

The Body Sliding Meanings: The Discursive (Inter)(En)lacement of the Political on the Frontiers with the Social / *O corpo deslizando sentidos: o en(tre)lace discursivo do político nas fronteiras com o social*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the question of the signifying materiality of the body in the discursive interlacement of the political imbricated on the frontiers with the social, based on the works of Dan Halter. To this end, we propose a theoretical-analytical dialogue between the dialogical perspective developed by Russian Mikhail Bakhtin and the historical-materialism perspective, based on the theoretical assumptions of the French Discourse Analysis, in order to analyze the object of this study in its relation with body, memory, and discourse. In this sense, by working with the imbrication between verbal and non-verbal materiality, we intend to focus on two specific works by Zimbabwean artist Dan Halter, considering the meaning effects that slide metaphorically and metonymically to other senses of the body that unfold in different images of the subject, in view of the processes that structure the conflict and tensivity of the social from the spaces occupied by these bodies and crossed by the symbolic, by ideology, and history.

KEYWORDS: Discourse; Memory; Ideology; Signifying materiality of the body

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo discutir a questão da materialidade significativa do corpo no en(tre)lace discursivo do político imbricado nas fronteiras com o social, a partir das obras de Dan Halter. Para tanto, proponho um diálogo teórico-analítico entre a perspectiva dialógica desenvolvida pelo russo Mikhail Bakhtin e a perspectiva do materialismo-histórico, tendo como base o dispositivo teórico da Análise do Discurso francesa, a fim de analisar o objeto de estudo em questão na relação corpo, memória e discurso. Nesse sentido, ao trabalhar com a imbricação entre a materialidade verbal e não verbal, busco lançar olhar sobre duas obras do artista zimbabueano Dan Halter, considerando, desse modo, os efeitos de sentido que deslizam metafórica e metonimicamente para outros sentidos do corpo que se desdobram em diferentes imagens do sujeito, tendo em vista os processos de estruturação do conflito e da tensividade do/no social a partir dos espaços ocupados por estes corpos e atravessados que são pelo simbólico, pela ideologia e pela história.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso; Memória; Ideologia; Materialidade significativa do corpo

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Introduction

When observing the signifying materiality of the body in its relationship with language, history and the social, the dialogue with Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin is advantageous and appropriate. In this sense, the influence of his work and the Circle is broad and rich, considering the appropriation of the Circle's concepts by several authors, such as Julia Kristeva, Jacqueline Authier-Revuz, and Tzvetan Todorov. Besides, unlike the notions of polyphony, chronotope and exotopia, for example, Bakhtin's perception on the question of the body (as a support for discourse) is not organized centrally in one of his books, but briefly commented in some of his works, such as the essay *Автор и герой в эстетической деятельности* [Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity],¹ from 1920-1924, in which the problem of the body's cultural value appears in Bakhtin's work for the first time. This noncentrality provokes a significant *a priori* effect: the need to consider the question of the body in all its complexity: in its social, discursive, political, historical, and ideological dimensions. However, considering his early manuscripts:

[...] Bakhtin was exploring a more dynamic notion of how the body relates to the environment, one based on the notion of endless movement and interaction. In his early thinking meaning was based on fixed position and moment; later it was in endless flux and process. I argue that even though Bakhtin is still dealing with images of bodies, his emphasis on materiality opens the possibility of a dialogue with what Guy Claxton called a New Materialism [...], and more generally a more dynamic conception of the body that extends into the world (MACCAW, 2019, p.38).²

Thus, in this article I intend to elucidate this complexity, resuming some of the main points of Bakhtin's theory (presenting concepts appropriate for this discussion) in dialogue³ with the materialist perspective of French Discourse Analysis, with which I work. Therefore, I try to observe the theoretical basis of Bakhtin's thought (starting with

¹ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov; translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.4-256.

² MACCAW, D. Bakhtin's bodies. *Bakhtiniana*, v. 14, n. 3, pp.36-54, julho/set, 2019. Available at: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/bak/v14n3/2176-4573-bak-14-03-0035.pdf>. Accessed on: 06 Jan. 2020.

³ Not failing to consider here the divergences and approximations between Bakhtin's theory and the French perspective of Discourse Analysis, we decided to establish a possible dialogue, which is challenging and productive at the same time, based on current discursive studies.

the idea of art as a responsible act), which helps us to reflect on the dialogical projections of the body in/through art, considering the meanings mobilized by the body sliding through/on the frontiers with the social. To do so, the analysis is based on some snapshots of street protests in South Africa, in different historical moments, captured from *Untitled – Zimbabwean Queen of Rave* (2005; 3:33s) and *Beitbridge Moonwalk* (2010; 5:24s), videos by Zimbabwean artist Dan Halter. By mobilizing the question of the body occupying different social spaces, in these videos he builds his critique of the political situation of Zimbabwe in its postcolonial era. Based on the videos, I examine how the artist perceives the demonstrations for the end of *Apartheid* and the xenophobia directed at refugees who left Zimbabwe to South Africa.

