this, we can begin to understand the complex relationship between the activity of realistic thinking and the activity of advanced forms of imagination. Each step in the child's achievement of a more profound penetration of reality is linked with his continued liberation from earlier, more primitive forms of cognition. A more profound penetration of reality demands that consciousness attain a freer relationship to the elements of that reality, that consciousness depart from the external and apparent aspect of reality that is given directly in perception. The result is that the processes through which the cognition of reality is achieved become more complex and richer. (VYGOTSKY, 1987, p. 349)

Following from the above quote, play affords – through imagination – a way of escaping the reductionist relation to reality simply as a stagnant, given set of information to be absorbed by the knowing subject. Instead, imagination feeds from an assemblage of stimuli to interfere with established forms of consciousness and cognition and produce ideas that may not be a simple effect of the immediate reality that a knowing subject shares with their social community. While freedom is indispensable for imagination, imagination is indispensable for science to be capable of seeking that which is not yet known, or otherwise perceived.

If I were to radicalise that notion, bearing in mind Vygotsky's explanation of how deeper levels of reality cognition demand that consciousness be freer (and, thus, proportionally more imaginative), I would dare say that ethical scientists are, in fact, professional 'imagers.' But I will not. There is a problem in saying that, since it would drastically contradict the argument I am defending here. Let me explain why.

Professionalising imagination is precisely what modern science has been doing for quite some time, which results in a colonial separation of people between those entitled to use their imagination so as to produce legitimate knowledge within the confines of knowledge institutions and

those required to accept that their imagination is somewhat ‘disfunctional’ and/or ‘shallow’ and, therefore, *useless* when it comes to answering ‘the tough questions’ that involve ineffability, for instance. In other words, it is an effective attempt to equate the locus of enunciation with social positionality as being determined strictly by market-induced job labelling.

The main consequence of this is far-reaching: that learning opportunities become rarefied proportionally to how much loci of enunciation are regulated, in an effort to hurriedly force the unification of very different kinds of imagination as if they had the same substance, that is, as if they came from the same, shared plane of embodied experience. With the market as onto-epistemology – and the only possible one –, concomitant to the unification of imaginations is their scaling in a highly stratified hierarchy of functions: if a person is a manual labourer, they are supposed to use *a bit* of imagination as a pastime when not at work, for instance while seeking relaxation with a game, film or book; if a person is an entertainment labourer, they are supposed to use *a lot* of imagination to concoct creations that produce fun; if a person is an intellectual labourer, they are supposed to use imagination to fetch solutions for actual problems perceived in the lived experience of certain communities with/for which they work, though the extent to which they can have a free imaginative process will depend on the academic degree they hold. An example of that kind of normativisation is present in the relative imaginative power ascribed to each academic employment position that composes most Western educational systems: a full professor is ‘allowed’ to imagine more freely than an associate professor, who is ‘allowed’ to imagine more freely than a lecturer, who is ‘allowed’ to imagine more freely than a high school teacher, who is ‘allowed’ to imagine more freely than a middle school teacher, who is ‘allowed’ to imagine more freely than an elementary school teacher, who is ‘allowed’ to imagine more freely than a professional at a nursery.

1.2 Play and academic metalanguage

Let me begin this section by calling the reader’s attention to the following:

The ineffable regards that which presents a challenge to communication inasmuch as it cannot correspond to shared linguistic rules⁵. As such, it prompts the metacritical perception of a given semiotic resource's insufficiency and marks the borders of systematicity. In the logic of modernity/coloniality, this condition implies insecurity motivated by doubt, which in turn entails an anxious stance of attempting to undermine the ardent power of unspeakability by individuating 'factors' from it whose meanings supposedly could be ascribed by a process of unpacking, drawing branches from and, consequently, making a case for pre-existent categories, rather than incorporating new ones on an equal footing.

In short, the modern/colonial stance is predicated on a sort of inbreeding frenzy aimed at always retrieving an established, single form of systematicity, which must be protected, or otherwise discursive comfort may be endangered. If such a retrieval is not viable, though, a response usually ensues that ranges between fear, denial, resentment, disdain, depression and wrath directed at the ineffable.

Scientific research practices are no different in that respect, since academics are not exempt from seeking discursive comfort over adventurousness and semiotic experimentation, for the sake of self-preservation. While this scenario deserves further discussion (particularly with regard to the ethical implications of adopting self-preservation as hegemonic political stance), I will momentarily focus on the notion that lack of adventurousness and semiotic experimentation (which is inversely proportional to the spread of lazy reason) cannot be blamed on 'individual choice.' The logic of blame and of individual choice are but two tightly braided strings in the fabric woven by modernity/coloniality's echoing influence in science and exacerbated by current academic neoliberalism.

Let us recall the fact that academics are actually flesh and blood. They are also labourers, and I am constantly reminded that many of them lead somewhat hard lives nowadays, for a variety of reasons. Due to the psychological strain of having to submit publications to indexed journals all too often, of being uncerimoniously assessed and ranked by criteria that are alien to the needs of the local community that is served, and of being forced to compete against one another to earn grants etc., I understand the recurrence of arguments such as the one according to

⁵ Cf. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100002362>. Accessed on September 18, 2021.

which semiotic experimentation articulated by breadth of production (for instance, spanning different social contexts, research topics, textual genres etc.) is ‘less important’ than, say, an oeuvre’s measurable size and reach. After all, adventurousness is not paying any house bills in the times of quantification that Higher Education is going through today. So, I understand all that. But I refuse to accept its permanence, and that is why I propose that linguistic play has a central role in challenging that state of affairs, as I will explain ahead.

1.2.1 Linguistic play as scientific undertaking

Linguistic play is not a simplification strategy for science communication. While playfulness may help to achieve the goal of increasing access to scientific thought and scientific works through an expanded readership, the idea that playing can be a legitimate attitude towards academic knowledge *only after* it has been sanctioned is highly problematic.

In other words, linguistic play is not the same as transposing the known to a different linguistic register – and portraying it as such is but one very effective way in which the university silently operates its exploitation of playing, conducted by the ‘top minds’ who make surprising, unprecedented discoveries supposedly owing to the rigour of method. The fact that the method receives undue recognition for the production of all kinds of knowledge-wealth lying outside its structural capabilities (or, said differently, the fact that discourses cheering the method dominate conversations about the means by which scientific achievements are attained) is a supporting element for the continuity of coloniality.

It is play – and not the method – that grants science the capacity to embrace the ineffable and embark on metacritical reflections that can expand knowledge, since playing mostly concerns learning, as I will discuss in a moment. On the other hand, the method’s purpose is unrelated to learning, since it aims at revitalising frameworks-as-estates (i.e., properties), which makes it concerned with boundary disputes above all else. It is, after all, a form of deliberate ostracism.

Today, in Western(ised), neoliberal Higher Education contexts, learning has ceased to be a priority, as a result of the desire to establish market-driven universalised competition criteria. This fuels the modern/colonial impetus to antagonise and/or subordinate the intangible aspects of unknown onto-epistemologies to the dominant parlance (i.e., the hegemonic manners of expression authorised by the method).

Kress (2003, p. 30-31) has helped me to understand how linguistic play is inherent in learning and how it has the potential to change the known by altering one's relation to the available linguistic resources:

[M]eaning is the result of (semiotic) work. **Work always changes those who do the work, and it changes that which is worked on.** The resources through which meaning is made are changed in the process of meaning-making, but so is the inner disposition of those who have made that meaning inwardly in interpretation or outwardly in articulation. The process of inward meaning-making and the resultant change to the state of an inner semiotic resource is called learning. However, the process of outward meaning-making also has a transformative effect. Again, the signmaker's resources have been changed, because the sign made outwardly is **a new sign**, and even though it is made from existing meaning-resources, **it is nevertheless made into a new sign by the conjunction of an existing form with the new meaning**; a conjunction which, it is safe to say, will never have been made in that way before. The inner transformations produce learning, and **learning is the shaping of the subjectivity of the maker of signs**. The transformations that are part of outward articulation produce new syntactic, textual or lexical forms, which play their role, however slightly, in changing the resource which was used in making meaning. This is how semiotic change happens – whether a change to writing, to speech, to gesture. But it is also the way in which that semiotic change, **the change in the modal resources, always reflects and tracks the values, structures and meanings of the social and cultural world of the meaning-maker and of the socio-cultural group in which they are**. Learning is not a term that belongs in semiotics; sign-making is. However, learning and signmaking are two sides of one sheet of paper as Saussure might have said; which side we choose to look at depends on the perspective from which we are looking. Both learning and sign-making are dynamic processes which change the resources through which the processes take place – whether as concepts in psychology or as signs in semiotics – and change those who are involved in the processes. **This makes both learning and representing/communicating into dynamic active processes, far removed from inert notions such as 'acquisition'.** (emphases mine)

The main point I take from Kress is that learning and communication are inseparable. All learning is language learning, that is, learning is entirely about the work of sign-making.

While the socio-cultural nature of changes in semiotic resources is stressed in the above quote, I would like to add another layer of complexity to this discussion by connecting Kress's sign-making to the notion of reality/fantasy that is present in Vygotsky (1987, p. 344):

[T]he first distinction between realistic thought and fantasy is that the former is conscious while the latter is subconscious. The second difference between these processes is associated with their relationship to reality. The realistic development of consciousness prepares activity that is connected with reality. The function of imagination is different. In this respect, the activity of imagination reflects the principle of satisfaction. The third difference between realistic thinking and imagination is reflected in the fact that realistic thought can be verbally reported. It is social and verbal. It is social in the sense that to the extent that it reflects an external reality that is similar for consciousnesses that are structured in similar ways, it can be communicated or transmitted. Since the basic means of social interaction or transmission is the word, realistic thought is both social and verbal thought. The adult transmits the contents and course of his thought more or less completely.

What to me is most striking about reading these author side to side is that the work of sign-making – particularly the one seen in playing – is the driving force that keeps meanings moving between the realm of realistic and imaginative priorities in a territory of faint distinctions, that is, a space where the single, universally accepted socio-cultural paradigm is weakened by the coexistence of multiple consciousnesses that ascribe realistic or fantastic value to utterances quite differently. In this sense, playing can take part in promoting political learning and questioning naturalised postures adopted in face of differences.

One of the places where playing has been more extensively explored as a political tool is Reggio Emilia. The northern Italian city has gained a worldwide reputation for turning its public school system into a forum where different generations can come together, mingle, debate, develop collective ideas and interpret issues affecting the population. As a consequence, for over 60 years now, schools in Reggio Emilia have been designed and built as places that potentialise *il gioco* as cultural research and incubation, which has made the Istituzione Nidi e Scuole dell'Infanzia (i.e., the institution managing the public infant-toddler centres) an actual political agent when it comes to making decisions at the municipal level of governance⁶.

In this sense, Rinaldi (2006, p. 93-94) says:

⁶ For a deeper understanding of the educational values defended by the Reggio Emilia Approach, see Rinaldi (2006), Edwards, Gandini and Forman (2016), Vecchi (2010) and Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2013).

The dimension of play (with words, playing tricks, and so on) is [...] an essential element of the human being. If we take this dimension away from children and from adults, we remove a possibility for learning, we break up the dual play-learning relationship. The creative process [...] needs to be recognised and legitimated by others.

What Rinaldi calls ‘creative process’ is, to my understanding, the work of sign-making between realistic and fantastic thought, which entails a kind of pedagogy at the service of investigating phenomena pertaining to the public sphere of a school or a city. For this reason, I find Reggio Emilia to be a useful reference as a long-lasting educational experiment that interrogates the very sense of academic knowledge, questioning the ways in which it may be constructed outside universities, in particular as a less unequal relation between specialist and lay inquiry into the real is enforced.

That kind of relation is present in play and since it can interrupt the coloniality of scientific discourses, the ideology of modernity targets it and tries to contain its supposedly ‘harmful effects’ over rigorous thought. However, what the duo modernity/coloniality is actually trying to prevent is the surfacing of the violence used to gain privilege over *other* ways of feeling, thinking and existing that are not in conformity to the universalised behaviour of knowledge professionals. In this sense, play is dangerous, because it brings up an *other* behaviour that can potentially make both partakers and onlookers aware that learning in depth can take place even under unfavourable material circumstances. Due to its unashamed spontaneity, free play is a reminder that despite arbitrary vertical hierarchisations of knowledges and the precarity of certain positions within those divisions/scales, ongoing learning is the right and the duty of any person implied in the functioning of knowledge institutions. In other words, without undermining the critique of the process that led to the current state of affairs, playing is one way to engage with the real propositively when in adverse conditions, producing new signs that enable extended survival through a fresh relationship with the environment.

Winnicott (2005, p. 50) goes so far as to argue that play is therapeutic in that it makes public representations that had been repressed, providing subjects with a chance to *experience* such representations in the flesh, rather than *being told* what representations there are and what they mean. With this in mind, play can be thought of as an actual form of resistance, since Hoy (2004, pp. 9-10) conceives of resistance as ‘[...]’

both an activity and an attitude. It is the activity of refusal. It is also an attitude that refuses to give in to resignation, [...] [which] is disconcerting because it challenges standard patterns of behavior.'

As such, play has the capacity to incite alternative loci of enunciation with reference to a body that behaves *otherwise* and is continually seeking to resituate itself in relation to its surroundings. As a consequence, it confronts the perception of the locus of enunciation as predicated by one single form of language and/or one single dimension of bodily experience (i.e., biology, cognition, affect etc...). Bodies are, after all, extremely ironic, producing learning when they venture across the line that separates reality and fantasy and, thus, become themselves resources for sign-making.

The analysis of bodily behaviour in play can give insights on relevant topics pertaining to coloniality, such as the (in)stability of techniques of intimidation and bodily (dis)advantage, or the (in)stability of the categories of the expert-lay, sacred-profane, comical-solemn and dramatic-lyric-epic, among other segmentations of experience that have been reinforced throughout modernity.

I consider that paying attention to the body in play is an important premise to be upheld in research interested in the decolonial option, since I share with Veronelli (2016, p. 408) the perception that

[Modernity/Coloniality Research Program] thinkers [...] [tend to] focus on people enacting something at the level of ideas, of epistemic and political projects, and they often don't enter the lived experience, the subjectivity of and intersubjectivity among real people thinking and acting.

In this sense, I am defending that the physicality of multiple bodies (both human and non-human) be accounted for in theory, since it is the 'stuff' of play and, as such, has a determinant role in triggering knowledge events.

Caputo (2016, p. 6) defines events as 'the coming of something we cannot see coming, the coming of the unexpected, unprojected, unprogrammed, which of course we hope will make everything new but may make everything worse.' He goes on to say (*ibid.*) that '[w]ith the coming of the event, things are reopened, reinvented, undergo a paradigm shift, a new being, and this happens everywhere, in history and

everyday life, in philosophy, in art, in science.’ My interpretation of his words is that even in seemingly timid, superficial and inconsequential moments, a whole lot can be experienced that may change the political dispositions of individuals, communities and entire societies.

Without giving proper attention to the behaviour of bodies in playful events (each of which having its own very specific physical conditions), decolonial research will miss out on the opportunity to learn about resistance sign-making and imaginative politics as homeostatic techniques.

Damasio (2003, p. 35-36) defines homeostasis as a collection of processes of survival that guide the actions of an organism moment by moment, whose governance

[...] is achieved by means of a simple arrangement: First, something changes in the environment of [the] individual organism, internally or externally. Second, the changes have the potential to alter the course of the life of the organism (they can constitute a threat to its integrity, or an opportunity for its improvement). Third, the organism detects the change and acts accordingly, in a manner designed to create the most beneficial situation for its own self-preservation and efficient functioning. All reactions operate under this arrangement and are thus a means to *appraise* the internal and external circumstances of an organism and act accordingly. They detect trouble or detect opportunity and solve, by means of action, the problem of getting rid of the trouble or reaching out to the opportunity. (Original emphasis)

The mechanism that Damasio describes is prompted by events and, despite its biological nature, bears a resonating politically quality, nonetheless. This is due to the fact that an organism’s continued existence depends on how it (re)shapes relationships with other organisms around it, that is, what kind of posture it displays towards alterity. In this sense, politics is the necessary by-product of bodily behaviour conveyed through multiple languages that are aesthetically-ethically combined to achieve a certain stance in relation to a given set of situational conditions.

That said, I would like to state that my understanding of locus of enunciation is bound to the shifting and adaptable feature of the bodies of living organisms, which provokes inconstant positionality that lies at the core of the open-endedness of political action, something that coloniality tries to erase from the public sphere by instilling naturalisation of violences coupled with fatalism and a demeaning attitude towards play’s evocation of the body’s homeostatic potential to act upon events.

It would be best now to recall my previously posited disagreement with Arendt (1998, p. 8), to whom action is ‘the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter.’ As I see it, because political action is always embodied (i.e., its emergence is always very specifically bound to unique scenarios of interaction between living organisms, where a complex and ephemeral state of affairs arises unpredictably), things and matter establish the locus of enunciation and, as such, they are but what the *logos* is built upon.

However, Arendt remains an important reference to me in that she helps to further explain how modernity has disseminated and protected economic structures that effectively froze the body’s disposition to act on its own behalf:

World alienation [...] has been the hallmark of the modern age. Expropriation, the deprivation for certain groups of their place in the world and their naked exposure to the exigencies of life, created both the original accumulation of wealth and the possibility of transforming this wealth into capital through labor. These together constituted the conditions for the rise of a capitalist economy. That this development, started by expropriation and fed upon it, would result in an enormous increase in human productivity was manifest from the beginning, centuries before the industrial revolution. **The new laboring class, which literally lived from hand to mouth, stood not only directly under the compelling urgency of life's necessity but was at the same time alienated from all cares and worries which did not immediately follow from the life process itself.** What was liberated in the early stages of the first free laboring class in history was the force inherent in "labor power," that is, in the sheer natural abundance of the biological process, which like all natural forces—of procreation no less than of laboring—provides for a generous surplus over and beyond the reproduction of young to balance the old. What distinguishes this development at the beginning of the modern age from similar occurrences in the past is that **expropriation and wealth accumulation did not simply result in new property or lead to a new redistribution of wealth, but were fed back into the process to generate further expropriations, greater productivity, and more appropriation.** (ARENDT, 1998, pp. 254-255, emphases mine)

The perpetuation of a relation of subservience that is implied in Arendt’s words above takes me back to my main point about how academic circles (in particular, research and tertiary-education institutions) are able to oversee a concealed exploitation of play as a tool that enables creativity, that is, the free decomposition and recomposition of knowledge aimed at escaping from, confronting and/or possessing a reality that is too oppressive to deal with otherwise (RINALDI, 2006, p. 92). By playing, researchers can explore the cracks in existing theories and expand on what is known about a given subject, sometimes with such astounding leaps in reasoning that could only have been afforded by play’s inventiveness. Nevertheless, in present-day universities, play is not readily available to all, since it is the privilege of researchers who are

liberated from worrying about having their intellectual production questioned. While these researchers have a wealth of opportunities to generate ideas in unconventional ways (e.g., through playing), others are denied that right and, as a consequence, alienated from the process of building a shared world of theory.

In other words, the means through which a given theoretical insight was gained will rarely – if at all – be questioned when it comes to scientists whose work is by default considered legitimate. More often than not, these professionals deploy play in order to look at things in an innovative perspective and come up with never-before-seen findings, because they are well aware that the ineffable (i.e., the unspeakability of uncharted knowledge territories) cannot be tackled by the debilitated, self-preserving capabilities of the method. As a result, they are faced with no choice but to resort to the inventiveness that is achieved through play.

After all, as Kastrup (2016, pp. 3-4) argues, it is on the basis of invention that art, science, technology and philosophy operate, using no specific psychological domain in isolation, but rather activating the entirety of cognition (especially imagination) in an attempt to interrupt perceptive automatisms through the proposal of new questions about embodied reality. In this sense, the languages of play extrapolate the semantic boundaries of the method by proposing a holistic, homeostatic response to events (much like the fight-or-flight mechanism, for instance) aimed specifically at producing learning that results from movement within the realm of political-semiotic resources.

While play keeps the mystery of the ineffable alive and evident, thus fueling imagination that generates invention and learning, it is easily concealed when research by-products are excessively accentuated over the points of onto-epistemological reform (materialised as linguistic play) encountered along the process of researching. For this reason, when the results of academic research are published, the responsibility of free play over leaps and discoveries is deliberately hidden and its achievements are declared to have been the product of a rigorous methodologisation of action, which is predicated on an association of linguistic play and other non-universalist communicative manifestations with a derogatory image of children's intellectual prowess. As Gopnik (1996, p. 486) argues:

[T]he claim that children construct theories [through playing] is often greeted by scientists, philosophers and psychologists [...] with shocked incredulity. Surely, they cry, you cannot really mean that mere children construct theories, not real theories, the kind of theories that we, that is the serious grown-up scientists, philosophers and psychologists construct with so much sweat and tears. Aside from injured *amour propre*, [they] [...] point to a number of differences between children and scientists. Scientists are supposed to be consciously – in fact, self-consciously – reflective about their theory-forming and confirming activities. They talk about them and they are a part of the scientific stream of consciousness. Only a few adults become scientists, there is a division of labor. They do science in a structured institutional setting, in which there is much formal interaction with other scientists. (Original emphases)

Building on the above quote and returning to my previous distinction between ethical and unethical scientists (wherein the former weakens their certainties to explore knowledge construction possibilities beyond the method, whereas the latter enacts lazy reason by reinforcing the vicious cycle of the method), I now conclude that although some knowledge professionals do take notice of the potential of play and deploy it in order to propose meta-critical shifts in their respective fields, if asked to disclose the origin of their insights, they usually fall back into normativisation, remaining silent about the role that play had in the research process.

That is the logic behind the coloniality of language: with enough traps set up by the method, the situatedness of the knowledge gained through playing becomes easily homogenised, as it is made into standard academic language by a process of interdiction and violation of multiplicity at the structural level of descriptions, explanations and arguments. In the next section, this notion will be treated in further detail.

1.2.2 The usurpation of play by the dialogical ideal in science

In order to analyse how the situatedness of play is homogenised by a normativisation of the acts of describing, explaining and arguing – and how, in turn, that amounts to the usurpation of play by modern science –, I propose the construct of **cenotypographic terrain** as a tool that can aid in identifying connections between the different kinds of bodies that interact in academic settings, such as university environments. While these bodies could be roughly divided between human and non-human (in which case the notion of ‘cenography’ would suffice to bring out the artificial/intentional trait of how academic environments are set up), I have decided to include the notion of ‘typography’ so as to stress the

significant role that the over-circulation of the written letter at universities, schools etc. has in the usurpation of play. Lastly, the notion of ‘territories’ evokes the demarcation of knowledge sovereignty and its tense relation with homeostasis and learning.

More broadly speaking, the construct follows from the set of presuppositions presented in Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007, p. 13):

Nosotros partimos [...] del supuesto de que la división internacional del trabajo entre centros y periferias, así como la jerarquización étnico-racial de las poblaciones, formada durante varios siglos de expansión colonial europea, no se transformó significativamente con el fin del colonialismo y la formación de los Estados-nación en la periferia. Asistimos, más bien, a una *transición del colonialismo moderno a la colonialidad global*, proceso que ciertamente ha transformado las formas de dominación desplegadas por la modernidad, pero no la estructura de las relaciones centro-periferia a escala mundial. Las nuevas instituciones del capital global [...] mantienen a la periferia en una posición subordinada. (Grifos originales)

Among the institutions that the authors mention, academic organisations can be pinpointed as showing a prevalence of colonial scientific discourses permeated by the coercion of the method. By coercion I mean that the maintenance of a centralising methodologisation of action in academic settings creates a sense of unaccountability, since in the logic of modernity knowledge is conceived as a self-produced, self-evident truth that could be ‘arrived at’ by any knowing subject, implying that the realm of rationality is constituted by universal principles (GROSFOGUEL, 2007, p. 64). In other words, the method becomes a device of authoritarianism insofar as it removes from the knowing subject the ability to choose to operate scientifically outside of the normalised academic discursive arrangements as a means to carry out research.

