

Body and Decoloniality in Performing Poetic Composition

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ABSTRACT – Body and Decoloniality in Performing Poetic Composition¹ – The text is situated between the arts, anthropology and philosophy and aims to answer the question: can the artistic process be understood as a means of decoloniality of the ordinary body? Methodologically, a literature review was carried out and it was analyzed an artistic process in which the authors participated. It emerges from Sampaio's proposal (2007) concerning the *atense body* for the scene, which can be a fruitful way to reach the decoloniality of the everyday body.

Keywords: **Theater. Decoloniality. Body. Performing Poetic Composition. Performing Practice.**

RÉSUMÉ – Corps et Descolonialite dans la Composition Poétique Scientifique – Ce texte est placé entre les arts, l'anthropologie et la philosophie et vise à répondre à la question: le processus artistique peut-il être compris comme un moyen de décolonialisation du corps quotidien? Sur le plan méthodologique, nous avons effectué une revue de la littérature et nous analysons un processus artistique auquel les auteurs ont participé. Il ressort de l'expérience que la proposition de Sampaio (2007) pour le *corps (pas) tendu* de la scène peut être un moyen fructueux d'atteindre la décolonialité du corps quotidien.

Mots-clés: **Théâtre. Descolonialite. Corps. Composition Poétique Scénique. Pratique Scénique.**

RESUMO – Corpo e Descolonialidade em Composição Poética Cênica – O texto se situa entre as artes, a antropologia e a filosofia e pretende responder à questão: o processo artístico pode ser entendido como meio de descolonialidade do corpo cotidiano? Metodologicamente, realiza-se revisão de literatura e faz-se uma análise de um processo artístico de que os autores participaram. Resulta da experiência que a proposta de Sampaio (2007) a respeito do *corpo atense* para a cena pode ser um frutífero caminho para se chegar à descolonialidade do corpo cotidiano.

Palavras-chave: **Teatro. Descolonialidade. Corpo. Composição Poética Cênica. Prática Cênica.**

Decolonial Perspective

This article was sought to contribute to discussions about artistic and pedagogical processes that can provide (or not) the decoloniality of the everyday body. Initially, we would like to make it clear that our choice for the term *decolonial* instead of *post-colonial* was made in virtue of what is pointed by Rivera Cusicanqui (2010, p. 54), “[...] there is neither ‘post’ nor ‘pre’ in a vision of history that is not linear nor teleological, that moves in cycles and spirals”. Methodologically, we have transited between the social science and the arts, by means of a bibliographic review and an analysis of experiences in theater common to both authors. The decolonial perspective, even though prior to this research, does not count on the academic production in the field of performing arts in a number that is relevant enough to serve as a basis for the discussions that follow. This is why we used authors from other fields of knowledge, rather than the artistic one. In this sense, we claim that the work is part of a still incipient field of research.

The practical experience that we addressed in this article refers to a process of theatrical creation in Performing Poetic Composition. This is a theoretical-philosophical and methodological perspective for teaching and creation in theater, which has been built by the second author of this text, since 2010, in a dialogue established with other researchers². The focus of the perspective has been the processes of experience of otherness from oneself to oneself, coming from different kinds of knowledge emerged from and in the theater practices (Sampaio, 2017b). Personal and collective pathways of meaning and sense of the experiences of creation are involved in these processes.

In short, both in socio-pedagogical as in artistic practice, the perspective aims at the human cognitive-affective development. We base our artistic-pedagogical proposals on the listening of subjectivities and on the understanding and encouragement to person-to-person relationship context. Each person is (co)responsible for the construction of an intersubjective space within which he or she operates (Sampaio, 2015a). We see real possibilities of action from the artistic field when supporting the construction of intersubjective fertile spaces for human development. That is, there are no actors and we do not intend to train them, there are human

beings acting on the world and being acted by it; humans who at any time may BE as professionals of the scene. Our conceptions of artistic and pedagogical experiences, upon proposing ways of (self)reflexive and shared (collective) practices, through experiences, records and their analyses, focus on the possibility of thinking the man as a being who needs to position himself intentionally to his field of symbolic action (Boesch, 1991), from the perspective of the practice, to the reflective dimension of this action field.

More recently, the perspective has turned to the personal processes of recognition of sociocultural historicity in the constitution of a personal way to operate in the world. This is a crucial aspect for the discussions that involve the binomials colonization/decolonization and coloniality/decoloniality.

To establish what we understand as colonization, we introduce Bosi's perspective (1992) about colonial cycles. According to the author,

[...] colonization may not be approached as mere migratory flow: it is the resolution of conflicts and shortcomings of the matrix and an attempt to resume, under new conditions, the dominance over nature and fellow men that has accompanied universally the so-called civilizing process (Bosi, 1992, p. 13).

When it comes to colonization, the dominance and the enforcement of new political and economic conditions give space for the conquest. The idea of conquest was strong enough for Europe to substitute the term by discovery during the 16th century, emphasizing the constraint that the bodies and the environment suffered at the time. For Bosi (1992), the power relations of societies in a cycle of colonization are potentiated within the political and economic spheres.