Because the method itself is socio-historically situated and, therefore, cannot cope with more than a only few knowledge/discourse arrangements with which it is familiar, in the era of global coloniality the boundaries of its territory are pushed further outwards, in an attempt to engulf and absorb other ways of constructing knowledges and discourses about such knowledges as its own, that is, as a necessary extension of itself and a token of its absoluteness.

In this sense, the playful body is to the impetus of methodologisation both an asset and taboo. It is an asset to the extent that it works as a technology of academic power comparable to an insight engine-generator, which disregards the fixidity of Western academic cenographies (i.e.,

the status quo) and causes aprioristic hierarchical relations between bodies to be suspended by means of adventurousness, semiotic experimentation and inventiveness. As a consequence, play affords that scientists holding secured positions of privilege (i.e., academic dignitaries) be able to come up with new perspectives that advance onto-epistemological revisions/shifts in their respective fields. However, at the same time, play also makes visible with its gestures of embodiment a plurality of life forms and a multiplicity of ways of knowing, which defies the hegemonic parlance of/on the method and, ultimately, generates a sense of taboo triggered by two fears: a) the fear of similitude between those academics at the top and a specific group of nonpersons (namely, children), which stems from the hierarchisation of behaviours perpetuating the latter's supposedly low relative value when it comes to knowledge construction; and, as a result of said similitude, b) the fear of a hypothetical redistribution of the right to speak about knowledge and tailor metalanguage.

Thus, free play is quietly usurped as a subordinate knowledge process, whose 'raw' achievements are thoroughly hygienised (and, therefore, erased) by the propriety of standard academic language that forces embodied, pulsating gestures into the procedural typography of written scientific texts essentialised as purely rational. That is how the living and breathing features of knowledge construction evinced in play are, after all, 'absented' from mainstream discourses on knowledge construction and, at length, made ineffable.

Between asset and taboo, the playful body presents itself to modernity/coloniality as a monster. As Cohen (2000, p. 30) said:

[Monstros] são híbridos que perturbam, híbridos cujos corpos externamente incoerentes resistem a tentativas para incluí-los em qualquer estruturação sistemática. E, assim, o monstro é perigoso, uma forma — suspensa entre formas — que ameaça explodir toda e qualquer distinção.

The potential explosion of the boundaries of sovereignty is the price that modern science does not want to pay for the benefits that can be attained through playing. Academic circles, then, attempt to address the risk of dismantling their own historical privileges by using linguistic normativisation to cool off – without, however, being able to fully control – the incoherent/spontaneous enticement that grows monstrously from playfulness. In this sense, according to Cohen (op. cit., p. 48):

O monstro também atrai. As mesmas criaturas que aterrorizam e interditam podem evocar fortes fantasias escapistas; a ligação da monstruosidade com o proibido torna o monstro ainda mais atraente como uma fuga temporária da imposição. Esse movimento simultâneo de repulsão e atração, situado no centro da composição do monstro, explica, em grande parte, sua constante popularidade cultural, explica o fato de que o monstro raramente pode ser contido em uma dialética simples, binária (tese, antítese... nenhuma síntese).

Despite its resourcefulness, play is systematically concealed in discourses about academic research, because it evokes the player's inability to retain control over the cenotypographic terrain once sign-making and learning gather momentum, which would entail a step away from a hegemonic stance in a hierarchical system that relies largely on top-down coercion.

As I see it, one important pillar that sustains the above mentioned process of concealment, which is predicated on a mechanism that hygienises monstrosity and retains sovereignty, is the **dialogical ideal** present in modern science. I am using this expression specifically with reference to how current academic works seek a status of legitimacy through a particular kind of third-party endorsement regarding their capacity to describe, explain and argue in a certain default way about a given topic. That is, roughly speaking, the major intent behind the peer review process as it is enacted nowadays in academic publishing industries across different regions of the globe, which means that the 'dialogue' between author and reviewer is very unlikely to produce learning, since strict evaluation criteria are provided that need to be followed (e.g., the preferred use of highly acclaimed methodologies) so as to ensure that preset expectations on what a scientific paper should be like are met.

Therefore, as hegemonic market-oriented discourses on knowledge have instrumentalised peer review and presupposed its mere existence as a quality seal and a currency with which respect can be acquired from the larger scientific community, neither authors nor reviewers possess the ability to treat the evaluation process as an event, revealing their respective loci of enunciation and entering into an ethical relation that could produce new ideas and new signs (i.e., learning) by triggering homeostatic responses to the interpolation of their own embodied experiences. That constitutes a universalisation mechanism that shapes human behaviour in both writing and reading, fulfilling what Dardot and Laval (2013,

p. 257) call an ‘emancipation’ of individuals from their traditions, roots, family attachments and personal loyalties, which leads ultimately to the commodification of social relations.

While the state of playfulness assumes sign-making as an opportunity for onto-epistemological expansion, the imposed conditions for the publication of research papers in current Western academic circles encourage an objectifying attitude towards language. In this sense, I have read Nunes’s (2006) reflections on the geological implications of human behaviour towards nature during the Anthropocene as being particularly useful to expand on my point about language:

O excepcionalismo pelo qual o humano era visto como o único sujeito ou agente – o único a trazer incerteza ao mundo – era o mesmo princípio que lhe dava o direito de dispor da natureza [e da linguagem] como bem entendesse. A natureza [bem como a linguagem] não era o lugar onde estamos e do qual fazemos parte (nosso *meio ambiente*, no sentido literal do termo) nem um lar em relação ao qual se vive em dependência recíproca (o grego *oikos*, que significa “lar”, é a raiz tanto de *ecologia* quanto de *economia*). Era *objeto*, matéria inerte a ser infinitamente moldada pela chama criativa do ser humano.

Essa concepção da natureza [e também da linguagem] como *mobília do mundo*, inanimada e sem história, coleção de objetos à disposição do sujeito humano para serem rearranjados e transformados segundo seus interesses e conforme o conhecimento que sua ciência lhe faculta, foi, infelizmente – mas não por coincidência –, muito influente no período em que a humanidade viveu o auge de seu desenvolvimento tecnológico.

[...] Não apenas a natureza [ou a linguagem] tem uma história, mas essa história é capaz de agir de volta sobre a humanidade, invertendo a relação entre sujeito e objeto. (NUNES, 2006, p. 4, grifos originais)

It seems to me, then, that the consistent reiteration of play’s concealment in published academic texts has given modern science more and more confidence to disregard language’s ability to ‘come back’ and act upon users who have neglected its ‘environmental’ trait, treating it as ‘furniture’ that can be shifted around with barely any consequences, in an attitude of presumed omnipotence.

Today, neoliberal practices in academic settings – especially within the publishing industry – accentuate the sense of exacerbated power over language by applying the market logic to process of circulation of knowledges and discourses. Specifically, this means that excessive certainty about language as an object leads to quick judgement (usually based on the presupposition of the transparency of meanings) and irresponsible criticism and/or manipulation of utterances.

This kind of manipulation is cruel, because it shaves off the marks of embodiment in order to have even the smallest of utterances comply with a highly stratified, ‘ascending’ system of academic communicative practices that make up the cenotypographic terrain of modern science, with an implied *architecture* of language at every level serving as gatekeeping parameter that prevents unwanted persons to place themselves at a level where they ‘do not belong’ – but at the same time keeps them interested enough to ‘work on their language’ and hopefully jump to the next level soon.

However, in the case of non-compliance, deviations from the norm are either rejected altogether (causing a paper to be deemed unworthy of publication) or subjected to a process whereby they become *incorporated*, *alloted*, *valuated* and finally *annexed* to the already existing territory, so that the pre-existing architecture may develop further over the new stretch of ‘property’ that the deviation has become. Whenever non-verbal texts such as photographs or even verbal texts such as poems appear in academic publications and ‘instinct’ dictates that a description, an explanation and/or an argument constructed in the usual academic fashion is in order, coloniality is at work, placing difference ‘under its wings.’

To summarise what I have been discussing so far in this section, let me introduce the concepts of **diction** and **diegesis**. As a speaker of Brazilian Portuguese as a first language, based in the Southeastern part of Brazil, near the capital of São Paulo, I am using the word diction with reference to such common phrases as ‘good diction’ and ‘bad diction’, which in conversations usually express an assessment of one’s perceived ability to physically articulate one’s facial muscles and speak clearly. On the other hand, I am using the word diegesis according to its meaning within the performing arts, which has to do with the situatedness of sound effects in a given scene (VAN SIJLL, 2017, pp. 120-121): the sounds that are inherent in a scene are called *diegetic*, while the ones that are external to the depicted universe are called *non-diegetic*. The latter can be used for a variety of reasons, for instance, to give out a sense of normality, to stress the importance of an action, to announce a dive into the realm of surrealism etc. They can be directed at either the performers along with the audience (in which case both will react to the effect) or just the audience (when the character cannot listen to the sound and, therefore, does not react to it).

When I mentioned that the monstrous body aroused through playing is covered up in academic texts before the time for peer review comes, I was indirectly pointing out to a problem involving the universalisation of diction and the stagnation of diegesis.

The main issue I identify with regard to the universalisation of diction is the presupposition the everything that can be enunciated will become public by means of the action of a body with a face and muscles that can move to produce sounds recognised as language. Also, implied here is the notion that this body will produce only a certain range of sounds that are deemed comprehensible and will not fall into the realm of monstrosity/playfulness.

In this sense, Souza (2017, p. 263) explains that:

[i]n certain local cultural communities, for example, where knowledge is acquired visually and not through what is considered language, the preferred cultural form of registering knowledge tends to be *visual*, through non-alphabetic drawings or markings on ceramics, textiles, bodies, or paper. However, from the predominant Western modern perspective, and its epistemology of literacy, such non-alphabetic visual drawings or markings tend not to be seen as literacy, given that the preferred concept of a literate culture is that of a culture with *alphabetic* writing. Following this logic, cultures without such a form of writing are deemed *illiterate*, or lacking in writing. [...] Western logocentrism paradoxically requires the existence of alphabetic writing to represent speech in order to valorize speech as the representation of thought. [...] The fact that thought may be represented by a means other than speech (such as vision and images, for example), and that writing, as a register of thought, may take a form other than that of speech in representing thought is apparently inconceivable to a Western audience. (Emphases original)

Alternatively, then, I would say that semiotic manifestations that do not comply with the predominant language perspective are portrayed as ‘noises’ in communication that are promptly objectified and manipulated at will. This leads me to my concern regarding the stagnation of diegesis: once objectified and, consequently, turned into manipulable material, knowledges and languages from illiterate cultures end up either as a non-diegetic, surreal sound that can be ignored, or as a diegetic sound whose volume can be turned down and/or fine tuned whenever necessary. That is the reason why I claimed that peer review has become devoid of dialogue.

In modernity/coloniality, two important processes are constantly reiterated that stimulate the permanence of this scenario: the **division of the logos** and the **hegemony of dramatic communication**.

On the one hand, as for the former, Ratcliffe (1999, p. 203) states that:

in a divided logos (one that speaks but does not listen), we commonly employ dialogue as Hegelian dialectic wherein the posited thesis subsumes the acceptable aspects of the antithesis with the unacceptable excess being exiled from the dominant logic.

On the other hand, as for the latter, let me briefly unwrap the concept of ‘drama.’ Schechner (2003, p. 325-6) posits that drama refers to a narrative structure characterised by a conflict that reaches a climax and has a resolution. This structure mirrors ancient hunting rituals and is enacted by means of an accumulation of neurological processes that lead to the realisation of external physical gestures, which in turn combine with one another to form signs (i.e., information/emotion units) that are sequenced to build a scene. Finally, the sequencing of scenes culminates in the formation of drama.

Dramatic communication, after all, implies: a) a strict linearity that channels neural stimuli all the way through specific gestures that are useful for the general hunting objective; b) a narrow range of information/emotion whose display is relevant for the purpose of capturing prey; c) a fixed, binary ending for the sequence of scenes: success or failure.

Peer review is possibly where the division of the logos and hegemony of dramatic communication are most visible: as authors and reviewers assume a hunting spirit, the text to be published becomes not an environment for the co-existence of different onto-epistemologies, but rather a stage that hosts either death or survival as the only possible resolution paths, wherein descriptions, explanations and arguments respecting the dominant diction work as knowledge/discourse weapons.

Consequently, other behaviours that do not directly resemble hunting undergo incarceration. That is the case with play, since its hallucinatory potential reduces the perceived transparency of meanings and, at length, decreases the ability to focus on the ritual of capture. As such, the hallucination experienced while playing is highly a-dramatic, because it evokes a variety of information/emotions besides the ones necessary to kill prey. As Damasio (2003, p. 118-119) put it:

The brain allows us to *hallucinate* certain body states by a variety of means. One can imagine how such a feature began in evolution. At first the brain merely produced straight mappings of the body state. Later, other possibilities arose, for example, temporarily eliminating the mapping body states such as those culminating in pain. Later perhaps, there was the possibility of simulating states of pain where none existed. [...] It is worth noting that hallucinations [...] as not adaptive when they occur in sensory systems other than the one that has to do with the body's interior. Visual hallucinations are highly disruptive and so are auditory hallucinations. There is no benefit to them and they are not enjoyed as entertainment by the neurologic and psychiatric patients who have to suffer them. The same applies to the hallucinated smells or tastes that epileptic patients may experience. Yet body-states hallucinations, outside the few psychopathological conditions I outlined, are valuable resources for the normal mind.

As I see it, in a different perspective than that of modernity/coloniality, hallucinations would be valuable – particularly in academic settings – due to their potential for poetic elaboration and resulting increased possibilities for expansion of metalanguage.

However, because this kind of expansion would depend on the public display of affective behaviour, modernity/coloniality's protection of ideogenesis as drama entails the deafening of the knowing subject, who is made incapable of listening and coping emotionally with the superabundance of meaning that characterises the poetic usage of languages (TODOROV, 2014, p. 305-306).

Thus, the knowing subject in modernity/coloniality is denied the right to assume more than one position in the cenotypographic terrain, since that would entail an affectively mediated detachment from hegemonic standards for academic behaviour. As Damasio (2010, p. 89-90) argues:

[Emotions are triggered] by images of objects or events that are actually happening at the moment or that, having happened in the past, are now being recalled. The situation you are in makes a difference for the emotional apparatus. You may be actually inhabiting a scene of your life and responding to a musical performance or to the presence of a friend; or you may be alone and remembering a conversation that upset you the day before. Whether "live," reconstructed from memory, or created from scratch in one's imagination, the images initiate a chain of events. Signals from the processed images are made available to several regions of the brain. Some of those regions are involved in language, others in movement, others in manipulations that constitute reasoning. Activity in any of those regions leads to a variety of responses: words with which you can label a certain object; rapid evocations of other images that allow you to conclude something about an object; and so forth. Importantly, signals from the images that represent a certain object also land in regions capable of triggering specific kinds of emotional chain reaction.

In short, modernity/coloniality do not altogether ban the public display of affective behaviour, but rather narrow down the possibilities to a very few options that reinforce the hunting game. In this sense, according to Safatle (2015, p. 49), a kind of subjection takes place that is affectively constructed and affectively perpetuated, which means it could only be affectively overcome through the production of another kind of relation to embodied sensibilities.

Nevertheless, while the domination of dramatic sensibility is not interrupted by the visibilisation of other affective flows such as the ones present in play, the oppressive logic of coloniality cannot not be weakened, since the violence of colonial hierarchisations cannot be made visible to dominant speakers (VERONELLI, 2016, p. 410).

1.3 Closing remarks

In this chapter, I have established that play's condition as a marginal entity to science results from its capacity to weaken modernity/coloniality's defense mechanisms and defy a system of onto-epistemic violence. I have also discussed how linguistic play serves a central purpose in science, allowing for meta-critical revisions through its detachment from standard behaviour associated to academic knowledges/discourses. Finally, I have argued that this feature makes play both an asset and a taboo among academic circles, where its traces/marks are consistently erased from research publications, due to the presupposition that by acknowledging the value of play, scientists would be making themselves comparable to the the group of non-persons commonly portrayed in relation to play, playing and playfulness (i.e., children).

As such, I have been able to initially substantiate my claim about the disguised manner in which play is exploited in theorisations conducted within academic settings, such as universities. While I have, throughout my rhetorical exercise so far, pointed mainly to the causes for concealment, I now set out to write a second chapter that expands on the notion that the methodologisation of writing (enacted by a restriction of semiotic resources associated with play) is fundamental for the repression of the political power residing in inventiveness.

CHAPTER 2

The Pedagogy of Gestures: a ‘backdoor’ modus operandi for writing

*me viu pensando, quis pensar junto
"pensar é um ato tão particular do indivíduo"
e ela, na hora "particular, é? duvido"
e como de fato eu não tinha lá muita certeza
entrei na dela, senti firmeza*

*eu pensava até um ponto
ela entrava sem confronto
eu fazia o contraponto
e pronto*

*pensar assim virou uma arte
uma canção feita em parceria
primeira parte, segunda parte
volta o refrão e acabou a teoria*

(Zélia Duncan)

‘Pedagogy of Gestures’ is the name I have given to a way in which writing academically can be approached from a different set of theoretical presuppositions, the most important of which is: that the writing process is comparable to pedagogy in that it entails a learning curve, as conceptualised before in the previous chapter. In other words, as it is coming into existence, textuality is only possible as a result of changes that incur in relation to how signs are distributed within a given linguistic system.

On the other hand, the methodologisation of writing imposed by academic circles has forced sign (re)distribution within the system (and even sign-making) into poverty. As a consequence, learning cannot happen, since any pedagogical value present in the act of writing becomes nullified, and a strict set of rules is easily in put into effect that restrains political impulses towards inventiveness.

With that in mind, by analysing crucial aspects of the Pedagogy of Gestures, I will in the following pages demonstrate that the purpose of the methologisation of writing in academic contexts is solely that of maintaining privilege and diminishing the impact that the knowledge held by subjects excluded from universities can have on scientific work.

Let me, then, begin by elaborating on the idea of ‘modus operandi’ that appears in this chapter’s title.

2.1 Note on ‘modus operandi’

‘Modus operandi’ is an expression I have been using along with some colleagues (DELL’OLIO, 2018; SILVA, A. A., 2017) to signal our critical stance before the widely accepted discourse in favour of the encapsulation of experience as a way to attain scientific validity, due to a

supposed reproducibility that is guaranteed by adopting standardised procedures to tackle data (in writing) among the scientific community⁷. This idea is problematic from a decolonial standpoint, because: a) it entails an abyssal exclusion; and b) it strips academic research of its erotic potential.

Regarding the concept of ‘abyssal exclusion,’ Santos, B. S. (2018, p. 28) posits that the colonial imaginary is permeated by an ‘abyssal line’ that divides societies and forms of sociability unevenly in terms of what is considered ethical. For instance: whereas killing may have been repudiated in the metropolis on grounds that it was outrageous, the crime very seldom caused the same reaction when the victim was a native in a colony. When it comes to knowledge, the dynamics is more or less the same: what is produced in the metropolis is mostly deemed as ‘scientific,’ whereas in the colony nothing besides ‘mythology’ or ‘lore’ is ever produced. In this sense, epistemic justice refers to the struggle for the interruption of the abyssal line, which would bring to an end both abyssal and non-abyssal exclusions alike. Abyssal exclusions, Santos explains (*op. cit.*, p. 55), are those between metropolis and colony (e.g., racism), while non-abyssal exclusions are those taking place within either side of the line (e.g., sexism).

Following from Santos’s considerations on the ‘abyssal’ above, epistemicide is the practice of ‘killing’ forms of knowledge that originate in the colony side of the abyssal line. By classifying them as *non-knowledges*, the metropolis denies them access to the epistemic canon and gradually forces their erasure from the records of intellectual history. In short, methodologisation treats methodologies produced outside of the

⁷ This pursuit of a different *way of acting*, or a different *posture for research*, is supposed to express a political detachment from the values of a modern paradigm for science. The result of readings in Decolonial Theory coupled with Aesthetics, it was particularly motivated by Guinzburg’s work on intellectual history. In one of his seminal texts, Guinzburg (1980) compares the posture of art connoisseurs, detectives and psychoanalysts based on the figures of Giovanni Morelli, Sherlock Holmes and Sigmund Freud. The three are similar, he says in the article, in that they make discoveries from clues unnoticed by most onlookers, interpreting supposedly irrelevant details as revealing signs: the shape of an ear, a stray footprint, the specific use of a word. Their way to go about business suggests a qualitative concern, highlighting the features of individual cases in themselves (or, as he calls it, their ‘character’). This way of acting is called by Guinzburg the ‘conjectural model,’ which can be traced back to the practices of hunters and diviners of the past, whose interpretative rigour may be termed ‘elastic’ inasmuch as it is not determined solely by the application of abstract rules, relying also on intuition and inference. In modernity, however, this paradigm has been undermined by the expropriation of knowledge from its unique context of existence and validity, which was possible especially due to: a) the disciplinarisation of evidence-reading; b) the appraisal of mathematical standards of generalisation; and c) the decision to exclude from scientific analysis all but the reproducible (in writing or in print, particularly after Gutenberg), thus preventing embodiment from becoming visible in texts.

walls of a university as being non-scientific, which usually materialises in the cynical attack of their ‘rigour’ as a way to hide the actual prejudice against their *origin*, accompanied by a desire to eliminate their presence in the here-and-now.

As for the erotic potential of research, by observing the contemporary phenomenon of pornography, Han (2017, p. 32) argues that ‘nudity that is displayed without secrecy [...] says nothing. It has no expressivity or mystery.’ In this sense, methodology as we know it in the West is a pornographic (and not an erotic) enterprise⁸, for it tries to lay bare *everything* that may come up during the research, anticipating responses by setting up protocols on how to deal with findings – as if they were simply ‘stuff’ coming from beyond the abyssal line, implying their submission to the control of the ego –, therefore shielding against surprises (and the erotic disorientation they cause) along the way.

From Kress’s concept of learning as change in semiotic resources (which I outlined in the previous chapter), it is my understanding that methodologisation actually prevents the eroticism of learning, because it establishes an uncerimoniously visible, closed and immovable set of resources and signs to which the singularity of data must surrender, so that a ‘valid’ conclusion can be reached and presented according to acceptable linguistic patterns in writing. Said differently, great amounts of steam are being let off elsewhere (and *not* during the research-writing-learning process), diminishing the capacity to relate to a given subject of interest in a manner that recognises its exteriority in face of the hegemonic academic structure of knowledge and, as a consequence, refuses to reduce its complexity to the terminology that has been laid bare and is known (if not altogether *commonsensical*). More on this notion of eroticism and research-writing-learning later on in this chapter.

So what is left of research without ‘proper’ methodology, then? Araújo (2019, p. 12) indicates that by not starting the research process with a previously scripted methodological routine that meticulously details how the researcher is supposed to behave, one is able to make visible the bonds between researcher, advisor, theoretical sources, themes/tropes and research subjects. This is an important point, for it relates to the decolonial restitution of the body to theorisations, which – in my views – is to be enacted in writing.

⁸ This is not an original idea of mine. Souza (2018) has proposed it orally at one of our research group meetings, and I am only developing it here.

Moreover, Martinez (2017, p. 23) explains that this kind of research aims to be pedagogical not in the sense of transmitting knowledge as *doxa* (i.e., certainty and stability that would hinder critique), but rather of *sharing* a researcher's own learning curve with 'whoever wishes to exercise their own [interpretive] capacities and make sense of the words [in a paper]' (translation mine).

Walsh (2018, p. 83) defines a pedagogue not as

a teacher who transmits or imparts knowledge, but [...] a facilitator; [...] someone who endeavors to provoke, encourage, construct, generate, and advance, with others, critical questionings, understandings, knowledges, and actionings; other ways of thinking and of doing *with*.

Because I see academic writing as very closely related to pedagogy, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, I consider Walsh's ideas above to be also valid with regard to the work of researchers and how they express and account for it through writing.

2.2 Crucial features of the 'Pedagogy of Gestures' as a way of writing academically

Many roads lead me to a *modus operandi* such as the Pedagogy of Gestures. Let me now retrace the major ones that shaped my 'gait' and unpack some of the main reflexions encountered along the way, which can help in explaining the triadic nature of research-writing-learning and its entanglement with textual methodologisation as a colonial semiotic device.

2.2.1 The road into the significance of physicality

I begin this section with the following question: in what ways is the physical world affected by the colonial concealment of play through textual methodologisation?

In order to address this issue, let me first elaborate on the interconnection between physicality, play and gestures, based on the historical retrospect provided by the following excerpt:

O gesto era considerado, na retórica antiga (na qual, escreve Quintiliano, mesmo “as mãos falam”), como um sinal não verbal, que visa a traduzir e tornar visíveis significados verbais (tese que Elenio criticará em sua intervenção). Para aproximar-se de uma definição, será útil começar com algumas observações sobre o termo latino *gestus* e sobre o verbo *gero*, dos quais ele deriva. Trata-se de dois termos que existem apenas em âmbito latino, sem nenhum correlato nas outras línguas indo-europeias, e para os quais os linguistas hesitam em sugerir uma etimologia segura. Sua esfera de significado é particularmente ampla: é possível *gerere* uma barba ou uma roupa, mas também uma amizade, uma função e até mesmo a si mesmo (*se gerere*, “comportar-se”); *gestus*, por sua vez, pode significar qualquer atitude do corpo e da pessoa. (AGAMBEN, 2018, p. 2, italics original)

From that quotation, particularly considering the pragmatic examples given, I understand that gestures are complex semiotic objects, since, despite their necessary manifestation as physical entities, they operate (i.e., are realised) *both with and without* visible attachment (or contemporaneity) to the thing they are targeted at. This complexity is further explained by Agamben (2018, p. 3), when he says that

[...] o gesto não é nem um meio, nem um fim: antes, é a exibição de uma pura medialidade, o tornar visível um meio enquanto tal, em sua emancipação de toda finalidade. O exemplo do mímico é, nesse sentido, esclarecedor. O que imita o mímico? Não o gesto do braço com a finalidade de pegar um copo para beber ou com qualquer outro escopo, do contrário, a mimese perfeita seria a simples repetição desse determinado movimento tal e qual. O mímico imita o movimento, suspendendo, entretanto, sua relação com um fim. Isto é, ele expõe o gesto em sua pura medialidade e em sua pura comunicabilidade, independentemente de sua relação efetiva com um fim.

When the idea of finality (or, as I would rather call it, *lucidity* of finality) is put on the table coupled with the idea of suspension (and why not suspicion, or doubt?), the gesture is awarded the status of a device capable of destabilising the commonsensical linearity of meanings presupposed by modernity, which makes it comparable to playing, after all. In this sense, Agamben (*ibid.*) explains:

Decisivo para compreender a natureza do gesto é, assim, o momento da interrupção e da suspensão, isto é, sua relação com o tempo compreendido como sucessão cronológica linear. Sempre me tocou o fato de que um grande coreógrafo do século XV, Domenico da Piacenza, em seu tratado *Dell'arte di ballare e danzare*, coloque no centro da dança um momento de pausa que denomina “fantasmata”. Eis sua definição: “uma presteza

corporal, a qual [...] faz parar a cada instante como se tivesse visto a cabeça de Medusa, isto é, uma vez feito o movimento, sê todo de pedra naquele instante [...] agindo com medida e memória”. Domenico chama “fantasmata” uma pausa súbita entre dois movimentos, a ponto de contrair na própria imóvel e petrificada tensão a medida e a memória de toda a série coreográfica. Aqui se vê com incomparável clareza que o gesto não é só o movimento corpóreo do dançarino, mas também – e sobretudo – sua interrupção entre dois movimentos, a *epoché* que imobiliza e, ao mesmo tempo, comemora e exhibe o movimento. (italics original)

As I understand it, the analysis of gestures opens up wider interpretive possibilities, insofar as the complex character of gestures playfully/abnormally interrupt expectations on bodily behaviour. It is important, nevertheless, to remain aware of the central meta-theoretical difficulty that this kind of analysis faces, as described by Agamben (*ibid.*, p. 4):

Se o gesto é caracterizado pela pausa e pela suspensão, nas quais se dá a conhecer apenas uma cognoscibilidade, isso significa que ele tem apenas uma realidade negativa, da ordem não de um ser, mas de um não-ser? Qual é, em outras palavras, o modo de ser da cognoscibilidade? [...] Aqui, as categorias da ontologia – existência e essência, *quidditas* e *quodditas*, potência e ato, ser e ente – colapsam necessariamente uma sobre a outra, coincidem, isto é: acontecem juntas. (italics original)

Having briefly gone over the interconnection between physicality, play and gestures, let me now get back to the question guiding this section: in what ways is the physical world affected by the colonial concealment of play through textual methodologisation?

To discuss this question, I would remind the reader that Western pedagogies – or, more broadly speaking, Western learning systems (especially those in effect in academic settings, e.g. universities and schools) – are predicated on a principle of representation as the superior mode of sign-making at the disposal of culture, knowledge and language. Associating learning mostly (and, in some instances, solely) with representation creates an educational loophole that serves as a distraction from asking a greater **variety** of questions about pressing political issues pertaining to the physical state of affairs. Masschelein (2010, pp. 275-6) helps me to explain this point:

The Belgian painter Rene Magritte offered maybe one of the strongest and most famous images of this problem. He made a painting of a pipe with the caption 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe'. This is not a pipe, but a painted pipe and one cannot decide whether the painted pipe represents the 'real' pipe. This means that when we let children 'see the world', we don't show them the world, but what we see as the world, and what we consider to

be important, valuable and useful about it. Therefore, educators do not only have to think about the 'right' representation but should be aware that they are not showing the world, but representing it: 'ceci n'est pas le monde'. And then the question seems to appear again: What do we have to represent and how to represent it?

The double question at the end is also applicable to the work of professional researchers, but – in a decolonial perspective – it cannot be the single, absolute, universal line of inquiry whenever a new research project pops up. I said it just before the quotation and I repeat it yet again: that kind of question is a distraction, if there is no space for other kinds of question to be made.

In this sense, whereas play would, through the suspension provoked by gestures, potentially make researchers able to interrogate the normality of representation as a mode of learning, at the same time as they would engage with problems of the civil society in other ways that are not representational, the modern standard of scientific theory-building stalls as it cynically invests a great deal (if not the majority) of energy and resources devoted to research in finding ingenious strategies of description, explanation and argumentation to shape things into articles, theses and other genres.

If a greater variety of questions were asked beside those motivated by philosophical tropes such as the one present in Magritte's pipe, the strength of representation as a colonial smokescreen would be undermined and the complexity of gestures could incite a kind of academic writing (and not only reading) that would interrupt the modern sense of textual normality, while nonetheless retaining scientific value. That other 'style,' as it is, would be a true paradox, but it is one that the decolonial option – as I have been executing it – leads me to.

One example of the varying kinds of meta-theoretical questions that can be asked so as to grant research with multiple focal points, besides the one regarding representation, is presented by Masschelein (*ibid.*, p. 276):

Not [just]: How to represent the world and how to make students [or readers in general] aware that this representation is not the 'real world'? This awareness is present enough. But [also]: How to turn the world into something 'real', how to make the world 'present', to give again the real and discard the shields or mirrors that seem to have locked us up increasingly into self-reflections and interpretations, into endless returns upon 'standpoints', 'perspectives' and 'opinions'. This problem, I think, is neither an epistemological one (about true representations) nor a normative one (regarding what to value, what to select, how to judge), but is precisely about the (dis-)stance i.e. the way we relate to the world, it is about the right distance which opens up an existential space.

Playful gestures, as I have conceptualised them, lead the way towards the visibilisation of the omnipresence of physicality. Towards the marking of embodiment in a terminology that resists hegemony, but communicates all the same, in a subtle, unstable aesthetic balance that presents many political challenges.

Among those, I would mention the issue of the relative weight of words in comparison to other forms of language, that is, the appreciation of graphocentric discourse as the privileged way to shape knowledge in Western(ised) societies. With this restriction in mind, I turn to Artaud (1984, p. 58), who helps me to better understand the central conflict regarding the communicative balance at the interior of play, which I have just alluded to:

[T]rata-se de saber se [uma linguagem mais “concreta”, mais “presentificada” e “crua”] é capaz de atingir o mesmo objetivo interior que a palavra; se [...] ela pode pretender a mesma eficácia intelectual que a linguagem articulada. Em outras palavras, é possível perguntar se ela pode, não precisar pensamentos, mas *fazer pensar*, se pode levar o espírito a assumir atitudes profundas e eficazes de seu próprio ponto de vista. Numa palavra, [...] uma linguagem que utilizaria apenas as formas, ou o som, ou o gesto [...] (emphasis original)

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the performativity of play (i.e., its situatedness) causes meanings to be formed holistically due to the embodiment of the playing subject, resulting not only in *ideas* that can be uttered in some available language, but also in ineffable *senses*. Both these products provoke thought that is affectively mediated, as Damasio (also cited in the previous chapter) explains.

Now, for the purposes of this thesis, what is primarily at stake here is not whether discourses other than traditional academic parlance have intellectual efficacy in their own right, but rather: how will professional academics who read the coming pages of this text react to the scientific paradox in front of their eyes?

Concepts presented by Schechner (2003, p. 130) catalyse an interesting hypothesis to address that question. Comparing and constrasting rituals of various kinds that take place between the global East/West, as well as between the global South/North, the author states that

performativity is always culturally perceived along a continuum whose extremities are *entertainment* and *efficacy*. Efficacy refers to the overall ‘ambience’ of situations where decorum (i.e., a sort of seriousness and, in some instances, even sternness) is naturalised as the enveloping mood assumed so that a well-delimited end can be achieved by means of a clear-cut series of actions that are highly regulated by a social institution. Entertainment, on the other hand, presupposes experiences that are circumscribed by no definite institutional finality regarding social interactions, marked by an sort of loose and weighless idleness that brings forth unexpectedness through spontaneity. The semiotic complexity of gestures owes to the fact that their existence as a token of linguistic play entails a wobbly kind of equilibrium that complicates the task of analytically pinpointing the goal of a given action, that is, to determine on the continuum the degree of effectiveness-entertainment of a gesture in the context where it was realised.

What I believe those concepts articulated by Schechner help to hypothesise may be the conspicuous nature of a long-lasting power struggle over the sovereignty of academic discourse, wherein coloniality plays a great role in dismissing non-hegemonic linguistic behaviours as ‘mere entertainment,’ with little to no intellectual efficacy. Let me discuss that for a moment.

From the standpoint of meta-theoretical presuppositions, I am considering that linguistic behaviour can only be analysed by identifying elements that shape the interaction between bodies in social space, whether or not they are human, whether or not they are alive – at least in the widely accepted Western sense of the word. What I mean by this statement is that no linguistic analysis can aspire to be responsible that does not take into account the complexity created by the entanglement of multiple communicative materialities, that is, of various forms in which textuality physically comes into being.

Take the wide phenomenon of writing, for example. For the purposes of this thesis, I construe the act of writing – even digitally – as *engraving and imprinting*, and the learning that comes from it as a process caused by the ongoing manipulation of physical objects in the world. As such, writing always takes place somewhere and somehow and its products (which is all there is left, if the process is not visible) signal traces

of life that ultimately turn a shared **landscape of languages** into a proper **territorial unit**, implying the establishment of borders, boundaries, barriers or sometimes even barricades of self-enclosure.

Since all bodies have a quite limited capacity for growth and longevity that is independent from desire or will, engraving and imprinting can serve the purpose of exceeding in some ways the limitations of materiality, inasmuch as visible, signalled territorial expansion can be equalled to power expansion. Thus, textuality provides a feeble sense of conquering the unachievable, that is, disembodiment. Why feeble? Because all organisms and things will cease to exist one day or another, including textuality itself, which can assume a range of embodied features of its own. However, writing is enticed by textuality in that texts (understood as engravings, imprints, marks of the interaction between bodies), although lacking perpetuity, display greater endurance and, as a consequence, relatively prolonged vitality, continuing to give out linguistic behaviour even if its producer has already ceased to exist as such.

Having said that, when I look back at the issue regarding the efficacy-entertainment continuum, I come to the conclusion that whenever a gesture is dismissed as pure entertainment (especially due to its potential for learning, i.e., for denaturalisation), the vitality of those producing said gesture is being violently attacked (i.e., it is being shortened even further) for the purposes of enforcing an already existing territorial arrangement. On those occasions, loci of enunciation become homogenised and locked in place by forced univocality.

As a result, the producer's body is annihilated not directly (i.e., not by strangling any of its immediate means of survival), but through the imposition of **delayed physicality**, which ultimately causes suffocation in the long run. By delayed physicality I mean the phenomenon whereby a combination of environmental conditions leads to the reduction of communication to a staging of remnants of linguistic behaviour (which are more easily controllable), rather than direct access to the gesturer-communicator in their embodied capacity for efficacy. This is why I said a few pages back – and now I want to stress that point once more – that, in research carried out within the large area of Applied Linguistics (as well as in other areas where linguistic studies are conducted with a special focus on the relation between language learning and politics), a greater variety of research questions need to be asked, so as to open lines of inquiry that point in different directions other than the one outlined by the issue of

representation, which runs the risk of falling into the metaphysical trap of trying to determine if the relation language/world is one of causality, circularity, amalgamation, tautology etc.

Play, as conceptualised in the previous chapter, disregards metaphysics as a stable dominion, due to the hallucinatory power of learning contained in imaginative gestures (and the subsequent multiple ‘avenues’ of ideogenesis they open up). For this reason, by strictly maintaining naturalised communicative patterns (i.e., gatekeeping), modern science ignores the right of reply and pushes through the back door the bodies of whose voices may defy the equilibrium within theoretical systems and bring the unspeakable a bit closer.

While play does indeed bring the unspeakable closer (as explained before), establishing a linguistic policy that controls who is allowed to play means that: a) linguistic play can be easily made available to just a few occupying privileged academic positions; b) ineffability can be approached in terms that secure the preservation of privileges; and c) the potential for learning is undermined, since play – if properly inhibited – results in *fewer* and *weaker* theoretical insights, prompting textual changes that are mere reshapings of familiar contents. In other words, they are less like actual semiotic experimentations towards an adventure of (re)invention, and more like a market-oriented stylistic choice made with the special purpose of displaying institutional power in the form of ‘creative genius.’

I used the expression ‘market-oriented stylistic choice’ above to refer to how the academic publishing industry motivates at the same time three complementary phenomena: a) the suppression of most playful linguistic behaviour, since it could invite more readers of different backgrounds into ongoing scientific discussions, thus possibly making room for an amplification of the right of reply and, ultimately, destabilising well-recognised theoretical systems in a swift manner; b) the exploitation of play during the research process as insight engine-generator, but the subsequent textual concealment of its traces when the time comes to publish results; and c) the exhibition of a domesticated version of play aimed at separating the ‘big names’ from the ‘small’ ones. To recall an important distinction that I established in the previous chapter, the professional intellectuals contributing to the perpetuation of phenomena b) and c) above can both be considered unethical scientists.

At the present stage of academic neoliberalism, modern ideology and colonial politics are convenient tools to potentialise the usurpation of play by a culture of research as **property**, which speaks to the limitations of physicality that lead to a reliance on textuality in order to transform landscapes into territorial units, as discussed above.

The logic of property despises play, because the latter evokes an erotic and ecological impulse to *merge*. Merging, in turn, presupposes movement and dislocation, thus challenging a number of very important landmarks of hegemonic Western culture, such as the sedentary behaviour manifested in permanent settlements organised in households. In this sense, if not privatised (i.e., if not owned and removed from the public space), play brings into existence disturbances to naturalised urbanistic and architectural patterns.

Let me pause for a moment in order to discuss the notion of an erotic and ecological impulse to merge that is present in play.

Among the subterfuges used by current neoliberal economy to impede play, delayed physicality (mentioned above) causes communication to become increasingly devoid of **contact**, which is critical to discouraging and/or obscuring erotic and ecological relations.

I define ‘contact’ as an intimate experience with language, especially the tactile experience (*-tact*) of togetherness (*con-*), such as that between bodies and surfaces of the physical world during the process of engraving and imprinting.

‘Intimate’ refers to what Han (2017, p. 12) calls ‘the erotic,’ which ‘concerns the Other in the strong sense, namely, what cannot be encompassed by the regime of the ego [...] [which] presumes the asymmetry and exteriority of the Other’ (*ibid.*, p. 1). This means that otherness provokes negativity (*ibid.*, p. 2) in that it is inapprehensible by known categories, that is, it eludes established abilities (*ibid.*, p. 11). In the case of ‘contact,’ negativity appears in relation to semiotic resources that seem so alien, they provoke a feeling of inability and, as a consequence, invite an erotic relation of engagement with surrender.

‘Experience,’ Bondía (2002, p. 21) argues, refers to what happens ‘to us,’ or what ‘touches us.’ The presence of ‘us’ as an object in the phrase is rather important, he claims, because many things happen on a daily basis, but not a lot of it actually affects us. Based on Benjamin, the author explains (*ibid.*, p. 22-23) that current (Western)(ised) societies are organised so that an excess of information, opinion and work, along

with a lack of (personal) time, hinder the occurrence of experience. It is my understanding that, for Bondía, experience entails a kind of learning that goes beyond the coding of knowledge into rhetoric. Instead, meaning and subjectivation mechanisms can be constructed by the elaboration of feelings and emotions. In this sense, engagement with surrender describes the attitude of not trying to contain the otherness of alien semiotic resources by reducing them to known signs. Thus, experiencing is about facing the exteriority of the Other and reflecting upon the affective response it triggers.

Finally, a word about ‘language.’ For speakers of Romance languages, please be aware that I am referring to *linguagem* (*linguaje*, *linguaggio*, *langage*, *limbajul*) and not *língua* (*lengua*, *lingua*, *langue*, *limbă*). For speakers of other languages where such a distinction is inexistent, please note that I am examining communication – particularly in academic settings – in a broader sense that encompasses both a ‘wordly world’ and ‘languages-outside-words’ as possible textual elements of research publications.

In this respect, I am greatly indebted to Malaguzzi’s (2012, p. 3), who, based on his work with childhood, proposed the liberating defense of the ‘hundredness’ of communication, that is, the assumption that meanings are produced by unique compositions of a multitude of contemporaneous languages (each with its own respective materiality, but occurring in a shared plane of physical manifestation), which is an idea that has significantly helped to shape my present views:

The child has a hundred languages
 a hundred hands
 a hundred thoughts
 a hundred ways of thinking
 of playing, of speaking.
 A hundred always a hundred
 ways of listening
 of marveling, of loving
 a hundred joys
 for singing and understanding
 a hundred worlds
 to discover

a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.

My training as a researcher in Applied Linguistics, which is marked by a special focus on literacy studies, often pushes me at a subconscious level to categorising linguistic behaviour (mostly for the sake of description, explanation and argumentation) in terms that reinforce territorial units, without any chance to fathom the coplanarity of languages that characterises embodied communicative acts, which take place across wide semiotic landscape and not within the enclosure of the unit.

With that in mind, I consider Malaguzzi's contribution particularly useful, since it pushes linguistic analysis in a direction that allows any kind of relation between bodies that leaves behind physical traces to be explored as a language. In other words, it brings forth an image of research that has gives less centrality to the goal of taxonomisation and provides greater operational freedom by means of a less stiffened attitude employed in the examination of situated communication, embracing gestures not exclusively from the standpoint of the distanced observer, but also in the perspective of the player who seeks contact.

Seeking contact means giving in to the erotic and ecological impulse to merge, so as to try and construct a more compromising stance that closes in on, and maybe even leans on, forms of consciousness other than the one assumed hegemonically in the West. I find this to be consistent with Malaguzzi's concept of language, provided that 'consciousness' is understood in terms of what Damasio (2000, p. 240) says:

Já se julgou que a consciência ocorria quando, e somente quando, a linguagem [verbal] comentava para nós a situação mental. Como já vimos, a concepção de consciência exigida por essa ideia sugere que somente seres humanos com grande domínio do instrumento da linguagem teriam estados conscientes. Animais sem [esse tipo de] linguagem e bebês humanos não teriam tal sorte, seriam sempre inconscientes.

Consciousnesses in whose foundation the 'wordly world' and the 'languages-outside-words' are merged can be reckoned as erotic and ecological, inasmuch as:

- a) efficacy and entertainment become indistinguishable, thus causing semiotic cross-fertilisation of territorial units and resisting the

[...] idea de que los conocimientos [y los lenguajes] tienen unas jerarquías, unas especialidades, unos límites que marcan la diferencia entre unos campos del saber y otros, unas fronteras epistémicas que no pueden ser transgredidas, unos cánones que definen sus procedimientos y sus funciones particulares [...] [según] las fronteras entre el conocimiento útil y el inútil, entre la *doxa* y la *episteme*, entre el conocimiento legítimo (es decir, el que goza de “validez científica”) y el conocimiento ilegítimo (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, 2007, p. 81, emphases original);

- b) the validity of using descriptions, explanations and arguments as a display of power is challenged, since

the limits of imagination [are stretched] toward responsive and responsible local sensitivity: interpretively, a hermeneutic of suspicion wary of universalizing judgments and premature closure, while cognizant of the explanatory potential of comparative, analogically interpretive analyses, counts among its most active ingredients. Suspicion is directed, principally, at the excesses of scientism, reductionism, and the instrumental-utitarian moral and political theories that sustain an ethos of dominance and mastery, where a dislocated knower-as-spectator seeks to predict, manipulate, and control the behavior of the material world and of other ‘less enlightened’ people (CODE, 2006, p. 8);

- c) the limitations of embodiment are made visible as a research strategy that attests to the fact that

[a]s body changes take place, you get to know about their existence and you can monitor their continuous evolution. You perceive changes in your body state and follow their unfolding over seconds and minutes. That process of continuous monitoring, that experience of what your body is doing while thoughts about specific contents roll by, is the essence of what I call a feeling. If an emotion is a collection of changes in body state connected to particular mental images that have activated a specific brain system, the essence of feeling an emotion is the experience of such changes in juxtaposition to the mental images that initiated the cycle. In other words, a feeling depends on the juxtaposition of an image of the body proper to an image of something else, such as the visual image of a face or the auditory image of a melody (DAMASIO, 1994, p. 145);

- d) the petrified agitation of paranoia (as walls are erected to protect territorial units) gives way to movement that can induce alterations to affective states such as resentment, since the materiality of gestures can elicit the relinquishment of ‘the idea that to be political requires making a total break with the existing state of affairs in order to create something absolutely new’ (MOUFFE, 2007, p. 5) in favour of an understanding of politics as a continuous process of attempting to comprehend the mutual implications of different bodies

occupying the social space (again, whether or not they are human, whether or not they are alive), as well as their roles in the current state of reality (ALCOFF, 2012, p. 63).