The thick trace of domination is inherent to the various forms of colonizing and, almost always, overdetermines them. Taking care of, in the basic sense of welcoming, means not only taking care, but also demanding. It is true that not always the colonizer will see himself as a mere conqueror; then, he will try to take to the descendants the image of the discoverer and the villager, titles to which, as a pioneer, he would deserve (Bosi, 1992, p. 12).

The generational passage approached in Bosi's excerpt refers to a process of symbolic and cultural secular construction involved in the colonization. That is, the forces involved in the colonization are beyond the act of occupying and exploring territories and possessions. The colonization

is linked to a cultural process. Being corporeality (Merleau-Ponty, 2011; 2012; 2013) an equally cultural relationship, the colonization lies on the constitution of our notions of body, our ways of acting, our modes of *being in the world* (Heidegger, 2009). Thus, the corporeality, also formed by colonization processes, ends up receiving the influences of the established context, reproducing “[...] always the same, body and features, and obeys here to an inner need of social perception” (Bosi, 1992, p. 54).

Culture is not something given beforehand about which the person does not have any influence. Culture is also structure and process (Boesch, 1991). There is a dimension of culture that is always redoing itself in accordance with the actions undertaken by people in the world. Wagner (2002) proposes that we think of culture as invention. The understanding of the world occurs by means of a culture, of which the person cannot detach. However, when there is a relationship among people of different cultures, so that they can interact, each one must be attentive to their own culture and use it as a reference in the mediation made in relation to another culture, so it is possible to understand the culture of the other. That is, it is necessary to find symbols in their own culture that bring the equivalence aimed to understand the culture of another. For this to occur, Wagner points out that creativity must act as a mechanism for understanding and communication.

According to Wagner (2002, p. 29), the term “[...] culture also reduces the human actions and purposes to the most basic level of significance, in order to examine them in universal terms to try to understand them.” This mediation is an individual or collective process of creativity that allows the understanding of the other, through the experience of alterity. However, the mediation is only possible through the symbols recognized within their contexts. This is one of the dimensions in which culture presents itself as a structure, in the sense of Boesch (1991), from which the processes undertaken by individuals and groups within a given culture are possible in the direction of Wagnerian creativity.

When it comes to cultural mediation, Wagner (2002) understands symbols as the connotative and metaphoric meaning that each culture establishes to reality. The symbols relate among themselves and provide material in the form of analogies for the understanding of other cultures. It

is clear that the approximation by analogies has their limits and does not allow the full understanding of another culture. This makes the cultural relations always to be relationships of otherness.

For Wagner (2002), the symbols can be interpreted only when contextualized. If they were taken out of their context, i.e., the area in which it is allowed to create endless combinations, the understanding would be random and disjointed, losing sight of the otherness of relations and the meaning to anyone who tries to understand them. The implication of this fact to the culture is that, for the author, it is invented all the time. Therefore, the combination of symbols is a creative and contextualized mediation. Yet, even though we accept the Wagnerian idea that culture is created all the time, we do not lose sight of the Boeschian notion that culture is also a structure from which cultural transformations are possible. That is, creativity takes place in the presence of any structure that sustains it.

We can understand the cultural invention as a dynamic personal, collective and transpersonal training, based on metaphors, associations and symbolic extensions, which act in reading and production of the symbols of the person's own culture or another one. In this case, the culture ends up aiming at the reality through its conventions, as well as, according to the author, inventing conventions from the symbolization. The culture should be thought of as heterogeneous elements that serve to the inventive improvisation itself and as a basis for an imaginative culture. Still, "[...] 'culture' in the narrower sense consists of a historic and normative precedent for culture as a whole: it embodies an ideal of human refinement" (Wagner, 2002, p. 81).

Wagner's proposal (2002) points to the symbolic construction of the person in relation to the collective. In this sense, we back up the idea that our body cannot be thought decontextualized from the culture in which the person is and from relationships of this culture with the others. These relationships include, of course, the colonial stages of creation and development of a nation, being the community realized in accordance with Benedict Anderson (2008). Our body does not exist separate from the symbols, meanings and cultural meanings in which it is inserted and which it helps to build and transform. That is, our body and the corporeality that

contains it and from which it formed is also a result of colonization that we have experienced historically, and the power relationships that have been established since then.

Thinking of culture in relation to the body includes the idea of cultural barriers that this body can suffer in its development. Part of the colonization process in Brazil and many other countries involved the dominance of the bodies found in colonized lands. The colony saw its bodies being disciplined by the colonizers. If the culture exists on the extent of the symbolic act of persons, symbolic objects produced by us and the historicity built (Boesch, 1991), taming, disciplining and fitting the bodies to the Eurocentric model was clearly a significant demonstration of what Foucault appointed as biopower.

According to Foucault (1987), power is built historically as a practice, not as an object, and it is established in the networks of relationships and in the micro relationships of people. According to the author, power crosses the whole society and is omnipresent in the relationships of the world. Its network operates in addition to the State, community, family or technology, and is everywhere, because it comes from all places. It encompasses everything and everyone, it is present in the relationships established in different places, even when there is resistance.

The practices of power, which, according to the author, operate in any society, tying, imposing limits and obligations to the body, work through regulatory mechanisms and devices. According to Foucault (1987, p. 164),

The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power*', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile*' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us

say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.

Discipline acts as a technology of biopower, operating directly on the individuals, dominating them, controlling their aptitudes and taming the bodies. It corrects and ranks according to its needs. Biopower is the regulatory element of biological diversity and the disciplinary is the regulatory element of the individual body. On the one hand, the biopower crosses State institutions and agencies, it acts on the collective body; on the other, the discipline operates in the individual scope, punishing and watching out for the taming. Biopower, according to Foucault (1987), brings a series of mechanisms which, through the biological characteristics of the human species, creates power strategies for the masses control.

But how does the body act and react to these power relationships? One of the theoretical perspectives that allows us to understand this fact is Greiner's proposition of *bodymedia* (2005), and its unfolding in the writings of Katz (2005; 2010). Thinking historically the issues of power, biopower and our incursion through the *bodymedia* in a society like the Brazilian one, in which the colonization context is explicit, it is necessary to understand how we are affected by the moorings and enforcement of colonization, recognize them and maybe unfasten some of them, allowing an identity of its own, unlike the one that subjects us to colonization.

The noun "body comes from the Latin *corpus and corporis*, which are of the same family of corpulence and incorporate" (Greiner, 2005, p. 17). This first aspect refers to the materiality of the body. In the Indo-Iranian dictionary, still according to the author, the term has its origin in *krp*, which suggests "form", and points out that the Greek origin is *soma* – a dead body – and *demas* – alive body.

From its etymology and its use in the field of historical-philosophical research, we noticed that there is a certain convergence towards the design of a split body as, according to Greiner, for a long time this was the form used to understand the body and its relationships with the world surrounding it (Simão; Sampaio, 2014, p. 155). Currently, the division has been losing strength and focus has fallen on the interdependence among their biological, social and cultural dimensions. In the words of Greiner (2005, p. 37), "[...] the relationship between the biological body and the

cultural body is an aspect to begin to map the body as a system, not as an instrument or product anymore”. It is a system that, when interacting with other systems, generates changes in itself and in the other one. Thus, the body affects and is affected by the other and the same happens with the environment in which it is inserted.

Katz (2010, p. 124), from Sebeok idea, and in dialogue with Greiner’s propositions, discusses the context in his understanding of the body.

The context is not a container populated by things that shape it; the context is always changing because the set of things that forms it also changes. The updates are continuous, articulatory and decentered, as the permanent transit makes the notions of inside and outside unstable. Thus, the context and everything that forms it shall be read as transient states in a constant flow of changes.

Understanding that the environment moves the body leads to the assumption that the body, in turn, moves/regulates the environment. For Greiner (2005) and Katz (2005), this bidirectionality generates a process of coevolution, in which all information does not reach a body without undergoing changes. When the information is absorbed by the person, it may be used within new cognitive-affective contexts, generating senses and meanings that are distinct from the initial ones.

The environment in which information is produced, conveyed and interpreted is never static, but kind of sensitive to the context – therefore, the exchanges between the bodies and environments are possible, and the body, that is always passing through several environments/contextes, keeps on exchanging information that not only modifies it, but also modifies the environments. Of course, there is a fee of preservation which ensures the unity and survival of every living being, in this process of co-transformations that does not stop between body and environment (Greiner, 2010, p. 123).

Taking this perspective of context makes us state that relationships of biopower of which Foucault speaks about would also be (co)built by people in their everyday life in addition to State or economic relationships. However, power as practice and force acts in a more present and effective way on the person rather than the person on the power. One person alone does not represent the strength of the collective, that is why the relationship is unequal. If the bodies are the result of their interactions with other bodies and with the environment, they affect the practices of power to which they

are subjected to. From this perspective, the bodies are the ones that (co-)regulate, nourish and maintain the coloniality; therefore, they may also find ways to reveal or minimize such influence in the creation and recreation of the culture in which they lie toward the recognition of coloniality and, who knows, paths of decoloniality.

Quijano (2000) coined the concept of coloniality as being a practice of power that surpasses the colonialism, that remains in the world-system even after processes of decolonization and independence. The author uses the term to try to explain the modernity as a process directly connected to the colonization, i.e., linked to the colonial experience. With the independence of most of the European colonies, Quijano demonstrates that the structures of subordination and exploitation are now played by the capitalist world-system. For the author, the current system would also be colonial and modern. Thus, the historic process that began in the 16th century is linked to the concept of coloniality, integrating colonizers and colonized in the current system, in order to perpetuate the participants' roles in an explorer-exploited relationship.

System-World, in its turn, refers to a structure that encompasses the international relationships by means of globalization; a way how the political, economic and social dimensions are given among countries, having capitalism as background. In the search for the world capitalist advancing, labor relationships, production and economic demands become divisors of waters and help to determine the position of each country in the world relationship among all others. As a result, or goal, the world-system proposed by Wallerstein (1979) divides the world between hegemonic and dependent. However, the disparities in relationships do not only apply to countries, but also internally to every nation, every social group, reaching the personal relationships that somehow reverberate all other relationships of meso and macro span. In short, such interferences have a decisive impact on the modes of physical and symbolic action of every person.