With that being said, I come to the conclusion that consciousnesses mediated by contact, relying on a notion of communication as a political operation whereby social existence can be constantly (re)constructed (i.e., granted or taken) and life can be (un)(der)stated by ascribing uneven relative values to utterances, makes the ethical choice of letting the polysemy of materiality intercept the mechanics of an inherited colonial memory and imaginary.

In this sense, I am regarding *intellectuality as a faculty* based on a principle of semiotic indiscrimination, which – as a result of the traumas inflicted by modernity/coloniality – is framed into the designations of an institutionalised profession. This is why, in my understanding of the decolonial option, a process of rehabilitation (through the duo gestures/contact and other such meta-theoretical devices) is necessary to bring forth opportunities to combat historical exclusions.

My image of rehabilitation is influenced by Souza's (2018, p. 431) borrowing of a medical professional's voice to explain the connection between brain plasticity and politics:

“[W]hen memory has suffered [...] trauma, [...] it *can* be rehabilitated by external stimuli. [...] A whole complex network of narratives, interconnected and endless, apparently pointless, even. But the point is that memory, like identity, does not need to have a point, a justification. Like a pilgrim, it only needs to have a motive to go on. And, also like a pilgrim, that motive is intangible. As I said, we are ever-changing adaptable beings. Some may call it dementia but I call it being alive!” The doctor remembered, to his satisfaction, that the line between dementia and wisdom was a fine one.

It is precisely *along* that line mentioned by the doctor that a playful restoration of intellectuality as a faculty is possible. But how far could it hypothetically go, taking into account the pernicious restraints imposed by the academic publishing industry through world-wide standards for peer review? I would say that there is no way to approach this question, other than by tenaciously testing it.

Therefore, I introduce the Pedagogy of Gestures as a complementary tactics to the kind of decolonial work carried out in academic settings that Stein *et al.* (2020, p. 4) point to:

It is important to note that the dynamic of debates related to decoloniality and its discontents tends to be circumscribed by an intellectual, affective, and relational grammar that is extremely difficult to overcome. This grammar is rooted within a modern/colonial system, and includes particular parameters with regard to intelligibility, desirability, and relationality. Elsewhere, we have mapped the parameters of intelligibility within this grammar as being restricted by certain referents that cannot be entirely dismissed if one intends to be intelligible within academia [...] Indeed, even the discussions in this paper, and in this conclusion in particular, might appear unintelligible to some. These modern-colonial referents are grounded on a Cartesian ontology that reduces being to knowing (“I think, therefore I am”) and that imposes certain forms of reasoning as parameters for legitimacy and legibility, including teleological, anthropocentric, allochronic, logocentric, universalist, utility-maximizing, and dialectic forms of reasoning. Paradoxically, we need to strategically use this grammar – at least in selected ways – in order for our critical efforts to be intelligible within dominant scholarly discourses and institutions.

As I see it, then, a combination of efforts is required in order to enhance the ability to work on multiple fronts with a decolonial perspective. While the parameters of academic literacy and research publication are indeed to be used strategically to communicate with *certain* audiences, the Pedagogy of Gestures can simultaneously be deployed *elsewhere* in close exchange with non-academic communities, so as to motivate a ‘sideways’ movement across grammars, which is useful to bring to the fore textualities that instigate an assessment of the qualities of scientific communication throughout different social settings.

This can help to raise questions about the role that professional theory-building is playing in relation to the political objectives of a given social group: to what extent does the mode of presentation and circulation of a specific set of academic ideas cause them to be *obstructive* or *symbiotic* with regard to a specific set of political goals? Why is that the case? Can and should any changes be made to the mode of presentation and circulation of these ideas? Why (not)? What would be the consequences of doing that? And if changes are indeed to be made, in what manner can they be implemented?

2.2.2 The road into atmospheres of meaning

The questions I posited above are important, but it is relevant to also discuss the way in which to treat them. It is my hypothesis, considering my understanding of the decolonial option, that they reinforce coloniality and the concealment of play if treated only *dialogically*. Let me discuss that, based on what I have previously stated about the nature of meaning-making.

The first point to recall is that meanings are produced by unique compositions of a multitude of contemporaneous languages (each with its own respective materiality, but occurring in a shared plane of physical manifestation). In other words, meanings are formed holistically due to the embodiment of the playing subject, resulting not only in *ideas* that can be uttered in some available language, but also in ineffable *senses* – either of which provoke thought that is affectively mediated.

With that in mind, what is the issue with sustaining an exclusively dialogical approach to the questions I presented in the previous section above? To answer, I would like to bring up an example from a scientific community in Brazil.

Less than two decades ago, Lopes (2006) put together a publication that could be then considered as having a provocative premise, where he – along with the other (Brazilian and foreign) authors in the volume – argued for an ‘undisciplinary spirit’ within (Critical) Applied Linguistics. The overarching theme of the eleven articles in the book regards the notion that Applied Linguistics is primarily concerned with social transformation and, as such, needs to engage with knowledge construction in a way that is not to be compliant with traditional divisions between academic disciplines.

I understand that the book, entitled *Por uma Linguística Aplicada Indisciplinar*, can be read as a sort of manifesto in favour of the strengthening of *learning by dialogue*, that is, an attempt to diminish academic sectarianism and, using multiple theoretical models (whether or not they have academic prestige), make the process research more capable of tackling the complexity of social phenomena. By calling the reader’s attention to the possibility of building theorisations beyond the normalised patterns of modern science (LOPES, 2006, p. 22) in ways that avoid

the neglect of lay opinions and experiences (RAJAGOPALAN, 2006, p. 155), the volume poses the question of who can participate with a legitimate voice in the process of research.

In doing so, the book addresses a fundamental colonial pillar sustaining the maintenance of modern ideology in science: the essentialisation of the locus of enunciation. Imputing an essence to the locus of enunciation is the same as legislating for stiffened communicative possibilities, where multiple restrictions are in place so as to prevent exchanges between social groups. For the purposes of my discussion here, I will mention just three restrictions: of social roles, of manner and of intent.

In my reading, the articles presented in Lopes (2006) attack the restriction of social roles, implying that more people – whether or not they are professional scientists, and whether or not they belong nominally to the same academic disciplines – need to join forces in the process of research. Nevertheless, the volume does not confront the fact that colonial restrictions of manner (i.e., how participants engage communicatively with one another) and of intent (i.e., with what goals participants engage communicatively with one another) are in effect when it comes to how scientific research is conceived of in the first place.

For that reason, I take issue not with the book itself, since it never overtly claimed to have decolonisation as one of its goals. However, the book's motto (i.e., an 'indisciplinary' posture for research in Applied Linguistics) has been continuously and profusely cited by Brazilian scholars working in the area, without raising awareness to the limitations of dialogical learning that the texts by Lopes and others overlook. Let me for a moment explore but a few of those limitations.

Firstly, I would like to point out the strong reliance on Freirean and Bakhtinian theorisations regarding dialogue that exists in (Critical) Applied Linguistics – as well as in other correlated areas where linguistic studies are conducted with a special focus on the relation between language learning and politics – in Brazil. I consider that this is an important socio-historical feature to be highlighted and factored in, when discussing the prevailing culture of dialogue in some Brazilian academic circles.

In his writings⁹, Freire argues that ‘dialogue does not deny the validity of *explicative* or *narrative* moments’ in learning contexts (PA¹⁰, p. 83, translation and italics mine). Dialogue doesn’t make learners and teachers equals, but marks a democratic position between them. It is about conserving one's identity and also *defending* it, and being able to learn from difference. Dialogue is not a favour, but rather a fundamental respect which is not spontaneous, for dialogue is not simply a ‘*chat*.’ (PE¹¹, pp. 162-163, italics mine):

O diálogo tem significação precisamente porque os sujeitos dialógicos não apenas conservam sua identidade, mas a defendem e assim crescem um com o outro. [...] O diálogo não pode converter-se em um “bate-papo” desobrigado que marche ao gosto do acaso [...]

A dialogical attitude, then, evokes social and political responsibility, seeking causal relations through rational argumentation (EPL¹², p. 84). It also entails openness, not domination (EPL, p. 95) and involves *listening, asking, investigating, discussing* (EPL, p. 118-119, italics mine).

From these citations so far, I derive the understanding that, for Freire, dialogue is situated within the realm of verbal discourse, where a pre-disposition to rhetoric as means to mark historicity and social locatedness is at the foundation of communication. This, he claims, is an exclusive feature of humans attained through literacy. However, as signalled by Souza (2017, p. 265), ‘as an educator and not a linguist, Freire did not spend much time theorizing different or plural forms of written knowledge as texts.’

Based on a distinction between the natural and cultural world (EPL, p. 142), he states that illiteracy gives humans excess of time, which is deleterious to politics because it prevents awareness of temporality and historicity (EPL, p. 57):

⁹ Although the selected works used as reference here were published at different stages in Freire’s personal and intellectual life, thus presenting considerable variation, I have focused on the aspects that remain reasonably stable throughout his oeuvre.

¹⁰ Abbreviation for *Pedagogia da Autonomia* (FREIRE, 2011a).

¹¹ Abbreviation for *Pedagogia da Esperança* (FREIRE, 2011b).

¹² Abbreviation for *Educação como Prática de Liberdade* (FREIRE, 2011c).

O “excesso” de tempo sob o qual vivia o homem das culturas iletradas prejudicava sua própria temporalidade, a que chega com o discernimento a que nos referimos e com a consciência desta temporalidade, à de sua historicidade. Não há historicidade no gato pela incapacidade de emergir no tempo, de discernir e transcender, que o faz afogado num tempo totalmente unidimensional.

As a consequence, he ascribes to language the role of a tool that can transform nature, thus helping humans to re-signify their existence, which can be achieved through aesthetics. Aesthetics is where beauty proves the existence of a subject that is part of culture, e.g. a woman who arranges a flower bouquet: ‘ “Faço cultura. Sei fazer isto.” [...] “São natureza, enquanto flores. São cultura, enquanto adorno.” ’ (*EPL*, p. 174). Nevertheless, Freire induces a moralisation of aesthetics by reducing it to the manifestation of beauty and preconceiving beauty as externalised decency, when he argues that beauty will avoid deviations to ingenuous paths for critique (*PA*, p. 34):

A necessária promoção da ingenuidade à criticidade não pode ou não deve ser feita à distância de uma rigorosa formação ética ao lado sempre da estética. Decência e boniteza de mãos dadas. Cada vez me convenço mais de que, desperta com relação à possibilidade de enveredar-se no descaminho do puritanismo, a prática educativa tem de ser, em si, um testemunho rigoroso de decência e pureza. Uma crítica permanente aos desvios fáceis a que somos tentados [...]

One instance of this is found in his idea that bodily acts need to emulate verbally constructed propositions, forming what he calls the ‘examples’ that must be given by educators (*PA*, p. 35): ‘Quem pensa certo está cansado de saber que as palavras a que falta a corporeidade do exemplo pouco ou quase nada valem. Pensar certo é fazer certo.’ Despite a seeming simultaneity between the wordly world and languages-outside-words, here I tend instead to see an imposed linearity from the former towards the latter, which to me becomes visible in moments such as when Freire claims that teachers must ‘re-say’ (and not ‘un-say’) with physical actions what verbal discourse has previously defended (*PA*, p. 36, italics mine).

Another instance of aesthetical moralisation is found in his argument that beauty is also related to elegance, which is evidenced in *writing* as an aesthetic movement of language, which has nothing to do with the rigour of scientific thought, for – as he claims – even scientists can seek beauty in the expression of research results – which avoids ‘hurting the ears’ of readers (*PE*, pp. 100-101, italics mine).

By insisting on the ‘beauty of words,’ which elevates the potential of dialogue and favours critique, he definitively shuts off the human world from other forms of life that inhabit the planet, which he deems as less complex than *Homo sapiens*. After all, he claims that relationality is something exclusive to humans, because it is marked by plurality, transcendence, critique, temporality (EPL, p. 55):

As relações que o homem trava no mundo com o mundo (pessoais, impessoais, corpóreas e incorpóreas) apresentam uma ordem tal de características que as distinguem totalmente dos puros contatos, típicos da outra esfera animal. [...] Há uma pluralidade nas relações do homem com o mundo, na medida em que responde à ampla variedade dos seus desafios. Em que não se esgota num tipo padronizado de resposta.

Here his heavy criticism of ‘contact’ begins, for he conceptualises it as an automated kind of response that lacks the capacity for aesthetic transformation. It is as if contact impeded othering, whereas dialogue fuelled it.

Freire posits that contact is typical of animals, marked by reflexes, and not reflexivity; only humans can transcend, he says, not animals, because humans can recognise other forms of existence besides their own and distinguished between the ‘I’ and the other (EPL, p. 56). Contact implies culturally inconsequent responses which tend to accommodate instead of integrate life (EPL, p. 59). It is limited to apprehension and vegetation, which can only be broken by dialogue, that is, by responding to alterity with rhetoric (EPL, p. 82-83) ‘É essa dialogação do homem sobre o mundo e com o mundo mesmo, sobre os desafios e problemas, que o faz histórico.’

Meanwhile, Bakhtin’s work¹³ is centered around what he calls language as individual *speech* acts (MFL¹⁴, p. 74, italics mine). Since his proposal is to go beyond a formalist analysis of semiosis, he posits that sentences are *language units* and their analysis is to be different from the analysis of utterances, which are *discursive communication units* (ECV¹⁵, p. 276, italics mine).

¹³ As is also the case here, the comparison of the selected works evinces variation in the author’s views, since there is a time-span of almost five decades separating one book from the other. However, following the same approach I took with Freire, I have restricted myself to commenting on the ideas that remain reasonably stable throughout Bakhtin’s life.

¹⁴ Abbreviation for *Marxismo e Filosofia da Linguagem* (BAKHTIN, 2010).

¹⁵ Abbreviation for *Estética da Criação Verbal* (BAKHTIN, 2003).

Communication, he says, is basically dialogue. Dialogue is the classic form of discursive communication, for each reply is precise and simple and possesses a conclusive feature in that it expresses a certain position of the speaker (*ECV*, p. 275). In this sense, dialogue is indeed a form of *verbal interaction*, but in a broader sense it refers to the whole of *verbal communication* (*MFL*, p. 127, italics mine).

Proceeding with the delimitation of a scope for his research, Bakhtin proposes a distinction between interior and exterior dialogue. He clarifies that theorising exterior dialogue is his main aim, thus leaving interior dialogue aside, due to the independence from the logic of grammaticality that results from the fact that pragmatic emotional convergence governs the enunciation (*MFL*, pp. 64-65):

Uma análise mais aprofundada revelaria que as formas mínimas do discurso interior são constituídas por monólogos *completos*, análogos a parágrafos, ou então por enunciações completas. Mas elas se assemelham ainda mais às réplicas de um diálogo [...] [que] estão ligadas uma à outra, e sucedem-se uma à outra, não segundo as regras da lógica ou da gramática, mas segundo leis de *convergência apreciativa* (emocional), de *concatenação* [...]

This distinction is further developed when he speaks of aesthetics. Aesthetics is connected to the kind of response that a reader gives to a ‘character’ in a ‘story,’ with ethical and cognitive assessments involved (*ECV*, p. 4):

[O] autor acentua cada particularidade da sua personagem, cada traço seu, cada acontecimento e cada ato de sua vida, os seus pensamentos e sentimentos, da mesma forma como na vida nós respondemos axiologicamente a cada manifestação daqueles que nos rodeiam; na vida, porém, essas respostas são de natureza dispersa, são precisamente respostas a manifestações particulares e não ao todo do homem, a ele inteiro; e mesmo onde apresentamos definições acabadas de todo o homem – bondoso, mau, bom, egoísta, etc. –, essas definições traduzem a posição prático-vital que assumimos em relação a ele, não o definem tanto quanto fazem um certo prognóstico do que se deve e não se deve esperar dele, ou, por último, trat-se apenas de impressões fortuitas do todo ou de uma generalização empírica precária; na vida não nos interessa o todo do homem mas apenas alguns de seus atos com os quais operamos na prática e que nos interessam de uma forma ou de outra. [...] Já na obra de arte, a resposta do autor às manifestações isoladas da personagem se baseiam numa resposta única ao *todo* da personagem, cujas manifestações particulares são todas importantes para caracterizar esse todo como elemento da obra.

Here, I am reading the idea of character not literally as a proper character from a narrative *book*, that is, a kind of text constructed especially for the purposes of disclosing a story to a large reading public. Rather, I take his formulation to mean that, as interlocutors, individuals react – in dialogue – to multiple characters from ‘simpler,’ everyday stories that are told as two people interact through verbal discourse.

That said, I consider that what Bakhtin argues only holds true inasmuch as communication remains within the confines of a *single* language oriented towards the transmission of informational units. If layers of other languages are to be added into the mix, communication will become more complex due to the incompleteness and inequivalence of meanings between the wordly world and languages-outside-words.

In this sense, his notion of aesthetics presents a problem when the categories of internality/externality are considered. The main issue here is that, because of the different operational principles of internal and external dialogue, the body of the human individual is itself also forcefully split between what exists ‘inside’ and what happens ‘outside’ of it.

Verbal discourse shapes external images of an individual by other people, whereas internal organic sensations relate to possibilities of joy, passion, satisfaction (*ECV*, p. 44). The separation is such that what is felt ‘inside’ is confined there forever, for any attempt to externalise it makes it ‘something else.’ For this reason, according to him, the object of aesthetic activity is the expression of some interior state; aesthetic apprehension is the experience of such a state through an object and not one’s own self, which is called *contemplation* (*ECV*, pp. 56-57, italics mine). As a result, one only constructs, but does not experience in immediate fashion, the value of one’s external person (*ECV*, p. 45):

Não posso amar o próximo como amo a mim mesmo, ou melhor, não posso *amar* a mim mesmo como amo o próximo, posso apenas transferir para ele todo o conjunto de ações que costumo realizar para mim mesmo. O direito e a moral jurídica não podem estender as suas exigências à reação volitivo-emocional interior e requerem apenas certos atos externos que pratico em relação a mim mesmo e devem ser realizados para o outro; no entanto, não se pode nem falar de transferência para o outro da relação axiológica interior que nutro comigo mesmo, pois se trata da criação de uma relação volitivo-emocional inteiramente nova com o outro enquanto tal, a qual chamamos de amor e não pode, absolutamente, ser vivenciada em relação a mim mesmo.

Also, inasmuch as phenomenology routinely requires sensations to be converted into some form of externalised language in order to be contemplated – for, as Bakhtin states, beauty is inaccessible as self sensation, because it only exists in the axiological plane of the exterior body, which is personified in ethical terms (*ECV*, p. 47):

O corpo do outro é um corpo exterior, cujo valor eu realizo de modo intuitivo-manifesto e que me é dado imediatamente. O corpo exterior está unificado e enformado por categorias cognitivas, éticas e estéticas, por um conjunto de elementos visuais externos e táteis que nele são valores plásticos e picturais. Minhas reações volitivo-emocionais ao corpo exterior do outro são imediatas, e só em relação ao outro que vivencio imediatamente a *beleza* do corpo humano, ou seja, esse corpo começa a viver para mim em um plano axiológico inteiramente diverso e inacessível à auto-sensação interior e à visão exterior fragmentária.

The body that experiments with its own volition and emotion in a discontinued way is different from the playful body, since the latter tries to counter fragmentation (which is socio-historical) by projecting unity not onto verbal discourse, but rather onto *itself* as an aesthetic process. To a certain extent, the grotesque body that Bakhtin identifies in Rabelais's Gargantua and Pantagruel – two giants whose mouths can house whole villages – is possibly the closest to what the playful body is, despite the fact that it still uses anthropomorphic categories to delimit what the body is and what it isn't: womb, penis, etc.

Having briefly analysed both the authors who, to my understanding, have shaped the debate about dialogue in Brazilian (Critical) Applied Linguistics and other correlated areas, I come to the conclusion that Freire's and Bakhtin's overemphasis of the *logos*, proposing a body that is cropped by dominating principles of verbal action, is a product of their respective research agendas. Despite that fact, I am critical of the position assumed by a portion of Brazilian readers who fail to question the limitations of Freirean and Bakhtinian concepts that may ultimately lead to a impoverishment of the analytical apparatus used to examine language, due to the obliteration of categories that help to make the embodiment of communication (more) visible.

By trying to mark the contours of the concept of dialogue as it is used in Brazil in the academic contexts that I have indicated, I want to argue that, even when research – whether or not inspired by ideas such as those in Lopes (2006) – is openly defying colonial restrictions of social

roles, the hypothesis of an unintentional, incidental corroboration of the restrictions of manner and intent cannot be discarded. I consider that this is a relevant issue to take into account, especially if dialogue is construed as a means to promote a kind of rehabilitation towards a substantively and aprioristically defined, morally superior state of affairs, rather than to restore memory's and imagination's plasticity – in which case dialogue would repel play, operating in favour of the interests of coloniality by being a driving force of attack of embodiment in its spontaneous dimension.

In short, it is my view that even the more 'progressive' academics fall into the colonial trap of seeking ideal conditions for dialogue to take place in a certain manner (i.e., intelligible verbal language) and with a certain intent (i.e., finding a 'common parlance' by validation/verification or disaccreditation of meanings as informational units), thus dismissing communication as possible in cases where ideas and senses arise that are constructed in language-outside-words. As such, those ideal conditions translate into conditions of monolingual/monocultural self-reference, or self-protective circularity.

I will mention four instances when academic monolingualism/monoculturalism sustained by dialogical learning struck me, even before writing this thesis. Between 2014 and 2017, I proposed workshops to specialised audiences in Higher Education contexts about transdisciplinarity and meaning-making. For a variety of reasons – but mostly due to my personal resistance to the current tendency of turning workshops (which to me entail a literal 'hands-on' approach to knowledge construction) into compressed lectures with an extended Q&A time –, I planned to invite the audience to a few semiotic experiments (using props), followed by an analysis of the changes in communicative patterns when physical objects are introduced into the 'conversation.' I conducted these workshops at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), the Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP), the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) and the World Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA).

At UFPR, about 30 people attended the workshop as part of an ongoing foreign language teacher education extension project, but the space where it was held (which followed the same model as every other classroom in the campus) prevented participants from moving around, since the furniture was composed basically of desks that were stuck to the ground in an auditorium-like layout.

At UFOP, another 20-30 people attended the workshop as part of an undergraduate lesson for the Letras course. The desks in the room could be shifted around, so the workshop ran smoothly as far as moving around and interacting with colleagues goes. Then, towards the end, when the participants and I were talking about what the experience had been like, a professor who had barely participated in the experiments said that the way we were drawing conclusions about linguistic theory from those experiments had a ‘cult-like’ feel to it.

At UFAM and AILA combined, no more than 6 people attended. In both cases, I distinctly remember the compliments I received from the assistants/monitors assigned to the workshop, who were curious to know more about the kind of ‘unusual programme’ I would be going over that day, using props.

Because of experiences such as these, and considering the points I presented above about Freire and Bakhtin, I choose to side with other researchers who, in my reading, had pondered that dialogue may not be so much of a viable a *modus operandi* for the purposes of decolonisation. One such researcher is Veronelli (2016, p. 411), according to whom

[d]ialogue is indeed a heavy-duty word; maybe at some point we will need to drop it, maybe it is too loaded with colonization and racialization. [...] [D]ecoloniality calls for a decentralization of logos because the reverberations throughout the colonial difference are less cognitive than emotive.

Echoes of those ideas are also found in a recent article by Souza and Duboc (2021, pp. 883-4), who argue that

[t]hinking communication otherwise involves going beyond a focus on dialogue and problematizing universal presuppositions about interlocutors in a dialogue, such as, they are equal and equally human, and that the language of the dialogue is complete, neutral, transparent and nonconflictual.

When I read what those academics are saying, I find myself feeling/thinking that because the three restrictions sustaining the essentialisation of the locus of enunciation (i.e., social role, manner and intent) work cohesively as a single structure, even if one of them is weakened by an amplification of dialogue (such as the one defended by the two social media accounts that I mentioned at the introduction of this thesis, or even *Por uma Linguística Aplicada Indisciplinar*, for that matter), the other two remaining restrictions will continue to feed modernity/coloniality all the same.

In other words, I come to the conclusion that bringing more people to participate in academic dialogue and (un)learn together may not actually be useful, if the logic behind practices such as peer review (among others) is not attacked at its structural level in a way that changes the terms of the conversation. As I understand it, that is a crucial move towards estranging science from ‘negativity as subtraction,’ which is explained by Barad (2012, p. 49):

Critique is all too often not a *deconstructive* practice, that is, a practice of reading for the constitutive exclusions of those ideas we can not do without, but a *destructive* practice meant to dismiss, to turn aside, to put someone or something down — another scholar, another feminist, a discipline, an approach, et cetera. So this is a practice of negativity that I think is about subtraction. (Emphasis mine)

In sum, then, is dialogue to be replaced by something else? Well, that would be impossible. The Pedagogy of Gestures is but a way to carry out and think about research-writing-learning that goes beyond dialogue, which does not in any way mean dialogue is suspended altogether. What does actually happen to it, quite incidentally, is a reassessment of its status as a trustworthy *modus operandi* for social change, which puts to the test the multiple presuppositions (scattered throughout Freire’s and Bakhtin’s work) about what kind of communicative interaction can qualify as dialogical. That happens as a result – among other factors – of venturing into discussions about ineffability and languages-outside-words in academic settings.

Therefore, the Pedagogy of Gestures does not challenge dialogue in and of itself, *nor* does it attempt to save it. Rather, it is interested in fertilising communication with utterances that provoke learning over and across the ‘fences’ of dialogically marked territorial units. The reason why the Pedagogy of Gestures is able to do so comes from its internal economy as a product of **aesthetical (rather than representative) principles** applied to communication. Let me now expand on that.

Initially, I would like to present the notion that aesthetics refers to ‘shape’ (or the qualities) of the relation between Self and the world, and between things themselves:

It is like a slim thread or aspiration to quality that makes us choose one word over another, the same for a colour or a shade, a certain piece of music, a mathematical formula or the taste of a food. (VECCHI, 2010, p. 5)

Because communication is composed by a mix of rationality, imagination, emotion (VECCHI, *op. cit.*, p. 6), in the realm of aesthetic experience no indifference is possible, for there is never an absence of participation and/or feeling in terms of *aisthesis*.

According to Rancière (2011, p. x), the term *aisthesis*

[...] has designated the mode of experience according to which, for two centuries, we perceive very diverse things, whether in their techniques of production or their destination, as all belonging to art. This is not a matter of the ‘reception’ of works of art. Rather, it concerns the sensible fabric of experience within which they are produced. These are entirely material conditions – performance and exhibition spaces, forms of circulation and reproduction – but also modes of perception and regimes of emotion, categories that identify them, thought patterns that categorize and interpret them. These conditions make it possible for words, shapes, movements and rhythms to be felt and thought as art.

As such, *aisthesis* can be understood as the modes of perception and regimes of emotion that allow for aesthetical interpretation and categorisation of the world. Before the existence of *art* as a notion designating a form of specific experience (which has only appeared in the West at the end of the eighteenth century), all forms of aesthetic activity already existed, however, they were practised by individuals from

different social groups, thus creating such distinctions as the one between liberal arts – taken up by ‘men of leisure’ – and mechanical arts – which were meant for artisans and slaves (RANCIÈRE, *op. cit.*, p. ix).

In this sense, aisthesis is also marked by politics inasmuch as aesthetic appreciation is constituted with respect to the relative socio-economic value of the aesthetic activity itself and its author’s position in the division of labour. Regarding this tensions between activity and author, Rancière (2005b, p. 2) argues:

[...] [A atividade estética] não é política antes de tudo pelas mensagens que ela transmite nem pela maneira como representa as estruturas sociais, os conflitos políticos ou as identidades sociais, étnicas ou sexuais. Ela é política antes de mais nada pela maneira como configura um senso comum espaço-temporal que determi- na maneiras do estar junto ou separado, fora ou dentro, face a ou no meio de... Ela é política enquanto recorta um determinado espaço ou um determinado tempo, enquanto os objectos com os quais ela povoa este espaço ou o ritmo que ela confere a esse tempo determinam uma forma de experiência específica, em conformidade ou em ruptura com outras: uma forma específica de visibilidade, uma modificação das relações entre formas sensíveis e regimes de significação, velocidades específicas, mas também e antes de mais nada, formas de reunião ou de solidão. Porque a política, bem antes de ser o exercício de um poder ou uma luta pelo poder, é o recorte de um espaço específico de ‘ocupações comuns’; é o conflito para determinar os objectos que fazem ou não parte dessas ocupações, os sujeitos que participam ou não delas, etc. Se a [atividade estética] é política, ela o é enquanto os espaços e os tempos que ela recorta, e as formas de ocupação desses tempos e espaços que ela determina interferem com o recorte dos espaços e dos tempos, dos sujeitos e dos objectos, do privado e do público, das competências e das incompetências, que define uma comunidade política.

As far as knowledge production and circulation are concerned, the universalism of Western rationality dissociated itself from both aesthetic activities and aisthesis, since they were associated with irrationality (VIETTA, 2015, p. 475). Consequently, an overemphasis was placed on what has been called the *representative order*, that is, a way to govern communication that presupposes a hierarchical relation of causality between ideas and language:

The aesthetic paradigm was constructed against the representative order, which defined dis- course as a body with well-articulated parts, the poem as a plot, and a plot as an order of actions. This order clearly situated the poem – and the artistic productions for which it functioned as a norm – on a hierarchical model: a well-ordered body where the upper part commands the lower, the privilege of action, that is to say of the free man, capable of acting according to ends, over the repetitive lives of men without quality. The aesthetic revolution developed as an unending break with the hierarchical model of the body, the story, and action. (RANCIÈRE, 2011, p. xiv)

In other words, the representative order presupposes a direct linearity and complete equivalence between what is meant in a given context and what is expressed materially in an utterance.

The representative order – gatekeeper of ‘neutral’ rationality – does not take perception into account, since perception is always accompanied by emotion, and emotion is always attached to pre-existing perceptive images that may not have a clear ‘outline,’ but are always associated with the social imaginaries that take part in the configuration of emotional response:

Como seres humanos, percebemos o mundo *em primeiro lugar* aistética e não racionalmente. Um bebê encontra o peito como fonte de sucção prazerosa e de alimento mediante o apalpar e o degustar, e não mediante cálculo racional. A primeira orientação no espaço também acontece mediante os sentidos do paladar, do tato, da visão e da audição, não mediante o pensamento abstrato. [...] Assim sendo, à aistética no sentido da genética humana cabe o primado sobre a racionalidade. (VIETTA, 2015, p. 476, emphasis original)

If emotional response plays a role in communication, meanings are not reducible to discrete informational units and because affects ravish the body as a whole, involving even the sensibilities that Self might not be very – if at all – literate in, aesthetics is not in direct correlation with understanding taken as the rational ordering of signs (PIGNATARI, 1973, p. 159).

In the paradigm of an *aesthetic order* of communication, then, bodies can act in suspension from the opposition between activeness and passiveness that is latent in terms that are applied to the representative order, such as ‘emitter’ and ‘receiver’ (RANCIÈRE, 2011).

This is consistent with an idea of meanings as atmospheres, rather than statements, which is a notion that has been explained in greater detail by Guattari (2009, p. 283):

The whole evolution of systems of enunciation tends toward the individuation of enunciation and toward the degeneration of collective arrangements of enunciation. In other words, one moves toward a situation where the entirety of complex systems of expression – as in dance, tattoo, mime, etc – is abandoned for an individuation that implies the position of a speaker and an auditor, such that the only thing that remains of a communication is the transmission of information in quantified “bits.” Yet, in another arrangement, the essence of communion is a

communication of *desire*. A child who plays, or a lover who courts someone, does not transmit information, he creates a richly expressive situation in which a whole series of semiotic components are involved. (Emphasis original)

As such, in an aesthetic perspective, the study of communicative acts and communication systems requires the analyst to look at the different languages and **modes of semiotisation** that are present in a given situation, as Guattari again suggests (*ibid.*, p. 279):

What I call *semiotization* is what happens with perception with movement in space, with singing, dancing, mimicry, caressing, contact, everything that concerns the body. All these modes of semiotization are being reduced to the dominant language, the language of power that coordinates its syntactic with speech production in its totality.

In contrast to what Guattari is saying in the above quote, I consider that the duo gestures/contact and other such meta-theoretical devices, particularly those attained through play, resist the hegemony of verbal language, since:

- a) aisthesis interferes in rational processes and the whole operation of the brain during semiotisation and enunciation, insofar as, according to Damasio (1994, p. 128),

there is evidence that *longevity*, a likely *reflection of the quality of reasoning*, is correlated not only with increased size of the neocortex, as expected, but also with increased size of the hypothalamus, the main compartment of the downstairs. The apparatus of rationality, traditionally presumed to be neocortical, does not seem to work without that of biological regulation, traditionally presumed to be subcortical. Nature appears to have built the apparatus of rationality not just on top of the apparatus of biological regulation, but also *from* it and *with* it. The mechanisms for behavior beyond drives and instincts use [...] both the upstairs and the downstairs: the neocortex becomes engaged along with the older brain core, and rationality results from *their concerted activity* (emphases mine);

- b) consciousness is heteroglossic, as implied in Damasio's (2000, p. 243-244) considerations elsewhere:

[É] improvável que a consciência dependa dos *caprichos da tradução verbal* e do nível imprevisível de atenção focalizada que prestamos a essa tradução. Se a consciência dependesse de traduções verbais para sua existência, provavelmente possuiríamos tipos variáveis de consciência, *alguns dignos de confiança, outros não*; vários níveis e intensidades de consciência, *alguns eficazes, outros não*; e, pior de tudo, teríamos *lapsos de consciência*. Mas não é isso o que acontece com seres humanos física e mentalmente sãos. (Emphases mine)

Following from these two points above, I conclude that, by sponsoring the domination of the representative order over various modes of semiotisation, coupled with the imprisonment of aisthesis as irrational, modernity/coloniality have forced Western(ised) societies into a state of debilitated consciousness, which leads to a decrease in the capacity to think in complex terms and, ultimately, survive beyond the here-and-now.

That capacity, as I understand it, can only be enacted by constructing a locus of enunciation that is multidimensionally defined in a dynamic relation between biology, cognition, affect, sociology, history, politics, culture and spirituality, which are fields of experience where communication can occur. This is something I have come to conclude based on Braidotti (2012, p. 33-34):

The body or the embodiment of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category, but rather as a point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological. I stress the issue of embodiment so as to make a plea for different ways of thinking about the body. The body refers to the materialist but also vitalist groundings of human subjectivity and to the specifically human capacity to be both grounded and to flow and thus to transcend the very variables—class, race, sex, gender, age, disability—which structure us. [...] A nomadic vision of the body defines it as multi-functional and complex, as a transformer of flows and energies, affects, desires and imaginings. From psychoanalysis I have learned to appreciate the advantages of the non-unitary structure of the subject and the joyful implication of the unconscious foundations of the subject. Complexity is the key term for understanding the multiple affective layers, the complex temporal variables and the internally contradictory time- and memory-lines that frame our embodied existence. In contrast with the oppositions created by dualistic modes of social constructivism, a nomadic body is a threshold of transformations. It is the complex interplay of the highly constructed social and symbolic forces. The body is a surface of intensities and an affective field in interaction with others. In other words, [...] emphasis on embodiment goes hand-in-hand with a radical rejection of essentialism.

In my reading, **essentialism** at the foundation of the representative order, undermining the complex mechanics of meaning that is implied in Guattari, Damasio or Braidotti. As I see it, there are two main forces that operate to that end: **mastery** and **drama**.

I am using the term ‘mastery’ in the context of a kind of power relations marked by hierarchical positions in which unequal degrees of mutual dependence define social roles, as proposed by Rancière (1991, pp. 5-6):

O que todas as crianças humanas aprendem melhor é o que nenhum mestre pode explicar: a língua materna. Falamos com eles e falamos à sua volta. Eles ouvem e retêm, imitam e repetem, cometem erros e corrigem-se, têm sucesso por acaso e começam de novo metodicamente; e, em uma idade muito jovem para que os explicadores comecem a instruí-los, eles são quase todos [...] capazes de entender e falar a língua de seus pais. É o explicador quem precisa do incapaz e não o contrário: é ele quem constitui o incapaz como tal.

In turn, I am using the term ‘drama’ in the same sense as previously stated in the introduction of this thesis. To make a quick recap, drama refers to a specific way in which logic is constructed, presupposing a series of acts that line up to form a narrative structure characterised by a conflict that reaches a climax and has a resolution (SCHECHNER, 2003, pp. 325-6).

Schechner (*ibid.*) defines *acts* as the basic physical units of scenic action. For the sake of decomposing behaviour on stage, he asserts that an act is a collection of routines, a routine is a collection of bits, a bit is a collection of gestures, and a gesture is a collection of movements. By holding ‘movement’ as the minimal discrete unit, Schechner situates aesthetic difference philosophically and operationally as the generator of scenic action, since the existence of movement can be detected if, and only if, variation in the disposition of bodies is perceived.

The issue with drama is that it ascribes bodies a pre-defined, naturalised range of behaviours that comply with the ritualised series of acts conflict-climax-resolution. As a consequence of this,

[diminuem-se] as chances de ambiguidade na comunicação quando uma longa série de padrões [de comportamento] independentemente variáveis se molda em uma sequência obrigatória (SCHECHNER, *ibid.*, p. 244).

With that in mind, I reckon it is worth noting that while the playful nature of the Pedagogy of Gestures aims at denaturalising communicative behaviour by giving due power to aisthesis, mastery and drama aid essentialism in reinforcing the representative order. I am not saying this to villify the representative order and drama in and of themselves, but to point out that their historical entanglement with mastery and essentialism has imposed deep social, cultural and political consequences for the present. As Said (1979, p. 67-68) argues:

One ought again to remember that all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge. The problem is not that conversion takes place. It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be. To the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always like some aspect of the West; to some of the German Romantics, for example, Indian religion was essentially an Oriental version of Germano-Christian pantheism. Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture, in some cases for what he believes is the sake of the Oriental. This process of conversion is a disciplined one: it is taught, it has its own societies, periodicals, traditions, vocabulary, rhetoric, all in basic ways connected to and supplied by the prevailing cultural and political norms of the West.

The Pedagogy of Gestures is, after all, a decolonial rhetorical incursion into the realm of academic language, which aspires to make visible the concealment of play by accounting for some of the communicative-political limitations imposed by modern lexical, syntactic and semantic models. In doing so, the Pedagogy of Gestures is a *modus operandi* that:

- a) addresses the issue of atmospheres of meaning as significant to the analysis of communication, thus inducing Applied Linguistics (as well as other areas where linguistic studies are conducted with a special focus on the relation between language learning and politics) towards a more agonistic perspective. As explained by Mouffe (2013, p. 6),

[...] in order to understand the nature of democratic politics and the challenge that it faces, we needed an alternative to the two main approaches in democratic political theory. One of those approaches, the aggregative model, sees political actors as being moved by the pursuit of their interests. The other model, the deliberative one, stresses the role of reason and moral considerations. What both of these models leave aside is the centrality of collective identities and the crucial role played by affects in their constitution. [...] The agonistic model of democracy aims to tackle all the issues that cannot be properly addressed by the other two models [...]

- b) addresses the issue of academic necropolitics exercised by the naturalisation of communicative practices within universities and other spaces where scientific research is conducted. As defined by Mbembe (2017, p. 107-108), necropolitics has to do with the power and

capacity to dictate who can and who cannot live:

[M]atar ou deixar de viver constituem os limites da soberania, as suas características fundamentais. Exercer a soberania é exercer o controlo sobre a mortalidade e definir a vida como uma realização e manifestação do poder. [...] A guerra, portanto, não constitui apenas um meio para obter a soberania, mas também um modo de exercer o direito de matar. Se imaginarmos a política como uma forma de guerra, devemos interrogar-nos: qual é o lugar reservado à vida, à morte e ao corpo humano (em particular, ao corpo ferido ou assassinado)? Que lugar ocupam dentro da ordem do poder?

In my reading of these two authors combined, I understand that agonism introduces a form of relationality based on forever coping with difference and conflict, rather than using homogenising oppositions to forge consensus (which, in turn, is how *antagonism* operates). In this sense, because affects are conceived of as a driving force of the political field, societal issues implied in communication cannot be seen simply through the lenses of rationality and/or individuality (i.e., the representative order), which would reinforce modern/colonial categories that sustain necropolitics through hegemonic academic literacy models.

Without trying to supersede strategic approaches such as the one adopted by Stein *et al.* (2020), who use the dominant language to articulate decolonial arguments in a manner that makes them intelligible to dominant scholarly discourses and institutions in Western(ised) audiences, the Pedagogy of Gestures seeks to operate through grammatical structures that motivate a kind of aesthetical/social revolution within academic settings, however, being wary of the naivety that is often implicated in the term ‘revolution.’

In this sense, departing from Rancière’s (2011, p. xvi) idea that ‘[s]ocial revolution is the daughter of the aesthetic revolution,’ I am reminded that the existence of a revolutionary consciousness, according to Guattari (2009, p. 208), ‘is a mystification if it is not situated within a “revolutionary body,” that is to say, within a body that produces its own liberation.’ My interpretation of these combined quotes, then, is that the materialisation of agonism and the resistance against necropolitics nourished by the Pedagogy of Gestures depends, first and foremost, on the constant attempt to ‘shake (both dominant and dominated) bodies out of inertia,’ removing them from the lethargic disposition instilled by the representative order.

As stated by Nascimento (2021, p. 67):

[É] preciso **trazer o corpo de volta**, [o que] não se dará sem **marcar o não-marcado** [...] Isto é, sem marcar o **lôcus de enunciação** que permanece pressuposto, mas que deve passar ao mundo do posto. [...] [M]arcar o não-marcado é forçar ao corpo [moderno/colonial] sempre assumir suas limitações epistêmicas que podem comprometer uma dada análise do texto. (Emphases original)

In the Pedagogy of Gestures, such epistemic limitations do not appear in a void, but instead can be outlined by questioning the roles and relative communicative-political power of a variety of actors (whether or not they are human, whether or not they are alive) who co-participate and, through their perceived public gestures, have different degrees of (un)intelligible influence over different stages of the semiotic process. This constitutes what I would like to call a longitudinal analysis of the **division of semiotic labour** in an academic text.

For this reason, I repeat my claim that the Pedagogy of Gestures promotes a ‘sideways’ movement across audiences, which amounts to a kind of necessary paradox of decoloniality in that it academically marks, in close exchange with non-academic communities, the emergence of grammars and textualities that instigate an assessment of the qualities of scientific communication-politics throughout different social settings. That kind of assessment, I believe, may as well serve the purposes of decoloniality in that it is a step towards **de-sacralising scientific discourse** by de-universalising the presuppositions that it is omnipotent. As Couto (2016, p. 5) argues:

O que se passa na narrativa literária acontece na narrativa científica. Espera-se da ciência a confirmação de um cosmos ordenado e possível de ser controlado. Sabemos que, no fundo, essa ideia corresponde a uma ficção. Mas preferimos essa mentira, porque ela reitera a ideia de que somos o centro do Universo. Foi por isso que os resultados do mapeamento genético provocaram uma espécie de desilusão perante expectativas geradas por uma imprensa que precisa anunciar milagres (desde que cientificamente “caucionados”). Criou-se a ideia de que os geneticistas encontrariam no mapeamento genético a solução para a doença. Estávamos na véspera da fórmula da eternidade. Essa esperança servia bem às forças do mercado. Mas não podia senão ser uma aposta efêmera e ilusória. Afinal, depois de tantos anos e tanto investimento há ainda algo de contingente que nos escapa. Essas vicissitudes são as conexões aleatórias, os diálogos entre os componentes vitais, os genes, as proteínas, as células e o meio ambiente. Na narrativa científica como na escrita literária há, de fato, algo em comum: ambos tocam algo que ainda não tem nome, algo que se oculta, fúgado e fugidio, num território de enigma e mistério.

Therefore, I consider the Pedagogy of Gestures to be a combination of research-writing-learning efforts that produces a theoretical device capable of expanding the scientific meta-critical apparatus at the level of the academic text itself, in turn enhancing the ability to work on multiple fronts with a decolonial perspective, since it deals with the ethical and technical issue of **ineffability** (resulting from an increased mobility in the realm of ontological categories) that presents itself, when multiple knowledge paradigms encounter with one another.

2.2.3 The road into textual synchronicity and translation issues

Back to the problem of naivety and its pitfalls when an aesthetic revolution (such as the one stimulated by the Pedagogy of Gestures) is assumed, a carefully conducted analysis of the division of semiotic labour is a relevant attitude in order to establish, through a process of intercultural translation, points of contact – in the sense I have previously outlined – that may lead to a degree of momentary synchronicity between the actors involved in a given communicative-political situation.

Intercultural translation is defined by Santos, B. S. (2018, p. 69) as:

uma ferramenta usada para, a partir do reconhecimento da diferença, promover consensos sólidos suficientes que permitam partilhar lutas e riscos. [...] Por essa razão, a tradução intercultural também não é uma actividade excessivamente individualizada, na construção da resistência e das lutas sociais. É uma dimensão do trabalho cognitivo colectivo sempre que estão presentes ecologias de saberes, trocas de experiências, avaliação de lutas (próprias e alheias), escrutínio do conhecimento que os grupos sociais dominantes mobilizam para isolar ou desarmar os oprimidos.

Among the main objectives of intercultural translation, Santos, B. S. (2010, pp. 354-355) highlights the following:

Perceber que cada ponto de vista traz consigo suas próprias deficiências faz parte integrante do movimento na direcção da “multiplicidade da realidade” porque nos leva a entender que não existe um ponto de vista que seja completo nem isento de falhas. É evidente que isso não é sinónimo de relativismo ou ecletismo. [...] Trata-se [...] [de criar] um distanciamento relativamente ao nosso próprio ponto de vista a fim de avaliar a sua relação, de competição ou cooperação, com outros pontos de vista.