If the coloniality is still present in the world-system, it reveals in its culture the European supremacy over the Asian, African and Latin American ones. The decolonial debate (Quijano, 2000) suggests that the colonization may have finished in many countries, but that the coloniality remains active in the capitalist form in which the world is organized. This is

because the colonizer continued being the conqueror and controlling the countries before invaded and colonized. The implications of the maintenance of the coloniality for discussions about the body and identity contribute so that we can build, even partially, an overview of the process that has established both the daily body and the colonized body.

The coloniality remains in practice where power is present. This is not just a matter of how the colonization was, relationship between colonizer and colony, but rather of vestiges that remain intrinsic in the society that was colonized. Currently, the relationship should be between decolonized/world, but, although a country is no longer colonized, it still suffers the consequences of having been/being a colony. Its people and its economy respond to capitalism, which had its system built after the colonies. In a society that works with aspects arising out of coloniality, it holds its values upheld in the explorer/exploited relationship.

If even after the decolonization we work in a relationship of coloniality, then decoloniality would be one way to build one's own perspectives, which consider the colonial path, recognize its operating traits and decide what to do with them, within the scope allowed by culture, which, as already said, also responds to colonial traits. As it is not possible to exclude the influence of colonization, what is expected with the decoloniality is to find an identity different from that imposed by the Europeans, even though their influences remain. Perhaps, in a first moment, it is believed that the economic, cultural and political aspects would be characterized autonomously in Latin American countries after the decolonization. However, this did not occur and, according to Mignolo (2005), these aspects responded to the interests of European countries. Thinking of the decoloniality is to allow the creation of culture, in the Wagnerian sense, through a more autonomous and less forced process by the foreigner, which does not mean pure, but conscious.

Mignolo (2008, p. 292) explains that

In South America, Central America and the Caribbean, the decolonial thought lives in the minds and bodies of indigenous people as well as of African descent. The memories recorded in their bodies for generations and the socio-political marginalization to which they were subjected by direct imperial institutions, as well as by republican institutions controlled by the

Creole population of European descent, nourished a change in geography and in State policy of knowledge.

There is a unidirectional approach in the historical narratives about the cultural constitution of the colonized peoples. This makes it impossible to recognize the history of peoples colonized by prospects that are not restricted to the European approach, even including the Eurocentric perspective. Surely this fact, which has drastic implications for how we think and make up our culture, also lies on how we see and idealize our bodies. This is because, in addition to a biological body, we are composed of symbolic constructions that we produce on and with the body. These productions are at the heart of what we understand, for instance, as a healthy body, sexual body, biological body, young body (adult, old), bodily development, etc. We have certainly built all these categories from a matrix based on colonial legacies.

In the words of Quijano,

In reality, each category used to characterize the political process in Latin America has always been a partial and distorted way of looking at this reality. This is an inevitable consequence of the Eurocentric perspective, in which a unidirectional and unilinear evolutionism is mixed contradictorily with the dualistic view of history; a new and radical dualism that separates the nature from society, the body from the reason; that does not know what to do with the question of totality, denying it simply as the old empiricism or the new post-modernism, or understanding the only organic or systemic mode, converting it to a distorting perspective, impossible to be used except for the error. Therefore, it is not an accident that we have been, for a while, defeated in both revolutionary projects, in America and throughout the world. What we could move forward and conquer in terms of civil and political rights, a necessary redistribution of power, of which the decolonization of society is the presupposition and a point of departure, is now being broken in the process of reconcentration of control of power in the world capitalism and with the management of those responsible for the colonality of power. Consequently, it is time to learn how to liberate us from the Eurocentric mirror where our image is always necessarily distorted. It is time, finally, to cease to be what we are not (Quijano, 2005, p. 138-139).

If on the one hand the colonization was historically the submission and slavery of people, on the other, and quite expressive for the decolonial

discourse, it has created the need for deviant actions, “[...] arenas of resistance and conflicts, compelling, counter-hegemonic strategies and new languages and indigenous projects of modernity” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, p. 53).

The decolonial perspective does not intend the overlapping of cultures. In it, it is expected the fairness of worlds. Therefore, the decolonial option is a world of coexistence, in which we realize the intrinsic coloniality to our cultural processes and we figure out how to live with it. Thus,

[...] Decolonial means to think from the exteriority and in a subaltern epistemic position vis-à-vis to the epistemic hegemony that creates, builds, raises and external face in order to ensure its interiority. [...] Decolonial implies thinking from languages and categories of thought not included in the foundations of Western thoughts (Mignolo, 2008, p. 305).

In this sense, how would a body that thought/worked in a subversive way be in relation to its colonial world-system? To answer this question, we propose to think how an artistic process can be used to ensure that the person in a state of action recognizes the coloniality of his body. We are not referring to the deconstruction to seek a new way of working the body, but the recognition of aspects of our body, which are fruits of a routine based also on the coloniality. After all,

[...] decoloniality means at the same time: (a) to unveil the logic of coloniality and the reproduction of the colonial matrix of power (which, of course, means a capitalist economy); and (b) to disconnect from the totalitarian purposes of subjectivities and categories of the Western thought (for instance, the successful and progressive subject and blind prisoner of consumerism) (Mignolo, 2008, p. 314).