The need for constant re-analysis of the division of semiotic labour, which is present in the Pedagogy of Gestures due to the ephemerality and complexity of gestures, requires contact – in the sense I have previously outlined –, for it is an effective way to approach translation by stepping out of the agitation of paranoia and dealing with

the need to know what one does not know. Translation, like the knowledges interconnected horizontally in an ecology, rather than signifying a total transference of meaning, implies incompleteness and ignorance and the need to overcome both; translation refers also to the fact that overcoming both of these in order to attain the desire of completeness, is beyond realization. However, these difficulties in translation do not indicate incommensurability; they do indicate the need for constant exchange and for the persistence in the continuous work of translation. (SOUZA, 2019, p. 19)

In the Pedagogy of Gestures, incompleteness and ignorance are addressed through the previously mentioned idea of the ‘hundredness’ of communication (MALAGUZZI, 2012), materialised in what Proudhon (2007) calls the **polytechnicity of language**, or I would call the embrace of both a ‘wordly world’ and ‘languages-outside-words’ as possible transdisciplinary approach to the development of research textualities.

According to Nicolescu (2015, pp. 93-94), transdisciplinarity is founded upon the assumption that there are different levels of reality, each of which corresponds to a specific arrangement of ontological axioms that define subjectivity and objectivity. Each level exists the way it exists in simultaneity and in relation to the other existing levels. It is my view that the acceptance of transdisciplinarity is an important meta-theoretical move in line with intercultural translation, since

[t]he introduction of the levels of reality induces a multidimensional and multi-referential structure of reality. Both the notions of the real and of levels of reality relate to what is considered to be the natural and the social and is therefore applicable to the study of nature and society [...]. Every level is characterized by its incompleteness: The laws governing this level are just a part of the totality of laws governing all levels. And even the totality of laws does not exhaust the entirety of reality: we have also to consider the subject and its interaction with the object. Knowledge is forever open. The zone between two different levels and beyond all levels is a zone of non-resistance to our experiences, representations, descriptions, images, and mathematical formulations. (NICOLESCU, *ibid.*)

The Pedagogy of Gestures aims at exploring the zone of non-resistance as far as possible, trying to discursively make visible and jump between the different levels of reality. This can be useful to decoloniality, since it emphasises difference in a perspective of care for the ineffable and a search for semiotic mobility, sustained by a desire for contact and synchronicity. In this sense, Souza (2007, p. 166) argues:

[W]hy the colonial strategy of eliminating difference has not fully worked? The answer lies in the very concept of difference (or identity). From the Eurocentric colonial perspective, difference or identity is seen statically as a substance, a set of values, beliefs or contents, or as a point of arrival in which one may supposedly, finally and victoriously proclaim the elimination of difference or the imposition of identity. From the indigenous perspective, however, identity or difference are relationships and processes, spaces to be constantly filled and not substances or contents.

Therefore, it is my view that **transdisciplinary textualities** are valuable to processes of research-writing-learning that aim to escape from the reduction of knowledge ‘to limiting and exclusionary syntheses, with a perennial return to dualistic categories’ (GUATTARI, 2009, p. 64), in an attempt to describe the undecidable, explain the unexplainable and argue about the unarguable.

These textualities require a kind of logical ‘collapse,’ since they are founded upon a driving force that breaks through well-established categorical distinctions, which results in a seemingly ‘mad’ condition of the knowing (or researching, or writing, or learning) subject:

[I]n this phenomenon crudely referred to as madness there are two things: a breaking through, which is to say a sudden light, a wall that is superseded; and the there’s a rather different dimension which could be called a collapse. [...] But breaking through a wall is very, very difficult, and if it’s done too brutally then you crumble, you fall, you collapse. [...] [It is] the arrival of something which is not even expressible, something which is so formidable that it can only be spoken of with difficulty, because it is something repressed in our societies – and therefore it comes close to coinciding with [...] a collapse. (GUATTARI, *ibid.*, p. 65)

As I understand it, this is a collapse that takes place at the edge of academic literacy, reconfirming – due to the need for embodied semiotic experimentation that is, in my views, present in intercultural translation – what Souza, Martinez and Figueiredo (2019, pp. 17-18) claim:

[A] transdisciplinaridade requer outra epistemologia; uma outra forma de pensar sobre esses conhecimentos, não bastando apenas transitar entre eles. Isso implica ressignificar a construção das fronteiras epistemológicas que conhecemos tradicionalmente. [...] é uma questão também de *ontologias* que geram epistemologias. [...] [N]ão se trata de “epistemologia” no sentido da filosofia, que é uma racionalidade abstrata pensada, sistematizada. [...] “[E]pistemologias” [...] se refere a uma maneira de pensar que surge a partir de uma determinada *vivência*. Então, é uma maneira de pensar, que começa no corpo, e que não se limita à racionalidade abstrata moderna, onde há separação de mente e corpo. O raciocínio é “penso de uma determinada forma seguindo não apenas uma suposta racionalidade, mas devido às minhas vivências”; essas vivências incluem também uma dimensão invisível, como no caso da “espiritualidade” ou “misticismo” [...] A moralidade, a sexualidade, a vivência biográfica, a espiritualidade fazem parte de quem você é e como você pensa; longe de ser algo individual, é coletivo. [...] Esse conceito [...] diz respeito a diferentes conhecimentos, saberes estarem interligados. Eles podem ser cúmplices uns dos outros em alguns aspectos e podem ser inimigos uns dos outros em outros aspectos. E essa relação complexa é uma ecologia. Dentro de uma ecologia, você pode ter a parasita, o vírus, e também aquele elemento que gera vida. Os aspectos negativos são tão importantes para uma ecologia quanto os positivos.

In this sense, I align myself with Pasquali (2013, p. 36), who argues that ‘a new language’ must be invented to speak in terms of the entanglement of things that constitutes atmospheres of meaning. I do not, however, consider that Pasquali is advocating for *one* language that will do the trick; rather, I understand the ‘new language’ to refer to new ways of communicating, which is something that the Pedagogy of Gestures also aims to do by promoting an encounter between languages where ‘neither one becomes the other, nor do they maintain their previous, respective state of being’ (PASQUALI, *ibid.*, p. 22).

Now, regarding the onto-epistemology of this ‘new language,’ there is one point in Souza, Martinez and Figueiredo’s excerpt above that strikes me as fundamental: the critique to the individualism upon which modern rationality is erected.

As previously seen in this thesis, play defies colonial behaviour patterns as it fuels a de-stagnation of those identities that serve the purposes of a neoliberal economy. For this reason, in a perspective of playful rhetoric such as the one upheld by the Pedagogy of Gestures, communication becomes a complex phenomenon to analyse, since it works as the arena where multiple categories governing social and aesthetic activity overlap. These categories tend to relate to one another in terms of oppositional distinctions created by modernity/coloniality and accentuated by neoliberalism. Here are some examples: researcher/researched; writer/reader; demonstrator/spectator; explicator/learner.

Nevertheless, in the theoretical perspective I have been developing in this thesis, play and transdisciplinarity provoke a cross-section of the above mentioned distinctions, thrusting the involved categories onto a shared plane of existence (i.e., fostering coplanarity and

contemporaneity). What happens to these categories, then, is not properly a merging, but rather a collapse that allows for increased freedom of participation in social and aesthetic activities that a given actor was not trusted to fully undertake or even contribute with.

That is why I have been using the term research-writing-learning throughout this chapter. In other words, the Pedagogy of Gestures instigates a way of communicating that assumes texts *not* as mere aprioristically genre-oriented receptacles where research that has already been concluded is formatted (i.e., a ‘bearer’ of research as content), but instead as a structuring element of the research process (i.e., a landscape where research as event is housed, in the sense I have previously outlined – that is, as a period of onto-epistemological openness where timid, superficial and inconsequential gestures may change the political dispositions of individuals, communities and entire societies). Thus, the process of doing research, writing and learning overlap.

But even so – still as I try to ward off the naivety of revolutionary discourses – a few questions remain that can be asked with regard to modern individualism and the neoliberal academic publishing industry: who is effectively doing research, and receiving credit for it, and making use of it, and what kind of use is that? Who is allowed to do the writing, and under what circumstances, and in what manner? To whom is the learning thought to serve, and what is it for?

Some approaches to theory-building (or, research-writing-learning) have to a certain extent addressed these questions before my formulation of the Pedagogy of Gestures, as is the case with Autoethnography.

According to Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011, para. 5),

[...] autoethnography combines characteristics of *autobiography* and *ethnography*. When writing an *autobiography*, an author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences. Usually, the author does not live through these experiences solely to make them part of a published document; rather, these experiences are assembled using hindsight [...] In writing, the author also may interview others as well as consult with texts like photographs, journals, and recordings to help with recall [...]

The meaning and centrality of *writing* for Autoethnography are clarified by the same authors a few paragraphs ahead in their text:

Writing is a way of knowing, a method of inquiry [...] Consequently, writing personal stories can be therapeutic for authors as we write to make sense of ourselves and our experiences [...], purge our burdens [...], and question canonical stories—conventional, authoritative, and "projective" storylines that "plot" how "ideal social selves" should live [...] In so doing, we seek to improve and better understand our relationships [...], reduce prejudice [...], encourage personal responsibility and agency [...], raise consciousness and promote cultural change [...], and give people a voice that, before writing, they may not have felt they had. (ELLIS; ADAMS; BOCHNER, *ibid.*, para. 25)

Procedurally, in order to carry out these objectives, the autoethnographer

[...] enters those strange and familiar situations that connect critical biographical experiences (epiphanies) with culture, history, and social structure. He or she seeks out those narratives and stories people tell one another as they attempt to make sense of the epiphanies, or existential turning-point moments, in their lives. Epiphanies are experienced as social dramas, as dramatic events with beginnings, middles, and endings. (DENZIN, 2018, p. 34)

In this sense, I understand that Autoethnography aims to perform in/through written communication a range of very specific, counter-hegemonic tasks related to the political dimension of public speech:

[Public speech] both perpetrate[s] and solidifie[s] power relations, as well as the valorization of a bourgeois decorum based on vocal qualities, gestures of gentility, social class, gender hierarchies, and the color of one's skin. [...] [It is] a site of hierarchical knowledge, value, and bodies marked by whiteness, maleness, and homogeneity that consolidated and celebrated these identities and affiliations. But, it [is] also a site of liberating expression and a contested space — a site where troubled identities [can] claim their power and strengthen their hope, [...] where audience and speaker [are] changing and changed by the urgent issues of the time and the compelling need to speak and witness. (MADISON; HAMERA, 2006, pp. xiii-xiv)

With that in mind, let me now highlight a few crucial differences between Autoethnography and the Pedagogy of Gestures:

- a) Like Autoethnography, the Pedagogy of Gestures also considers writing as a way of knowing, but it deems language as *opaque*, thus requiring a combination of intercultural translation, 'hundredness' and a breach of dramatic logic;

- b) Like Autoethnography, the Pedagogy of Gestures also works with memory, but it does not take memory as a *given* that may be restored, thus putting at the centre of its research agenda the interrogation of colonial memory and imaginaries through the actuation of brain plasticity by a combination of a 'wordly world' and 'language-outside-words';
- c) While Autoethnography focuses firmly on the achievement of social justice through the possibility to speak publicly that is given to certain excluded bodies (thus using academic literacy as a vehicle to make visible different kinds of oppression), the Pedagogy of Gestures has its main aims to work on the denaturalisation of meta-critical categories (that is, questioning the very definition of an academic language as such and promoting changes to it as a direct goal of research, and not as a by-product);
- d) While Autoethnography is centered around experiences that were not part of a subject's life with the end goal of being published as an academic work, the Pedagogy of Gestures relies on semiotic experimentation precisely *for the sake of* publication, considering the imbrication of research-writing-learning; While autoethnography thinks in hindsight to organise epiphanies, the Pedagogy of Gestures may also at times think in hindsight, however, without forming dramatically-oriented narratives;
- e) While Autoethnography is centered around experiences that were not part of a subject's life with the end goal of being published as an academic work, the Pedagogy of Gestures relies on semiotic experimentation precisely *for the sake of* publication, considering the imbrication of research-writing-learning;
- f) While Autoethnography has a constant commitment to producing cultural analysis that is grounded upon a single, embodied plane of existence, the Pedagogy of Gestures accepts hallucination and the momentary refusal of a single embodied truth, in order to enter a domain of cross-cut, unified transdisciplinary coplanarity and contemporaneity.

I did not present these differences to suggest that Autoethnography and the Pedagogy of Gestures are polar opposites, but instead to account for the different short-term goals of either way of conducting research.

I would even go so far as to say that, due to the similarities within the differences, the work of the Pedagogy of Gestures is somewhat autoethnographical – or, as I would prefer to call it, *essayistic*. According to Berardinelli (2011, p. 26-28),

[...] o ensaísta pode se exprimir alternadamente de maneira idiossincrática ou anárquica, ou tecendo estratégias intelectuais inspiradas por uma “missão” pública, pela responsabilidade pedagógica e civil. O ensaio é acima de tudo o gênero literário do pensamento crítico e antidogmático. [Sua] forma híbrida e mista [...] é particularmente adequada à descoberta de novos campos de pesquisa.

In this sense, what I consider that the Pedagogy of Gestures seeks – through play and transdisciplinarity – is to be in constant movement between the idiosyncratic and the anarchical, or between different levels of reality, not sticking to a single diction such as the overly collective one in traditional ethnographic works, or the overly individualistic one that might transpire in autoethnographical works that are not concerned with decoloniality and intercultural translation.

As a decolonial meta-critical effort displaying the above mentioned features, the Pedagogy of Gestures may lead to two relevant outputs: a) a more balanced power distribution between the impetus of a sociology of absences and the impetus of a sociology of emergences in academic discourse; and b) a dispossession of the modern/colonial scientific *status quo*.

According to Santos, B. S. (2018, p. 61),

[o] objeto primordial tanto da sociologia das ausências como da sociologia das emergências são as exclusões abissais e a resistência e lutas a que dão origem. Contudo, enquanto a sociologia das ausências se dedica à negatividade dessas exclusões, no sentido em que sublinha e denuncia a supressão da realidade social gerada pelo tipo de conhecimento validado pelas epistemologias do Norte, a sociologia das emergências dedica-se à positividade dessas exclusões, considerando as vítimas de exclusão no processo de rejeição da condição de vítimas, tornando-se pessoas resistentes que praticam formas de ser e de conhecer na sua luta contra a dominação.

On the other hand, with regard to dispossessions, Safatle (2015, p. 76) defines them as a phenomenon whereby the self-conscious narrative is suspended, changing the notions of autonomy and control, as well as exposing

[...] minha vulnerabilidade estrutural aos encontros, assim como a opacidade a mim mesmo daquilo que me leva a vincular-me a outros que me despossuem e me descontrolam. (SAFATLE, *ibid.*)

Thus, it is my understanding that dispossessions fuel the awareness that something fundamental of a given level of reality always exists in another, and the logic and laws of one level cannot *control* or *anticipate* what will happen during the encounter with the other level.

By stimulating the dispossession of research-writing-learning, the Pedagogy of Gestures aspires to contribute to the promotion of politics *not* as the management of fear (through securitisation, e.g., scientific incastellation and vigilance over academic literacy), but as agonistic communicative encounters that diminish segregation, without eliminating difference. In this sense, Safatle (2015, p. 106) explains that

[segregações] permitem transformar a impossibilidade de o poder garantir a *segurança fantasmática* desejada em identificação de um elemento que, no interior da vida social, impediria a realização de tal garantia, quebrando a coesão social prometida e fornecendo uma representação localizada para o medo cuja mobilização permitirá a nossas sociedades se transformarem em “sociedades da segurança”. Esse elemento acaba por encarnar, por representar a impossibilidade de as demandas de amparo social serem realizadas e direcionadas a frustração. Ele será o objeto para o qual o medo social será dirigido. Na verdade, a dinâmica do político será reduzida à simples construção e gestão desse objeto de “fobia social”. *A política se transforma assim na gestão da fobia.* (Emphases original)

Consequently, the Pedagogy of Gestures entails a way of writing academically that is predicated on ontological (and not social or civil) vulnerability and insecurity, which can ultimately lead to political productivity (SAFATLE, *ibid*, pp. 75).

As I see it, achieving that political condition depends not only on a desacralisation of scientific discourse *as it is*, but also a **dehumanisation** of the grammatical structures governing intellectuality. By dehumanisation, I mean the identification, interrogation and interruption of deleterious, segregational social and aesthetical effects of an overprotection of Humanism and the self-referential, self-protective

‘circular’ ego, coupled with an overemphasis *either* of a sociology of absences *or* a sociology of emergences – which is, in my experience, something of a norm in Brazilian Applied Linguistics and other correlated areas.

Let me, nonetheless, point out that my notion of dehumanisation differs from others’ who have discussed its connections with (de)coloniality, such as Singh (2018).

Here are some of the main differences between my take on ‘dehumanisation’ and Singh’s:

- a) Although she claims that ‘there is an intimate link between the mastery enacted through colonisation and other forms of mastery that we often believe today to be harmless’ (SINGH, *ibid.*, p. 9), that is as far as she goes, thus conceiving of mastery without outlining any particular context where it is visible and, as a consequence, suggesting a homogenous phenomenon devoid of variability according to when and where it occurs. Conversely, I see mastery in light of contextualised power relations marked by hierarchical positions in which unequal degrees of mutual dependence define social roles;
- b) She posits that mastery has founded subjectivities that must be ‘exiled’ (*op. cit.*, p. 4), which – in my view – implies a hygienistic, moralistic attempt to purge undesirable differences. Meanwhile, my understanding is that those subjectivities are always embodied and multilayered, that is, their contours are not as easily apprehensible by modern individualistic analytical parameters;
- c) Her arguments suggest the underlying belief that it is possible for the knowing subject to become stripped away from its violent foundations, something achievable through rationally concocting a plan to ‘read against’ mastery (*ibid.*), which I see as a simplistic solution that is supposed to deal only with those colonial impulses that are visible in the lexicon, syntax and semantics of rational discourse, thus disregarding the invisible ones that tend to appear, for instance, when aisthesis is considered;
- d) Her book altogether ignores the ideas of Latin American decolonial thinkers, deriving her concept of mastery from anti- and post-colonial works alone.

My conclusion is that Singh proposes dehumanisation as a way to promote other humanities, or other ways of being human, but in the end she employs without questioning a theoretical apparatus that has been used since the Enlightenment to hegemonically narrow down the shapes and paths of a human life.

When I speak of dehumanisation, then, I have in mind a specific political stance displayed by professional intellectuals who, recognising their own privilege, seek to insert *themselves* in spaces of ontological (and not social or civil) vulnerability and insecurity where theory is built not exclusively in terms of statements, but also gestures whose inherent movement – when described analytically – enables the explanation and argumentation about the ineffable forces within a given atmosphere of meaning.

That is considerably different from the dehumanisation that is mentioned by Veronelli (2016, p. 414), when she discusses complex communication and deep coalitions:

Deep coalition requires complex communication in the sense that it asks not to speak the same resisting code, not to have a metanarrative of resistance, and thus is not necessarily based on being able to hear one another in a coherent manner [...] Nevertheless, the complex utterance might be identifiable as responding to a sign that the other is someone who is taking up a situation of dehumanization. Although there is no full recognition in complex communication, there is a sense of reading both ways and understanding what is read in such a way that keeps the focus on resistance. In this sense complex communication is both a transgression and a methodology that enables reading reality as multiple. In this way, as a tool to think about decolonial communication, complex communication enacts the fractured locus in ways that enable the speaker to communicate very differently, away and even against dehumanizing meanings made through the coloniality of power, language, and speech.

In Veronelli's excerpt above, 'dehumanisation' applies to those embodied subjects who were historically segregated and whose vulnerability was politically exploited, leading to actual social and civil insecurity.

Between those (implied in Veronelli's considerations) who are consistently dehumanised against their will and those (implied in mine) who make the choice to compromise and experience a degree of dehumanisation, I am particularly attracted to the point about deep coalitions as a tool that has the power to transgress the necessity for coherence, instead favouring the semiotic mutualism. This is in line with my discussion in

previous pages about the coplanarity/contemporaneity of physical manifestations (by which the ‘thing-ness’ of gestures is submitted to conflicting vectors of cultural appreciation), synchronicity within atmospheres of meaning and, finally, communication as research (that is, research-writing-learning).

It is my understanding, after all, that through deep coalitions the hegemony of scientific discourses – which was criticised by me a few pages back – can be challenged, thus attenuating the scenario to which Santos, B. S. (2010a, pp. 528-529) refers:

Os problemas existenciais foram [...] reduzidos ao que deles pudesse ser dito cientificamente, o que implicou uma dramática reconversão conceptual e analítica [...], [com] o constrangimento e o empobrecimento causado pela redução dos problemas a marcos analíticos e conceptuais que lhes são estranhos. [...] [A] hegemonia da ciência estendeu-se para além da ciência, submetendo a filosofia, a teologia e as humanidades em geral a um processo de cientifização [...] Em suma, respostas académicas para problemas académicos cada vez mais distantes e redutores de problemas existenciais que estavam na sua origem, cada vez mais irrelevantes para dar conta deles.

In this context, I judge ‘gestures’ as an important analytical category that enables the forging of a unifying cut across onto-epistemologies, if understood not only as a space of *mimesis of the existent*, but rather more productively as *semiotics of the desire to re-invent*, resisting the desire for an enemy, the desire for apartheid (separation and enclave), and the fantasy of extermination of dissimilitude, to borrow some of Mbembe’s (2017, p. 73) accurate terminology.

2.3 Closing remarks

In this chapter, by contrasting the methodologisation of academic writing (enacted by a restriction of semiotic resources associated with play) with the notion of ‘modus operandi,’ I have expanded on the notion that the former is fundamental for the repression of the political power residing in inventiveness, thus implying a desire to maintain historical privilege and diminish the impact that the knowledge held by subjects excluded from universities can have on scientific work.

I have also outlined the crucial features of the Pedagogy of Gestures as a way of writing academically, namely: the significance of physicality, atmospheres of meaning and synchronicity with translation.

In 'Part II' ahead, I present to the reader four episodes of data analysis, which I bring to the thesis as a way to thicken the theorisation I have developed so far, when I conclude 'Part I.' Let it be noted that 'Part II' is not simply a repetition of 'Part I' in different terms, but rather an fertility infusion that is supposed to make an initial theoretical substratum richer, as the reader goes about each of the four episodes written with the Pedagogy of Gestures in mind.

PART II

INTRODUCTION

A great many things interfere in research-writing-learning that are particularly difficult to *speak of*, let alone *about*, in Higher Education contexts in general and especially in the process of publishing of academic works. I have collected the data for this thesis by selecting four of these sources of interference to be treated with my Pedagogy of Gestures. They were: **friendships**, **welcomes**, **cries** and **departures**.

Each of these four sources of interference amounts to one full episode that is presented in this part of the thesis, and was analysed with respect to one effect among many that it may impress on the process of research-writing-learning. Those effects are: a sense of **impact**, a sense of **fusion**, a sense of **dimension** and a sense of **inertia**.

The names given to the effects derive from the atmospheres of meaning circumscribing embodied social interactions that result in each source of interference's being singularly experienced and subsequently analysed here. In this respect, a sense of impact, a sense of fusion, a sense of dimension and a sense of inertia are viewed as the aftermath (to be reckoned as 'findings') of research-writing-learning that was affected by friendships, welcomes, cries and departures, respectively.