Decoloniality and Performing Body³

Next, we will discuss the experience of the production of the spectacle in Performing Poetic Composition (Sampaio, 2017a), *Favores da Lua – o prólogo*, performed in 2011 in the state of São Paulo by the *Eu-Outro* Performing Research Center⁴. The work was directed by the second author of this text, with acting out of the first author. In the creation process of the spectacle, some questions were raised that bring the proposal of body work close to the actor of the decolonial perspective discussed in this text. The documents used for analysis are from the logbook written by the director

between 2010 and 2012. Part of this material is published in the book *A constituição do ser(ator) entre a cotidianidade e as artes cênicas* (Sampaio, 2017a).

During the preparation of this spectacle, the director coined and developed with the members of the group the notion of *atense body*⁵. The *atense body* is set as the bearer of only the tension necessary for its maintenance in the performing situation. The excess of tensions in the biological dimension of the body hinders the expansion of body poetic compositions to the scene. “This ‘atense body’ [...] organizes itself with a minimum of tension necessary for its existence. For this reason, the expressions non-tense and relaxed did not account for what we were intending to mean and seek” (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 24). It was from this finding that the neologism arose in the practices of the group.

One of the crucial aspects of this performing research is that the actor needs to turn the look to his body, in order to pull it from the daily automatism and be aware of the influence that the relationships of power, of coloniality and social training exert on the body, initial stage of any decolonial proposal – to assume that coloniality exists and operates collectively and individually. The conduction aims to allow the person to extend his field of perception about himself, then to understand how he can construct a poetics of the scene. The person becomes the matrix and the true aesthetic contribution of language. All other materialities brought to the scene have as proposition the transformation of the corporeity of the person to be developed by the spectator. This implies the quality of the actor’s presence.

After constituting the necessary tensions, the ‘atense body’ must be rubbed with the other materialities of the scene, so that it can effectively build upon themselves the necessary tension to the game introduced in creation (and not only in its own existence). The tensions required should arise, as well, to the extent that the performing action is being made and the bodies are assumed as one of the materiality of this composition. (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 24).

In the direction of the decoloniality proposed with the notion of *atense body*, the first step would be to dialogue with one’s own-body (Merleau-Ponty, 2011; 2012; 2013), and then to be aware of its moorings. This initiative would be the initial step to put an end to the automatism of

which Foucault (1987) talks on the discipline of bodies and biopower. Therefore, the actor, besides being attentive to his body, seeks a non-daily conscience about himself. By what we are building, such awareness focuses on the automatic daily immersed in relationships governed by invisible foreign/colonial influences. In this direction, it is expected that the participant of theatrical practices in Performing Poetic Composition takes one's body to an extra-daily state. That is, it goes to being-there (Heidegger, 2009) in the world different from the usual. It is in this extra-daily situation of the body that the director believes that the actor can take awareness of his bodily moorings, not only for the scene, but also, and mainly, for the everyday life.

If the actor is to be aware of his body and its modes of operating in the world, and perhaps recognize its automatisms, he would be in the way of experiencing a body in a decolonial process. That is, upon experiencing the *atense body* the actor allows himself to have a decolonial posture toward himself, what, perhaps, encourages him to have the same posture in relation to other bodies/people. This is because, when the actor somehow removes everyday tensions to allow the scene to show the necessary tensions, he is building a body that seeks to oppose in his practice the model built by everyday life, originating in large measure from colonial processes.

And we did not need to do very complex exercises. In a short time, we realized that the walking, a particular way of bringing the body through spaces, was sufficient to gradually allow us access to more than we expected to show with the simple shift of feet on the ground. The walking, something so quotidian, revealed, to the extent that we were mapping in walking, tensions, ways, pressures, absolutely unnecessary for the simple fact of walking. We supposed in a tentative way at that time that everyday formatting was revealed arising from the way we dwelled the world. Our bodies were revealing to ourselves the straps and the power relationships with which we deal with daily and that we were shaping the body that we exhibited when walking. The advancement of the research in 2010 came, in a large extent, from this process of self-encounter with oneself, focusing on bodily tensions.

We were sure of one thing: the body needs to be in interaction with the environment (objects, things, people, symbols) so that it can be affected

and pressured by the materiality of the scene (actor, light, sound, setting, etc.) to make the necessary changes. This implies, therefore, placing also in dialogue with the historicity of things and symbols, which includes the hegemonic European perspective, but is not limited to it.

That is, the 'atense body' is contextually built and it is only possible to be effectively experienced if the being-actor opens up to the biological dimension of his own existence; however, such existing is never independent of social and cultural dimensions of the body. This opening, therefore, is an opening of being to the body-in-itself. [...] We suppose, to the extent that it approaches its biophysical organization, it is forwarded to its socio-cultural existence. Even though the access to the biological dimension of the body is never given to the being directly and in isolation, it is only because it exists that any another dimension of human phenomenon can happen. In addition, with the passing of time and experimentation, most human beings-actors noticed a considerable reduction of the distance between the 'atense body' and the daily body, reporting changes in tonicity and perception not in the body on the scene only, but also, and especially, in the body in its everyday activities (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 24-25).

To deepen the notion of *atense body*, Sampaio (2017a) presents the metaphor of a primary-color body. The author suggests that the body will have its scene state formulated from interference suffered by it. And not only human bodies are feasible of tensions, but all physical and symbolic bodies with which the person interacts.