As the analysis unfolds, the mobility of the scientific locus of enunciation (materialised in the stretching of academic parlance), which I consider to be a feature of intercultural translation, is examined with reference to the 'impact of friendships', 'the fusions provoked by a welcome', 'the dimensions of a cry' and 'inertia in departures.' These constructs designate not only interpersonal relations in a strict sense, alluding to the actual human lives of professional intellectuals and other people around them, but also scenarios where different forms of relationality are established with onto-epistemologies. For this reason, my analysis is to be taken **at the same time 'literally' and 'metaphorically.'**

In each episode, gestures pertaining to the respective scenario were isolated that could – through contact – potentially highlight flaws in modernity/coloniality's attempt to steel hegemonic discourses about knowledge production against vectors of intellectual democratisation, by

proving the existence of play as an internal device to the very grammar of academic language, whereby the claim I made at the beginning of this thesis about the concealed exploitation of play may be confirmed.

On textual impact



Juliana and I have known each other for almost ten years now. We met primarily as a professor and a student at a research group based at the University of São Paulo. It was 2011, and I had just begun the subjects from my English major there (having started my undergraduate studies in Letras the previous year), while she taught at the Federal University of Paraná and, along with some colleagues, attended the annual seminar in São Paulo promoted by the coordinators of the research group. Over the years, we grew closer to one another, particularly because we became classmates in graduate school, even sharing the same supervisor (she started her PhD more or less at the same time I was transitioning from undergraduate school to my master's degree).

Recently, in 2020, we set out to write a text for publication together. We were to write about new perspectives on pedagogy. Both of us had had very 'revealing' experiences as teachers and/or as students that we wished to touch upon in the text. Those were usually the lessons after which we left the classroom a different person than who had entered. Pedagogy as deep reflections and free flow of emotions building (on) knowledge.

At the time of writing, we reckoned that we would like the reader to have a taste of what learning that way feels like. So, instead of systematically exposing concepts and commenting on them, as is the norm in academic writing, we decided to try and 'transport' the reader to this place – these memorable lessons kept in our brain – where knowledge is not 'descending upon' students, but rather is flourishing in every corner of the room as you look and notice people listening attentively to their colleagues as they share feelings and thoughts on matters of lived experience that are provoked, amplified, countered, or answered by the texts in the syllabus. Specifically, we wanted to show how, from where we stand, that in this kind of pedagogy knowledge is diligently constructed in a collegial manner, speech after speech, comment after comment, question after question, interruption after interruption, disagreement after disagreement.

First → Construction of a sculptural set based on the experience



Set α based on the experience of producing a text with a close friend, seen from different angles. (Source: author)

Second → Interaction with the physicality of the sculpture, exploring details



- When a pipe fitting is inserted into a wet clay ball, the clay flexes and bulges slightly as the pipe fitting penetrates deeper. But the clay itself - if wet - doesn't usually rip apart. When the clay dries, though, its invisible contraction causes cracks of different sizes to appear;
- In cases like the ball on the left, during the process of building the sculpture, smaller pieces of clay were added to an initial bigger one, so that the ball would reach a certain ideal size. When wet, the surface of the ball is smoother and appear more uniform. When dry, though, these "patches" are noticeable.



Third → Interaction with - WETNESS - and - DRYNESS -



- When a pipe fitting like this one presses against a piece of clay, somethings can happen:

- If the clay is very wet, you don't have to press hard to leave a mark. When you remove the pipe fitting, a thin watery clay "blade" will stick to the pipe fitting, whatever the speed you pull back;
- If the clay is less wet, you have to press harder. When you remove the pipe fitting, if you do it fast, tiny bits of clay will probably





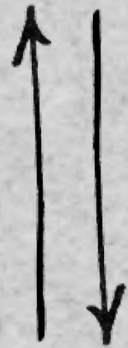
attach to the inside of the indentations. But if you remove slowly enough, the separation between clay and metal surface will probably be total and clean (at least, when observing with a naked eye);

- Still in the case of semi-wet/dry clay, though, if the pipe fitting resembles this one, the chances of pulling it away without any clay residue attaching to it is minimal, even if you go very slowly;

- If the clay is completely dry, pressing gently will basically leave no mark, but pressing harder might even break apart the clay ball.

- If the pipe fitting is inserted in the clay ball while the clay is wet and only removed when it dries, it most likely will come out without clay residue and will leave a mark.

(
WET - DRY
GENTLE - HARD
FAST - SLOW
)



SHAPE OF THE SURFACE

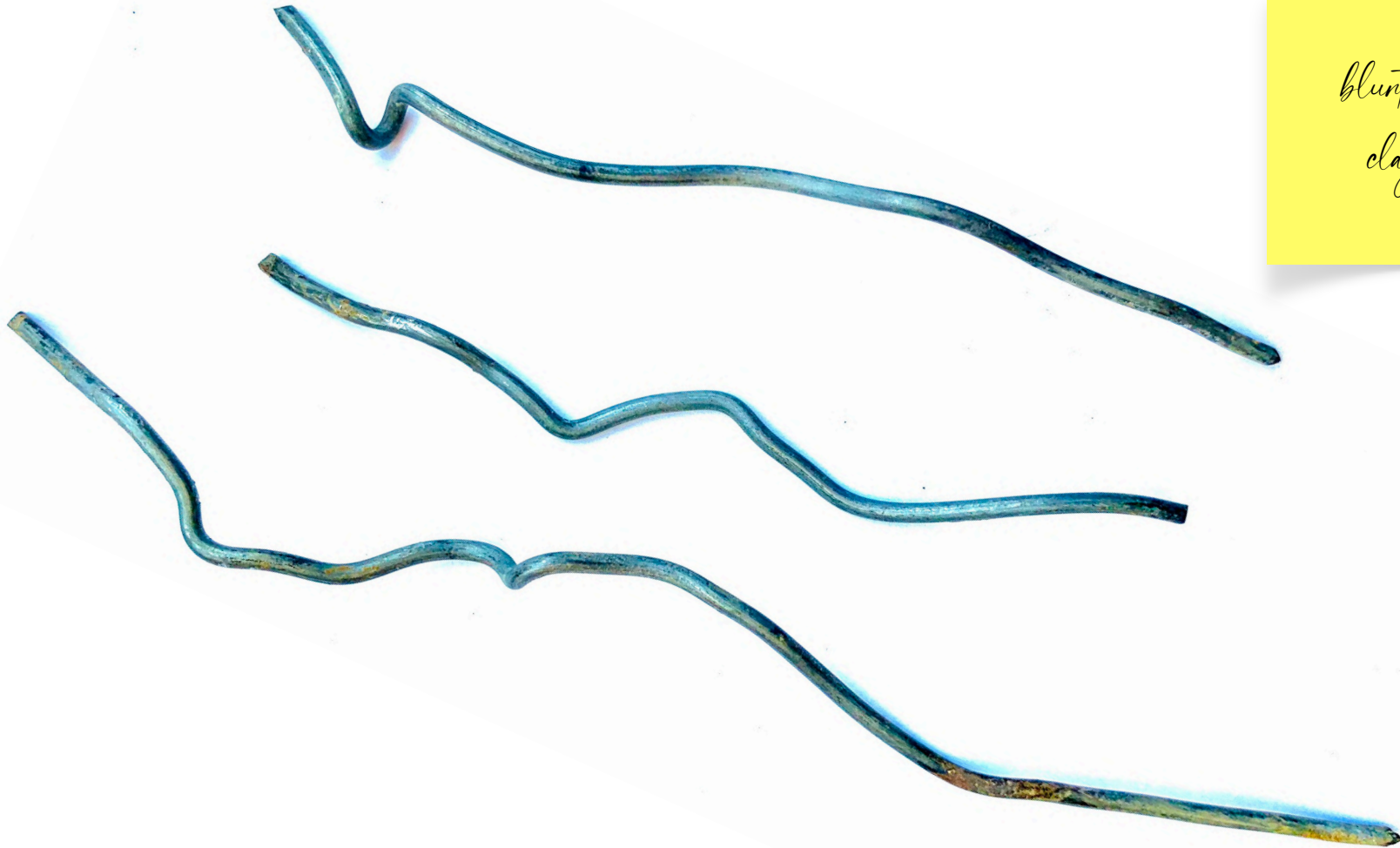
SEPARATION
CLAY & METAL

Fourth

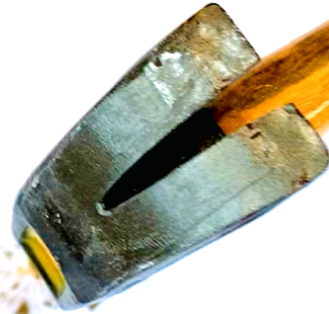
Interaction with

- SURFACE SHAPES -

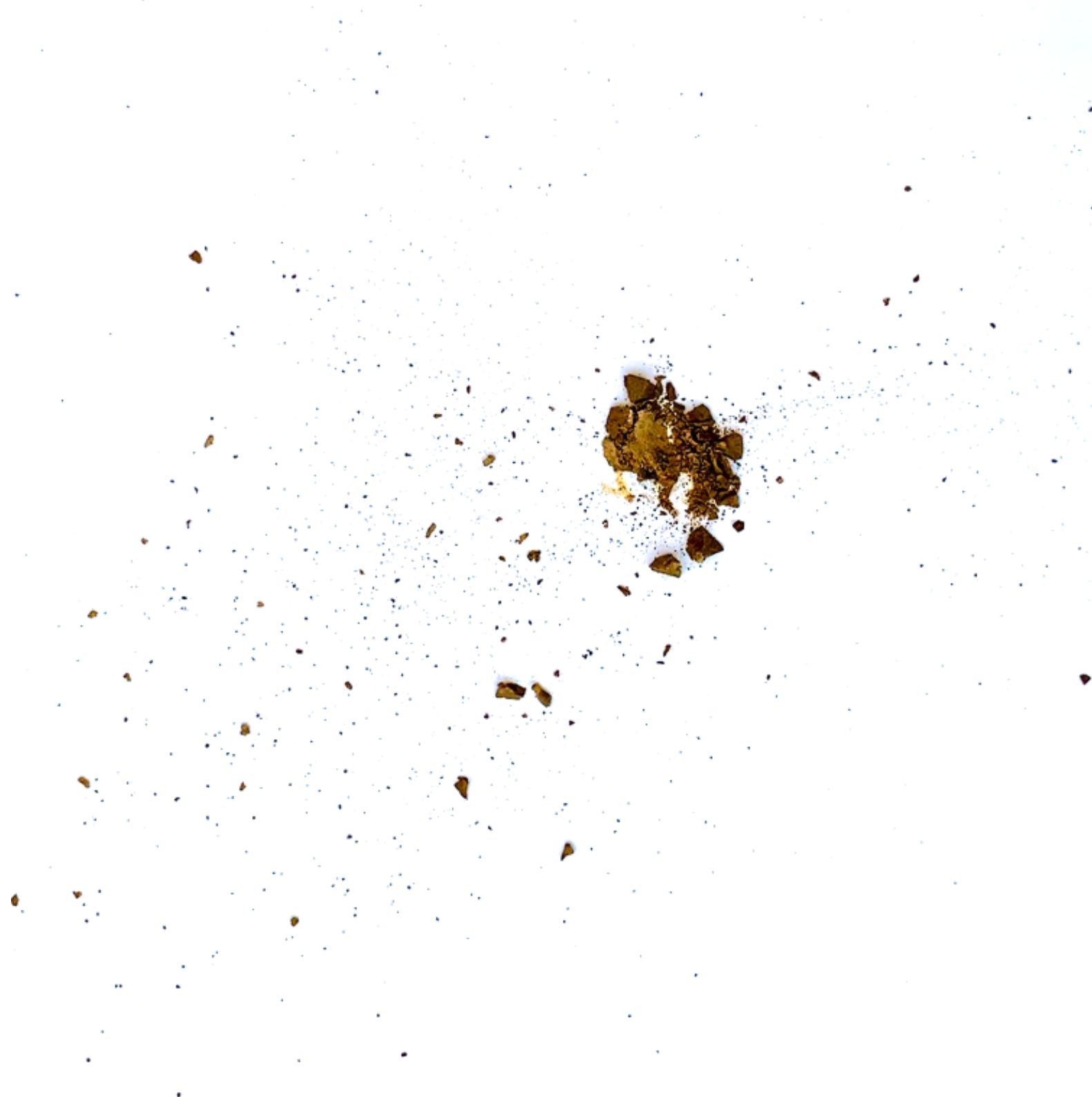
blunt object with
clay residue



flat object
vs.
dry clay











Who is saying what to whom?
 This friendship, this bond
 Needs to be like clay and metal?
 Is already like clay and metal?
 Keeps two together but as separate things?
 The marks of this unique
 Separation in togetherness
 Depend on
 Come from
 The mutual impact
 Of one on the other.

The slits and wrinkles and scars
 The cracks that open up are
 Born because of wetness and dryness
 Fastness and slowness, gentleness and hardness
 And because of pressure, after all
 Pressure produces the impact
 One sees
 But does the other also see it?
 Or only feel it?
 Bilateral pressure.

In Physics¹⁵, pressure is the result of
 The distribution of a force over an area
 Or, the relation between force and area
 $p = F/A$
 Will clay and metal pressure back at
 The hands manipulating them?
 Not actual pressure
 But pressure of recognition
 A pressure strong enough
 To communicate
 To change
 What's behind the hands
 A pressure that speaks eye to eye.

The forces in action
 As I was writing with Juliana
 Pushed us to see off
 Crystallised writing models in our brains
 Forces crushing, poking
 Or simply charging against
 Old behaviours
 Forever residual
 Maybe?

¹⁵ All of the concepts and formulae used here were retrieved from Kuhn (1996). It is worth noting, though, that I have used terminology from a relatively outdated paradigm (i.e., Classical Mechanics), and with certain simplifications when it comes to the actual formulation of equations.

Friendship within change
 Separation within friendship within change
 External and internal impact
 Self-inflicted ordeal
 Shared with one that
 Makes the other laugh distractedly
 Is that how pressure is distributed?
 Is that how serious change can be less bitter?
 Pressure running high, pressure running low.

First-hand friendships with humans
 And
 Friendships with
 Humans in books and videos and stuff
 Friendships with humanless stuff
 Friendships full of impact
 That puts either side at work
 Together separately
 Voluntarily and also not.

Because work may happen
 Regardless of whatever
 Regardless of will
 In Physics, work is defined by
 How much force is applied to make a body
 Move in space
 It is the product of a force and a distance
 $W = F \times d$
 At a strickly biological dimension

Bodies may remain still
 But dislocation may occur elsewhere.

And it leaves its marks
 On all participating bodies
 All
 Whether or not
 These marks matter to what is being said
 Whether or not they matter
 To who is doing the talking
 They are marks that speak their own language
 And even if they don't matter here and now
 They still retain their matterness
 Unsignified
 And quite potentially so.

The amount of time
 Those marks can be kept in sight
 Determines the power of a friendship
 Or the effect of it
 In Physics, power is calculated by
 How much work is exerted over a period of time
 It is a relation between work and a variation in time
 $P = W/\Delta t$
 The greater the time span
 The lesser the power
 Unless work is much greater
 Then there's compensation
 But is work shared?
 Is it carried out by either side?

Or by just one, or just the other?
Can humans and books and videos
And humanless stuff
Work together?
Together separately
Togetherseparately
Can they do the work for one another?
And breed power together
And for one another?

Maybe humans in their individual human bodies
Are incapable of producing great work alone
Maybe to have great power
They have no alternative than
To look to another constitution of body
Beyond that measure
A body of texts.

Friendship is but the maintenance
Of that body.

On textual fusion



Ten minutes before the advertised opening time, my father proposed we should go and wait at the door of the Bar for when it would open. As we approached the entrance, we saw a tall elderly man rolling his straw cigarette as he sat on a small bench blocking the way. My father and I waved at the man, who raised his head and did nothing but blink a couple times.

‘Good morning. What time do you open?’ asked my father phatically.

‘As a matter of fact, we were just waiting for someone to arrive in order for us to open! You’re the first. Come, come!’ the man replied excitedly.

He stood up and moved the bench slightly over to the side so we could go around it and enter. As he was just beginning to usher us inside, a couple of ‘neighbours’ to the Bar popped up, said nothing and just got in before us.

‘Oy! They were first in line!’ said the elderly man.

‘I come here every day,’ shrugged one from the couple. Turning back to us with a grin, still holding his half-smoked cigarette whose completion we had interrupted, the man grunted skeptically:

‘Folgado! He cut the line.’

My father assured him, with a shy laugh, that there was no problem, since there were all the tables to choose from. The elderly man finally said:

‘Well, do come in. Will you please sit here?’ and showed us to three tables that sat two people each, just by the counter. ‘We may choose whichever one you want to sit at.’

We thanked him and as we were getting comfortable at the table closest to the open door of the Bar, we heard the man shriek:

‘Oy! You’re sitting at a table for four. You’re just two.

He was calling the attention of the ‘neighbours,’ who neither moved a muscle, nor replied. This made the elderly man return to his seat at the door, not without remarking in a quite light-hearted, almost comedic tone:

‘They came to my bar and do whatever they like.’ My father and I laughed shamelessly.

During the entire lunch, the elderly man – who, after all, introduced himself as Diógenes, the owner – kept talking with us. His social life was the main topic.

First he interrupted the clerk at the register to ask him to retrieve an old version of The Guardian’s guide to food and drink around the world. His bar, he boasted as he placed the booklet on our table, was among the top establishments in Brazil, alongside better known gems. ‘Look here! I’m right next to Sudbrack. Did you know she was FHC’s chef at the Planalto?’

Then, he calmly made us observe the walls of the bar. His claim for fame was not a delusion, which I gathered from the displayed pictures of him with types such as Jorge Ben Jor and Angela Davis, which he collected over decades.

He also made a point of telling us about his failed attempt to be an agronomic engineer early on in his life. When that happened, he started working with art dealers and met some interesting characters like Alfredo Volpi. More and more he became acquainted with people from these prestigious social circles, which eventually gave him the opportunity to meet Burle Marx. They did become actual friends, especially due to Diógenes’s ability at landscaping and gardening, something he practiced as hobby in his own house.

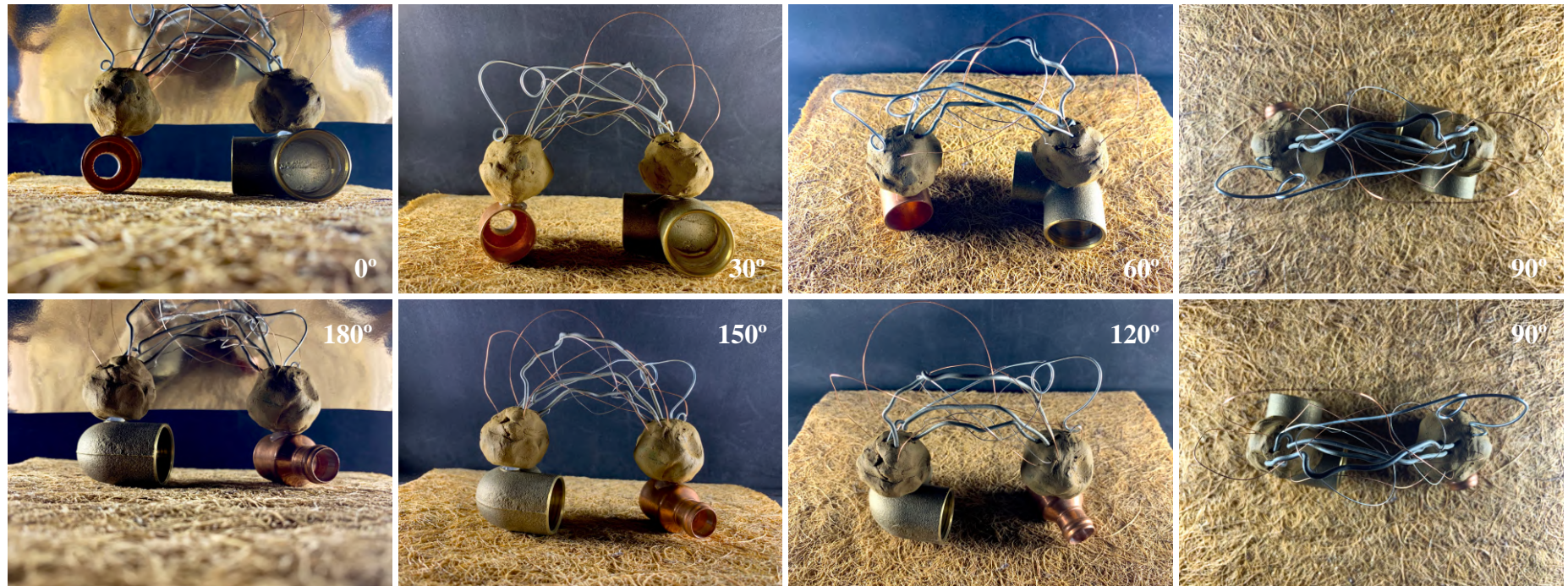
After eating, on our way out, we thanked him.

‘Oh, thank you. And thank you for the chat. Make sure to come here whenever you’re in Rio,’ he said.

‘We sure will,’ I replied.

‘Nice, nice!’ he interjected and, looking up at me from the small bench at the entrance of the bar where he was sitting again, concluded with a half-smirk: ‘It’s a pity Burle Marx won’t be able to join us.’

First → Construction of a sculptural set based on the experience



Set β based on the experience of being welcomed at a bar by a stranger, seen from different angles. (Source: author)

Second → Interaction with the physicality of the sculpture, exploring details



- When handling the sculpture, if the clay balls are pulled away from one another, the thick wires detach from the balls, even if those wires had been sunk deep into the clay. When they come off, the wires pluck out bits of dried clay and can even break up the clay ball entirely;
- The thin wires, however, remain firmly attached to the clay balls. Even if with pliers, it is impossible. The only way to separate the wire from the clay balls seems to be crushing the ball to dust.

THINNNESS - THICKNESS

Third → Interaction with - THINNESS - and - THICKNESS -

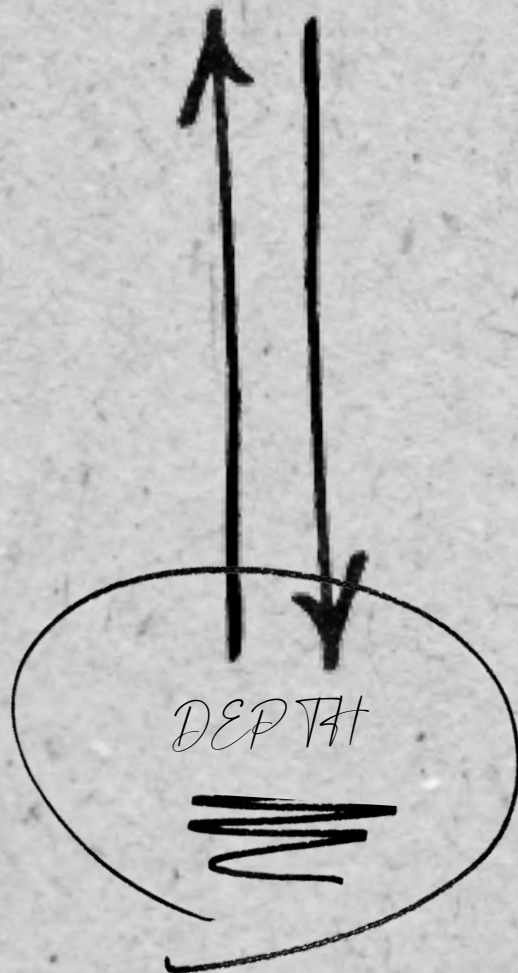


pulling small caliber
pipe fitting away from
clay ball

*pulling large caliber
pipe fitting away from
clay ball*



THIN - THICK



ATTACHMENT
CLAY & METAL

clay mass
relevant ?