At some moments [...] we compare the 'atense body' to the idea of a primary color. Each being-actor in creation and under the perspective of 'atense body' exposes a base, a birth-place, for multiple creative interactions. While the primary colors are only three, the 'atense bodies', as initial points, are infinite, but each one has a finite potential repertoire of creation (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 30).

This idea of primary-color-body refers to a body which has the necessary elements for future combinations and which earns its shades through dialogue with the elements and members of the scene. "[...] this body when available for the game of pressures will suffer the impact of further tension and relaxation that will allow the composition of the said performing body, according to the principles with which we work" (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 27).

In the work with the *atense body*, automatism is not avoided, on the opposite, in the state of representation ways are sought to recognize the automatism and to allow an identity construction which, at least, is guided by the acceptance of the existence of coloniality that constitutes the body. It is demanded to see the marks on the historicity of the bodies, of their colonial relationships and power. That is, a performing construction that does not deny the historicity of the body. A performing body, therefore, that it is also a descendant of colonial processes. If the *atense body* varies with each individual, it could then establish and seek its originating way of being; what makes it unique and at the same time part of the social body, that the culture builds on and around the person. That is,

[...] we are not talking about, I reiterate here, a body that keeps a strictly routine record, regarding the perception, for instance, but a body that should itself be there, in everyday actions. Why in the scene should we expand the senses? It seems to me more logical to think by the inverse: this *atense body* of which we speak about, and which we intend to organize our activities, considers for a moment the dimensions of the body itself, in its physical aspects, but also cognitive-affective, and the other as (co)constructor of this dynamic of symbolic action, which seems to us, plausible to the scene and to everyday life. When I say another, I say the other as space, such as lighting, such as sound, but also as another-subject. That is, the record that we seek for the bodies is potentially performing and quotidian at the same time, depending, of course, on the insertion we do of it in a particular culture, if we consider the scene in its operation, as a culture, interdependent and analogous to that where the subjects are in a non-performing-acting out state (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 50).

It is in this perspective of the body relaxation (*body atension*) in the direction to the quotidian that we consider this artistic process as a decolonial process. It is worth mentioning that, as the director warns in many passages of his logbook, the *atense body* and the ordinary body have a very tenuous limit of separation, but not enough to constitute a single dimension of bodily existence, even if they are inseparable. However, it is important to reiterate that the group leader does not indicate in his reports, in the period that we analyze his logbook with the *Eu-Outro* Performing Research Center, the daily body as a colonized body. Probably because this was not a topic of interest explicit in time of the propositions of the activities that serve as illustration.

One of the paths taken by the director to reach the *atense body* was working with vertigo. For Sampaio (2017a), upon reducing the rational control over the body, a result of the vertiginous state, some automatisms and lines of force acting on the body became evident. In this sense, the decrease of rational control allowed the mapping, though initial, of the marks of everyday life and of their relationships of power over the body (in the search for the idea of a healthy body, sexual, beautiful, professional, etc.), silent constituents of the person that was performing. This fact can be observed in the following passage of the logbook:

The accounts were in the sense that this way [at work with vertigo] the tensions of the bodies are further evidenced. This point interests me very much. I wonder if the vertigo may be a path of discovery of tensions and there would be an intense work to reach the *atense body*? Elton, for example, highlights his tension in the legs. This was accounted by more than one person in the group. Aninha, soon after the turn, puts a strain on the face that quickly is identified by someone (I can't remember who it was) (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 38).

The studies on the vertigo seem to have become quite important for the actors, as shown by several of their accounts transcribed by Sampaio (2017a). Perhaps the importance perceived by the actors is in line with Sampaio's purpose, in accordance with the following:

The vertigo, to a certain extent, prevents the being-actor to build the being-of-the-scene completely under the cares of reason. Upon confusing their own senses, in frantic turning, for instance, the body starts to reveal even more in the swirl of sensations and in biological attempt to (re)balance. The unnecessary tensions tend to be considerably more evident to the eyes of the observer and, thus, on conduction, the advisor has more access to the steps to be taken in pursuit of the 'atense body' (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 38).

We reiterate, however, that with this activity we were not concerned with any attempt of total deconstruction of symbolic-actional framework that each participant had about himself, even because we believe that this goal is totally achievable. But rather we were trying to unveil some of the characteristics of scripture of the body in space. Consequently, we aimed to become part of the clear coloniality and open paths to decoloniality (when it would be interesting for the person and for the creation), that is, to a

large extent, a personal initiative and is not linked with the scene to be created, *stricto sensu*.

The construction of the *atense body* is also possible by means of other types of game, other than those of vertigo, such as in the following example, which is governed solely on distance and in games of imagination about the ideal body for the scene:

Ideal Body: Walk! Is this the body that you consider ideal for the scene? If so, notice what this body is. If not, how to get to the ideal body? Perform the passage from one to another – step-by-step! What is really necessary in this ideal body? What is really necessary in this ideal (*atense*) body? Why does Larissa's ideal body have the chin forward? Why do some ideal bodies have arms detached from the body? Why when we talk about ideal body so many places place tension? Should the ideal body not be the 'Atense' or 'Attentive' body? (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 20).