Who is saying what to whom?
 Did Diógenes attach himself to me?
 Or I to him?
 As we journeyed through the pictures
 And the narratives
 Who was who?
 Who was?

There was an air of tender density
 Tender, but huge
 In Physics¹⁶, density is
 The result of the distribution of a given mass
 In a given volume
 $D = m/V$
 And in that bar
 A heavy lot of feelings was
 Compressed into a small casing
 The frame of those pictures
 And the frame of mind
 Created by the welcome we had gotten.

From lunch to history
 We made the trip as one

The result of a fusion of sorts.

The simple mention
 Even the innuendo
 Of the man's marks of the past
 Sank deep into me
 And it is still there
 And so I wonder
 How he got all that
 Out of himself
 Did he rip himself apart
 As he spit it out?

Pushing, pushing
 Through memory and memorabilia
 Both thin and thick
 Vividly, palpably
 The safe place of one
 Welcomes the other inside
 Drags inside.

The elderly man
 Won't let the customer be

¹⁶ All of the concepts and formulae used here were retrieved from Kuhn (1996). It is worth noting, though, that I have used terminology from a relatively outdated paradigm (i.e., Classical Mechanics), and with certain simplifications when it comes to the actual formulation of equations.

A simple customer
Nor he an old rag
He's still in business
Reaching out
Grabbing onto
Thriving along.

The acceleration of deautomatisation
Unexpected
Unavoidable
A variation in speed
Over a segment of time
 $a = \Delta v / \Delta t$
Intimate
And yet public:

A welcome is but a subtle invitation
To form a carcass
To withstand it.

On textual dimension



On the 7th of February, 2014, Professors Walkyria Monte Mór and Lynn Mario Trindade Menezes de Souza were giving the speech that would conclude that year's seminar of their research group on literacies. The annual gathering was always an opportunity for the representatives from more than 20 public universities in Brazil to meet up with long-term friends and colleagues separated by the geographical enormity of our national territory. Most of them had gone to grad school together at the University of São Paulo, where the seminar was traditionally held. As a consequence, during the three-day span of the event there was always a sense of homecoming connecting those scholars as they spoke, and listened, and debated, and saw photos of each other's families, and caught up with each other, and went out in the evening to eat and drink together. The last sessions, though, were tinged in particular with emotions more conditioned by the imminence of the inevitable split-up, as the closing ceremony approached unduly fast.

Suddenly, an intruder, half-thing with a human mouth and chin, barged in and cut short the farewell words that Walkyria and Lynn Mario were saying. Sat on a wheelchair, leaning slightly to the side as a misplaced dead body would do, the creature was rolled inside by a female colleague, who placed it in the middle of the small crowd of merry friends and colleagues, right at the centre of the room. She, then, quickly turned away and shut the door behind herself as she left the scene. After a few moments of silence, a gasp and a short laugh, the creature soon left its inert position and started fidgeting. It was Pablo, whom I was impersonating during that performance.

Walkyria and Lynn Mario did not reveal that they knew what had just happened. Instead, they played along. Seeing that they shrugged shoulders in disbelief and expressed mild surprise at the fact, some of the people in the room finally directed their attention to the wheelchair and whatever it was carrying. On the other hand, some others looked away to their notes or grabbed their smartphones to check the messages, believing that it was an obvious trick, for it was too abnormal to be casual.

The fidgeting soon increased in vigor, turning progressively into a wiggle, then finally into a continuous shiver that would at times be interrupted by jolts and twitches.

As the creature moved in such a convulsive manner, it also started to make noises and reach out with the only viable limb it actually possessed to feel the world around itself: the tongue. Bending over to one side, it ended up licking a person's elbow and his chair's arm, thus losing balance and falling to the ground in a thump partly muffled by the room's carpet.

The creature now began to pant and shout. Not before then did anyone dare move a muscle in its direction – rather, they moved away in disgust, avoiding proper interaction –, but when she saw it on the floor clumsily and desperately trying to communicate, Cláudia could no longer hold her response.

Cláudia approached Pablo physically and asked if it was alright to touch him. He consented more or less. She took him on her lap, and gave him water. She did her best reassuring him nothing would happen to him. Pablo's breathing progressively decreased in rhythm, until it eventually came to a halt. He relaxed.

First → Construction of a sculptural set based on the experience



Set γ based on the experience of witnessing the cries of someone who was eventually tended to, seen from different angles. (Source: author)

Second → Interaction with the physicality of the sculpture, exploring details





- When transporting the sculpture, as much as wire and clay have their own way of behaving and can be distinguished according to a variety of criteria, they operate mechanically as a single body. They display articulated - rather than segmented - behaviour;
- When holding the sculpture by the wires and transporting it elsewhere, a specific sequence of movements is required so as to preserve its structure. When holding by the clay balls, though, a whole different sequence of movements is required;
- It becomes less clear whether wire and clay could be reckoned as one and the same, that is, as an entity in themselves;

ARTICULATION
IN MOVEMENT

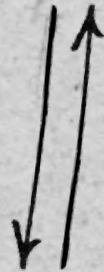
Third → Interaction with — ARTICULATION —



- If articulation is weak - like in the case opposite, where a pile of clay pieces is tied in place by a web of flexible plastic strings -, it will be more difficult to transport the pile without shifting its contents too much, that is, without changing its structure;
- Bagging up the pile is one way to transport it easily, but the initial structure of the pile will hardly be recovered, when removing the contents from inside the bag.

- Unarticulated bodies are easier to transport individually.

ARTICULATION
(STRONG - WEAK)



TRANSPORTATION
(EASY - DIFFICULT)

DISTINCTION
CLAY & METAL





Who is saying what to whom?
 An obstacle
 In the middle of the room
 But not an immovable one
 Instead
 A restless one
 With a restless cry
 So much friction
 Because of so little articulation.

In Physics¹⁷, friction is defined by
 The force that results from the interaction
 Between a body and a surface
 And is calculated by the product of
 The surface's friction coefficient
 (a set number stating the surface's tendency
 To impede a body from moving)
 A body's mass and gravity
 $F = \mu \times m \times g$.

The coefficient is important
 For it refers to the texture of a surface
 And texture affects legibility

And the lack of immediate legibility
 Makes friction greater
 Adding up to the commotion
 Caused by Pablo's body.

His body has an unusual shape
 Making it difficult to estimate its volume
 Calculating volume depends on
 Knowing the measures of a body
 In three spatial dimensions
 But how to determine *these* in relation to Pablo?
 He's got a mouth, alright, but is it on a head?
 What is that?
 What part?
 What?

Fidgeting prevents an onlooker
 From telling apart one's limbs
 From tearing them apart
 From taking one apart

Cláudia was no onlooker
 For she sought articulation

¹⁷ All of the concepts and formulae used here were retrieved from Kuhn (1996). It is worth noting, though, that I have used terminology from a relatively outdated paradigm (i.e., Classical Mechanics), and with certain simplifications when it comes to the actual formulation of equations.

And transported herself with Pablo
To that unknown place
Where they became indistinct
As a strange occurrence
By which the voiced pain
Signals life.

Urgent, intense
Life
Instantly full of momentum
The effect created by
A mass that is moving
At a particular speed
Or the product of mass and velocity
 $p = m \times v$
Pablo spits his agony
Thrusts a whole lot of verbal mass
Of sound waves
Upon the crowd
At incredible speed
And causes suspense and uneasiness.

‘How far will you go for me?’
He seems to be asking
Articulation in equilibrium
Is no good
Even if strong
Since marks are only left
In movement
A cry is but the cessation of balance.

On textual inertia



Between September, 2019 and February, 2020 Sesc Pompeia hosted Entrevendo, a monographic exhibition of works by Brazilian contemporary artist, Cildo Meireles.

His work is vast in its themes and tropes, as well as in the materials that he employs. As I perused the pieces chosen for this exhibition, one in particular stood out. 'Amerikkka' is an installation consisting of two boards, one laying flat on the ground and, directly above, the other suspended some metres over the floor, at an angle that formed a slope. On the lower board, seventeen thousand white wooden eggs (the size of chicken eggs) sit upright, aligned in a perfect grid. Away from the ground, crammed side by side throughout the upper board, thirty-three thousand unused projectiles hang shining with their points facing downwards.

After some minutes contemplating such a concoction, I took off my shoes and walked a few steps on the eggs, only to get to the centre of the board, where I eventually lay down. The oval shape, hardened by its wooden nature, was quite bothersome. As much as I tried shifting around to find a comfortable position, the 'tips' of the eggs punctured my back and gave the impression my spine was badly curved sideways at more than one point, like a snake.

Then, I noticed the tips of the projectiles hovering above, aimed at me. I cannot properly describe that sensation, since my attention was drawn to a young white boy, no older than six, approaching the scene. Seeing my shoes beside the installation, he promptly took off his own and was also going to try out lying down on the eggs.

He sat on the edge of the lower board, not going as far into the middle as I did. His head had barely touched the surface of the eggs when I heard:

'Oooouch! Hee hee!' the boy darted, half complaining, half giggling.

I kept my head still, nose facing upwards, but peeping at him with partial vision to see what he would do next. Before quickly standing up, not one minute after he had sat down, and putting his shoes back on to follow his father, who gestured that they should move along, the boy said this not to me, not to anyone in particular:

‘It hurts, but it feels good.’ And left.

First → Construction of a sculptural set based on the experience



Set δ based on the experience of being left behind by someone's departure, seen from different angles. (Source: author)

Second → Interaction with the physicality of the sculpture, exploring details



- If the photos had been taken with multiple cameras simultaneously, this behaviour would probably have never been captured. Since there was a single camera rotating around the sculpture to take the shots from each angle, between the beginning of the sequence of images (0°) and the end (180°), there was enough time for the sculpture to lose balance and topple over.

Third → Interaction with - STEADINESS -



- When irregular bodies are lain on a given surface, balance depends on the number of points of support, as well as the surface texture.

*Marks left on the
structure containing the
irregular body ...*

*... and helping to
preserve inertia*





Who is saying what to whom?
 Maybe the installation spoke
 Through the boy
 Motivated by the surface texture
 Of those tiny, numerous points of support.

But I tried to ostracise myself from him
 I somewhat antagonised his presence
 Trying to shut myself off
 By taking over the control
 Of those forces in my surroundings
 In Physics¹⁸, a force is
 The product of a mass and an acceleration
 $F = m \times a$
 And while the boy's mass is inapprehensible
 Perceptive power gives me the impression
 I may temper with acceleration

Acceleration is the variation in velocity
 That takes place within a certain time span
 $a = \Delta v / \Delta t$
 It can be nullified in basically two ways:
 Restricting velocity change to

A bare minimum
 Or cancelling out time.

'Not so fast, young man! Here!'
 I could have shouted
 Or
 I could have argued
 Either to myself or to him
 'I have no time for this.'
 I chose neither.

I froze
 But how to look him in the eye
 And ask away?
 Or how to distance one's self
 From a moving object
 Running towards you
 At a million miles an hour
 Even if it is actually
 Walking away somewhere else?

The boy refused inertia
 From my standpoint

¹⁸ All of the concepts and formulae used here were retrieved from Kuhn (1996). It is worth noting, though, that I have used terminology from a relatively outdated paradigm (i.e., Classical Mechanics), and with certain simplifications when it comes to the actual formulation of equations.

Not even I was steady
After his words
Dashed off from the depths of his lungs
Across the room and into my guts
Followed by his exit
And the marks that
His actions
Left on me.

Was I avoiding speed?
Or was I avoiding to
Hold him back?
Maybe
'Keeping it to myself'
Was a way to repress the joyful,
Reflexive, atmosphere he'd created
Maybe, too
I was trying not to prevent him
From living through that ecstasy
From losing that kinetic energy.

A departure is but a way to keep
That energy going.

ALMOST THERE

Points of (transitory) arrival

Dear reader,

If I were to provide some sort of clarification to someone who didn't quite grasp what I did for data generation and analysis here in these four selected episodes presented in 'Part II,' I would say the following:

Why is it that Higher Education perceives intellectuality as being so different from working with clay and wires? What is so distinctive about clay and metal bodies that sets them apart from human, animal, or librarial bodies? I am, of course, making these questions in rhetorical fashion, since I believe their answers are more political than metaphysical, insofar as they are reflected on the choice of prestigious, technical metalanguage over other 'edgier' kinds.

This doesn't imply that scientists should seek new ways to write academically just for the sake of it, but instead signals that when dealing with ineffability at the edge of established knowledge, the part of the academic community involved with decolonisation may resort unashamedly to languages that are less subservient to modern/colonial scientific grammar in the pursuit of an expansion of analytical categories.

To sculpt, photograph, handle, move around, twist, bend, pull, push, destroy... All of these actions prompt gestures of materiality that fuel an encounter with reminiscence, fragility, monstrosity, wonder. They provoke a conflict between aesthetical and representative imagination,

giving birth to new ideas. They raise ethical questions about where we stand as knowledge subjects and what is our role in specific, historically situated communicative contexts, as well as in the world, in general.

Through their insights, those actions suggest that the only means to approach the ineffable is to play with its tangible, embodied properties. In this sense, any utterance (such as the sculptural sets, for instance) is a product of physical dynamics, bearing material indicators that motivate and, at times, even feed the analytical apparatus with relevant categories.

Little by little, as I interacted with the resources that multiple modes of semiotisation gave me, a process of translation took place. Contact, therefore, made me look at the available semiotic resources differently and, in turn, helped me to reflect upon my *own* relation with semiosis in broader terms. It ended up being a search for supports through which thoughts and feelings could transit and make visible conflicting onto-epistemologies.

In order to theorise and draw conclusions, the combination of elements from different languages and the passage from one language to another and back – gathering useful concepts, while at the same time raising questions about the potential of each language – fortifies the attitude of attempting to identify and complement blind spots in established grammars. As a consequence, I have done in my analysis something with a double effect, which I now want to spell out.

Firstly, I have shown how play is concealed in scientific communication. By making public how analytical categories are born from physical objects, I have proven that academic language exploits the movement that play provokes in thought, even if afterwards it processes findings so as to reshape them, trimming undesirable edges to make them more palatable and sellable to the publishing market, which de-characterised the point of origin of a given concept, construct, idea, definition, explanation, argument, etc.

Secondly, I have demonstrated how playfulness may be marked textually by gestures in academic publications that retain scientific value despite their unusual grammar. Departing from an understanding of communication as always dense, I offered the reader the experience of being

faced with highly concentrated messages that don't surrender completely to the desire for legibility, comprehension and coherence, but rather display the vulnerability and uneasiness that lies outside the logic of grandiose terminology.

Thus, I contribute with a more complex understanding of what peer review may be, if it sides with the decolonial option, granting embodied knowledge the possibility to flow through unpredictable scape-routes without strict containment (i.e., without being reduced to 'a piece of content' or the product of 'a relay of alien information,' but remaining as 'an experiential trace' or 'a luring invitation to peep into a parallel , inhabited world').

This goes to show that scientific language, like any semiotic formation/arrangement, presents material properties such as the ones analysed in the episodes above: impact, fusion, dimension and inertia. In this sense, the normalisation of academic literacy by establishing description, explanation and argumentation patterns where play is removed results in sheer proselytism and textual body shaming, which is a form of unethical communicative attitude, after all.

Modern science is different from art and mythology, for instance, not because it seeks truth, but because it aspires to be the central, unquestionable linguistic means to signify the world, dismissing other alternatives as untrustworthy. As if the value of scientific inquiry presented in academic language was absolute and self-evident to the entirety of human population, everywhere, all the time.

The Pedagogy of Gestures addresses this problem to the extent that it seeks to retain the core principle of embodiment, bypassing the understanding that established methodologies are the single possibility to construct knowledge. Hence the recognition of play's role as driving force of knowledge and the appreciation for the material, linguistic apparition of bodies (whether or not they are human, whether or not they are alive) in published texts.

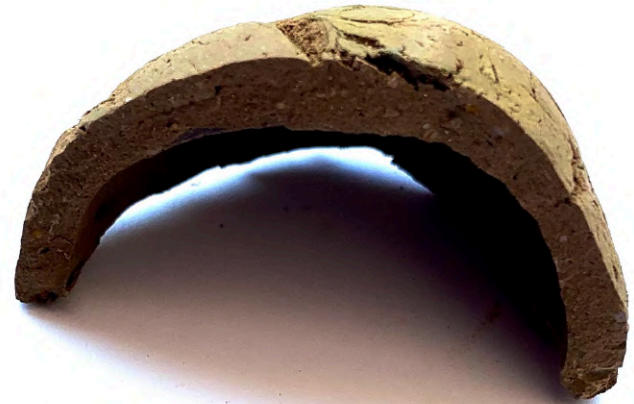
In this sense, my meta-critical process has been performed as a playful event, assuming a stance of contact, fueling 'hundredness,' intimacy and experience, weakening drama and opening the path to metalinguistic reflections about the impact, fusion, dimension and inertia at an onto-epistemological level.

In other words, continuous semiotic play (i.e., adding one language on top of another) will show the opacity – which is not the same as ineptitude – of each mode of semiotisation. Incompleteness, then, appears to be the catalyst for transdisciplinary mobility between categories (or, as decoloniality states, the ‘terms of the conversation’). This is, I believe, how decolonial science evolves, invigorating embodiment to rejuvenate analytical capacity.

Yours,
Guilherme.









LAST STOP (BEFORE THE NEXT)

As two roads diverged, which one have I taken?¹⁹

In this thesis, I questioned the supposed ineptitude of scientific grammar at addressing subjects that defy its capacity for ‘academic’ meaning-making. By alluding to those ineffable or unspeakable issues, my main objectives were to: a) contest the notion that some languages and discourses have an inherent (in)aptitude to tackle certain subjects; b) mark where, when and why the hegemony of the forms of communication in the academy become fragilised, while in the presence of languages and discourses not promptly recognised as academic; c) interrogate the categories that ratify the academic value of descriptions, explanations and arguments with reference to their verbal qualities (lexicon, syntax etc.); and d) discuss to what extent forms of construction of descriptions, explanations and arguments that presuppose different onto-epistemologies than that of graphocentric reading and writing may contribute to a redefinition of the ways scientific knowledge can be built.

To achieve those objectives, I centered my discussion around one set of marginal discursive formations/arrangements whose forms of language are not considered scientific by modern academic standards: play. With it in mind, I was able to answer questions about: a) how varying forms of implication between bodies and languages within the academy impact on the overall distribution of communicative power; b) what conditions of interaction can exist between participating bodies and languages in academic contexts, once ineffability starts to be enunciated in different forms of semiosis; c) what ethical issues emerge from treating the ineffable discursively with multiple (academic and so-called ‘non-

¹⁹ Title inspired by the third- and second-to-last verses from Robert Frost’s poem ‘The Road Not Taken.’ Available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken>. Accessed on May 1, 2021.

academic’) languages in communicative situations that are by definition ascribed scientific value; and d) what general intricacies can be highlighted in relation to the semiotic dimension of an onto-epistemic reform of the ingrained modern/colonial politics of enunciation in science.

To that end, I provided the reader with a twofold reading experience, dividing my text in a pair of differently arranged, but argumentatively interdependent, parts.

In ‘Part I,’ I initiated my discussion in the usual fashion of academic texts, with two chapters.

In Chapter 1, *Reaching for difference in academic language*, I established that play’s condition as a marginal entity to science results from its capacity to weaken modernity/coloniality’s defense mechanisms and defy a system of onto-epistemic violence. I also discussed how linguistic play serves a central purpose in science, allowing for meta-critical revisions through its detachment from standard behaviour associated to academic knowledges/discourses. Finally, I argued that this feature makes play both an asset and a taboo among academic circles, where its traces/marks are consistently erased from research publications, due to the presupposition that by acknowledging the value of play, scientists would be making themselves comparable to the the group of non-persons commonly portayed in relation to play, playing and playfulness (i.e., children).

In Chapter 2, *‘The Pedagogy of Gestures: a “backdoor” modus operandi,’* by contrasting the methodologisation of academic writing (enacted by a restriction of semiotic resources associated with play) with the notion of ‘modus operandi,’ I expanded on the notion that the former is fundamental for the repression of the political power residing in inventiveness, thus implying a desire to maintain historical privilege and diminish the impact that the knowledge held by subjects excluded from universities can have on scientific work. I also outlined the crucial features of the Pedagogy of Gestures as a way of writing academically, namely: the significance of physicality, atmospheres of meaning and synchronicity with translation.

Meanwhile, in ‘Part II,’ the reader was presented with a shift in the manner that theorisation is typically built, now encompassing academically marginalised forms of language. Here the reader found not simply a repetition of ‘Part I’ in different terms, but rather a fertility infusion that was supposed to make the initial theoretical substratum richer, as the reader went about each of the four analysed episodes.

In those episodes, the mobility of the scientific locus of enunciation (materialised in the stretching of academic parlance) was examined with reference to four constructs that designate relational issues that are inherent in the research-writing-learning process not only ‘literally’ (i.e., referring to interpersonal relations in a strict sense, alluding to the actual human lives of professional intellectuals and other people around them), but also ‘metaphorically’ (i.e., referring to scenarios where different forms of implication are established between onto-epistemologies).

In each scenario, gestures were isolated that could – through contact – potentially highlight flaws in modernity/coloniality’s attempt to steel hegemonic discourses about knowledge production against vectors of intellectual democratisation, by proving the existence of play as an internal device to the very grammar of academic language.

As a consequence, I was able to prove that a concealed, colonial exploitation of play by modern science through hegemonic academic language not only exists, but is also strongly connected to a historical constitution that entailed varying degrees of susceptibility to, and dependence on, different kinds of external semiotic interference. In other words, as much as Higher Education tries to push away a variety of other forms of language, it is not shielded against all marginal, ‘non-academic’ discursive formations/arrangements in the same manner, for some (such as the ones that emerge from play) have relative power to dislocate academic communication from the onto-epistemological framework it currently employs. Thus, I come to the ultimate conclusion that even within the conservative environment of colonial institutions such as universities, the history of modern scientific parlance prevents it from being successful at creating absolute and everlasting borders that can insulate it.

On a personal note, I tried to approach that tension with humility and – I couldn’t resist it! – a fair dose of curiosity.

Curiosity and humility, I believe, make good scaffolding for a researcher-writer-learner. From the outset, I imagined that however hard I tried to be ingenious, I wouldn't be able to *overcome* the force of ineffability that underlies academic language. Nevertheless, I wouldn't refuse to try and *interrupt* the silence either. Breaking the silence was one way I found to counter the erasure of: a) the body from theorisation; and b) play from texts. These erasures are, in fact, one and the same. They are a double erasure enforced by modernity/coloniality.

With that in mind, I suggest that a central concern of researchers-writers-learners interested in the decolonisation of academic language be the experimentation with non-hegemonic forms of language, in order to procure the conditions under which science can have widened possibilities that allow it to keep going, rather than becoming immobilised by the inevitable silences on the way.

Experimentation is one way to stimulate a more intense *ergonomy of language* that caters for the desire to talk about what modernity/coloniality has silenced. In this sense, play can be taken seriously for its capacity to trigger ideogenesis through translation, since intellectuality has no surefire, sole semiotic substratum on which it can stand erect. With such mechanics taken into account, we may be able to try and interrogate – from a standpoint where academic literacy, too, can be subjected to a decolonial reading – complex political phenomena (ingrained in semiotisation) that still lack names. May we, after all, play in the open.

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