What this passage seems to evidence is that the theater culture produces relationships of coloniality. Techniques and ways of doing and thinking of the theater are quite often imported and include the local practices and the more disaggregated proposals of the groups. This would justify, for instance, some choices of actors from the group on what they considered, until this work, as an ideal body for the scene. The ideal body (Sampaio, 2017a) refers to a record of tensions and other bodily qualities that are fair and necessary to the scene in accordance with the aesthetics that organizes the creation. In summary, a body suited to the scene, without excesses or shortages of the biological dimension of the body in the construction of performing presence. Thus, in order to unveil this pertinent and fair state of presence to the scene, it is necessary to prove the automatisms, unnecessary tensions built in everyday life, and previous ideational modes of being in the scene. We reiterate that it is in this dimension that the process passes to constitute as decolonial.

Many of the theater techniques and perspectives establish parameters of bodily behavior that are independent of the person to whom it is intended, assuming, in our terms, a relationship of power and more value that overwhelms the person to the dictates of the pre-established scene. In *Performing Poetic Composition*, however, the perspective that is being built by Sampaio (2017a) and that is the basis of the creation of the

spectacle whose process we analyzed, the assumption is investigative and not of results:

[...] I prefer to say that adaptability is the factor that allows the existence of this speculative structure that we have while performing research. There is only the possibility of such research to be validated because we do not work from the starting point of a regulatory process and neither wish to structure one. Upon proposing the collective research of an *atense* body of, we think of the idea of building individually, and according to the specific characteristics to each corporeity, a way to understand practically the performing existence of this 'bodily atension' (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 24).

Even though we discuss about the decoloniality in an artistic process, we do not intend, therefore, to create other parameters to be followed by directors, actors or artists in general. It is, rather, a goal that can be shared as a theoretical-philosophical and methodological perspective, and that both the path and the point of arrival is always individual and depend on the tracks in the game, the scene and the daily life of each one and the collective initiative which we undertake.

One must take care to ensure that the proposals that we have been making do not become practical manuals to be replicated by other professionals. This would lead us to create decolonizing and decolonial discourses and without effective decolonizing and decolonial practice. This is a principle that Rivera Cusicanqui recognizes in many multiculturalist discourses, including Quijano and Mignolo, who serve us as references in this text.

The discourse of multiculturalism and the discourse of hybridity are essentialist and historicist readings on the indigenous issue, which does not deal with issues of decolonization; on the contrary, conceal and renew effective practices of colonization and subordination (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, p. 62).

Although we agree with the author's criticisms to the theoretical frameworks that we used in this text, concerning these authors consider as pre-political the indigenous peasant movements, this does not exclude the value of the propositions of Quijano and Mignolo regarding the dyad coloniality-decoloniality, in addition to the indigenous issues *stricto sensu*. Upon particularizing the decolonial initiatives at our jobs and focusing on the person's modes of action in the world, we want, to a large extent, avoid

the totalizing and universalizing discourse that would imply in subordinations, probably from Northern patterns, and the diverting of linear conception of historicity that the two authors are linked, timely aspects also criticized by Rivera Cusicanqui.

We also agree with the author about the need to establish dialogue among epistemologies, cultures, ethical and aesthetic qualities of the South (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, p. 73), but we do not believe in the possibility to exclude from the temporal cyclic flow of human experiences influences and dialogues with epistemologies, cultures, ethical and aesthetic qualities of the North. After all, the latter are also part of our constitution. Upon assuming our bodies as media, in the sense already exposed in this text, we are assuming personal and private ways of dealing with the different influences.

The body is not a means through which the information simply passes, because all the information that arrives will enter into negotiations with that which is already there. The body is the result of these crossings, and not a place where information is just sheltered. It is with this notion of media of oneself that the bodymedia deals with, and not with the idea of media conceived as a vehicle for transmission. The media which the bodymedia refers to concerns the evolutionary process of selecting information that will constitute the body (Greiner, 2005, p. 131).

Our work, in this regard, upon recognizing the body both as a receiver-builder as well as interlocutor-builder (Simão; Sampaio, 2014, p. 158), is to attempt to explain the influences and hegemonies and try, as far as possible, to build conditions for people and social groups to be able to decolonize their imaginary, to deal with situations of more autonomous and conscious coloniality. Here we come across, for instance, with the unfolding of this discussion to think about the insertion of theater in K-12 education in Brazil (and also of other artistic languages).

Upon assuming our bodies as media and outside the context we presented in the previous paragraphs, we are walking in the direction of thinking that our *atense bodies* can even have among themselves some common points of disclosure of a same coloniality. Also about what we should/can think, act, modify, when necessary and appropriate. But how each one of us deal with it and/or lead to the scene, only poetry to be built and personal desires may say.

In the wake of that we outlined so far is that we are doing our *Performing Poetic Compositions*, with

[...] orders of movement – oppositions, parallels, inheritances, bend over and falls; and the laws of motion – height, strength, expansion, focus, sequence, direction, shape, speed, reverse reaction, tension, relaxation, extension, swinging, presence and balance [...] Association and disassociation of movements and their organization in space. [...] [Besides] (un)balance, opposition, alternation and compensation [...] [Linked to the questions] Which part of the body moves? In which direction or directions this/these part/parts moves/move? What is the muscle energy required for moving? With what speed does it travel through space? (Sampaio, 2017a, p. 18).

The journey herein explained aims to produce performing poetry and make it a decolonial process for our bodies, as it has already been said, by seeking to reveal automatisms built into our everyday lives. The focus on physical and symbolic action of the individual is tied to the idea that “[...] the regression or progression, the repetition or the overcoming of the past are at stake at every juncture and depend on our actions more than our words” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, p. 55).

Somehow, but this will need to be addressed in another text, the performing constructions arising from this artistic process have been recognized frequently, also, as a decolonial aesthetics. This fact seems to be linked to our assumption that an artistic process guided by a decolonial perspective results not only in a transformation of the people involved, but also in the creation of ethical and aesthetic epistemologies, equally decolonial. We also assume that this occurs to the extent that the decoloniality of the body lead to decoloniality of the imaginary (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010), which, in turn, enables new initiatives of bodily decoloniality, in a cycle that feedbacks it.

Final Remarks

In this text we present, since the authors’ experiences of creation, how the performing creation may take a decolonial dimension to the (bodily) existence of the person in everyday life. Therefore, we assume that even with the end of relationships of colonization among nations, the political

practices of coloniality still exert force on the modes of constructing the quotidian and in it to constitute in the condition of a person.

The Performing Poetic Composition, a perspective to teaching and theatrical creation, was adopted as a way to reflect about the question: how would a body that thought/acted in a subversive way in relation to its colonial world-system be? Quite often the artistic practice is taken always in its sense of positive transformation. However, we are still, in Brazil, largely dependent on ways of thinking and creating in theater guided by non-Brazilian logics, proposals and aesthetic. In this direction, as pointed out in the text, many processes of creation can also operate in the logic of coloniality.

Conversely, what was observed with the analysis of the experience is that the Performing Poetic Composition aims to reveal part of the coloniality working in everyday life of the person that is acting as a professional of the scene. Among all the possible paths, we chose to highlight the presence of automatic actions (not chosen) in dynamics that are taken as conscious actions (chosen). We mention then the first step to decoloniality. As long as our modes of being in the world are taken as natural and organic, built on the idea that we are autonomous in this process, the decoloniality will only be theoretical, when it exists.

To maintain consistency with the process being analyzed, vertigo (associated to walking) was taken as one of the possible paths for the disclosure of unnecessary bodily tensions, from which we operate our worlds. We assume that these tensions are, to a large extent, arising out of bodily ideals that sustain our daily life. And in the case of the actors, it is added to this first fact the search for theater aesthetics and modes of representation or interpretation, which are usually taken as good, better, ideal. Power relationships that affect the body of the professionals of the scene also emerge, building, little by little, automatism (result from coloniality).

It seems to us that the functionality of the vertigo happens to the extent of the decrease of rational control, carried by the state in which the person is. The decrease of control partially disorganizes the body. And it is exactly in the attempt of reorganization that we realized the actors seeking

ways to walk, ways of being present, absolutely unnecessary to the situation of exercise and creation that were participating.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that we, with the Performing Poetic Composition, did not seek to undertake the construction of a method, which would betray its first intention, which is to give back the person to himself in the processes of creation. In case it was organized as a method, the creation would relate the person to the method and would also be likely to natures of creation that would support the prospect of coloniality. The perspective serves us, to that extent, to consider the personal subjective processes of constitution and how these processes can be valued and fostered by the contexts of creation, toward a more conscious existence in relation to the dynamics of power and biopower to which we are exposed (and by which we are constantly influenced).

Notes

- ¹ This article results from the MSc research of the first author, titled *Entre o corpo cotidiano e o corpo cênico: uma perspectiva pós-colonial*, co-advised by the second author. The thesis was presented at Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana, at the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Latin American Studies in Culture and Society in Latin America, in 2017. In addition to the advising of the second author, the work also received contribution from Professor PhD Barbara Maisonnave Arisi.
- ² It refers to a critical review of the literature about the pedagogy and the theatrical practice in conjunction with a mix of constructivist semiotic-cultural proposals in psychology, a perspective created in Brazil by Livia Mathias Simão, and with the phenomenology of Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, with the purpose of thinking the cognitive-affective development of the person who dedicated to performing activities. For more information about the prospect see (Sampaio, 2015a; 2015b; 2017a; 2017b; Sampaio; Diniz, 2017).
- ³ We ask the reader to understand the number of self-quotations made in this part of the text. This results from the fact that the perspective and the concepts are creation, still under development. Besides, we believe that it would be fair to bring to the material the greatest possible number of examples and notes on the analyzed experience, with the purpose of facilitating the reading.

- ⁴ O *Eu-Outro* Performing Research Center is an extension of CONAC (Laboratory of Research and Extension in Performing Poetic Composition, narrativity and construction of knowledge, Universidade Federal de Tocantins), under development in the state of São Paulo. It is a socio-cultural/artistic research center, which focuses its research on performing language following what is recognized as illuminating. It unfolds from the studies that are carried out at CONAC (Palmas-TO) and forms an artistic repertoire (creation of spectacles in Performing Poetic Composition) of artists with different technical and academic backgrounds living in the state of São Paulo, but who develop performing studies continuously under the supervision of the CONAC coordinator. For more information, see the site: www.conac.net
- ⁵ *Atense* is the English translation of a neologism created in Portuguese (*atenso*), meaning relaxed.

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