In this sense, considering the discursive materiality and modes of representation of the social and political body in the videos, first, I turn my attention to Bakhtin's thought regarding the question of the body. For Bakhtin, the body is the materiality of singular events and a type of signature of individuals, constituted by language, ideology, and history. It is always an unfinished body, which becomes a "whole" when contemplated by the *other*. Thus, according to the understanding of the Russian philosopher, what makes the body an ideological sign is its materiality - as an object -, as well as its historical materiality and ideological value. In this sense, by approaching this signifying materiality of the body⁴ as a support for the discourse of struggle, militancy, resistance and protest on the frontiers with the social, I reflect on the important words of the Russian philosopher that "both body and meaning can do a cartwheel" (BAKHTIN. 1984, p.415).⁵ In this vein, Bulgarian scholar Galin Tihanov outlined some phases of the Bakhtinian understanding of "body," reviewing how the idea of body was getting shape in the development of Bakhtin's and the Circle's works and taking into consideration the question of the body as a philosophical problem.

According to Tihanov (2012),⁶ the 1920-1924 essay of M. Bakhtin (already mentioned here) seeks to initially delineate the limits of the individual body, which is, however, inaccessible to oneself – resulting in the idea of the "inner body" (the element

⁴ We work here with the notion of signifying materiality developed by Lagazzi (2009, 2011).

⁵ BAKHTIN, M. *Rabelais and his World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

⁶ TIHANOV, G. The Gravity of the Grotesque. *Bakhtiniana*, São Paulo, v. 7, n. 2, pp.165-178, 2012. Available at: <https://revistas.pucsp.br/bakhtiniana/article/view/11381/9337>. Accessed on: 09 Jan. 2020.

of self-consciousness, controllable) and the “outer body” (fragmented, with which one cannot act in an immediate way). The inner body completes itself through the outer body. It is not enough in itself, but needs, above all, another one. The external body, under the Bakhtinian light, embraces the inner body, shaping a kind of unarticulated mass into a whole. This feeling of wholeness and separation “becomes the prerequisite for a desirable human existence in which the body assumes cultural value” (TIHANOV, 2012, p.168).⁷ Thus,

[...] Bakhtin’s division of the body into internal and external originates in Max Scheler’s phenomenology. Scheler speaks of the ‘animate’ body (*Leib*) and the ‘physical’ body (*Körper*)[...] to suggest – similarly to Bakhtin – that it is someone else’s feeling of sympathy directed towards my physical body that endows me with the sense of unity and with the gratifying experiencing of the boundaries of my body as a whole. Bakhtin’s term *sochuvstvie* is a precise rendition of Scheler’s *Sympathie*. We hear the echo of this significant concept in Bakhtin’s contention that “I myself cannot be the author of my own value, just as I cannot lift myself by my own hair. The biological life of an organism becomes a value only in *another’s* sympathy and compassion [*sostradanie*] with that life (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.55)” (TIHANOV, 2012, pp.167-168).⁸

After his initial view on it, Bakhtin would reconsider his thinking about the body, moving it from its individual to its social and collective aspects. According to Tihanov (2012),⁹ Bakhtin, under the influence of his friendship with Kanaev in the 1930s, turned to a different idea of the human body - especially in his book on Rabelais, written in the second half of the 1930s. Then, in the 1940s, Bakhtin began to reflect on the “collective body, whose identity is shaped not by drawing a boundary between the self and the other, but through the experience of transgressive togetherness” (TIHANOV, 2012, p.169).¹⁰ For him, “the radical shift in Bakhtin’s interpretation of the body lies in his contention that it is not a unitary entity; it is neither ‘so single’, nor ‘so my own’” (TIHANOV, 2012, p.167).¹¹

⁷ For reference, see footnote 6.

⁸ For reference, see footnote 6.

⁹ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁰ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹¹ For reference, see footnote 6.

Pêcheux and Bakhtin...

Although Michel Pêcheux has hardly ever mentioned Bakhtin and his Circle,¹² the French philosopher highlights, in his epistemological position, that all science is opposed to an ideology. He considers the Russian philosopher studies as a type of “return to a pre-theoretical state” (i.e., pre-scientific). Moreover, Orlandi (1997), based on Pêcheux, criticizes Bakhtin and Voloshinov’s *Ideology of Life*, and what she calls a “sociologist dialogism.”

As a disciple of Louis Althusser:

[...] Pêcheux expanded Althusser’s reflection to think about the role of language in society: for him, language “inevitably reflected the class struggle, bringing, closely linked to its production, the marks of formation / reproduction / transformation of the conditions in which it was produced” (INDURSKY, 1997, p.20) since language was one of the forms of ideology manifestation. Moreover, the ideological apparatus of the State were places for the transformation of production relations and not simply the reproduction of the ideology of the dominant class, as Althusser argued (PORTO; SAMPAIO, 2013, p.99-100).¹³

Perhaps a possible point of convergence and approximation of their thought refers to the relationship between language and ideology. Although, in his last writings, the French theorist incorporated “notions of Bakhtin, such as constitutive heterogeneity (GREGOLIN, 2008), it was not possible for him to develop this dialogue, probably because he had no access to other texts by Bakhtin and the Circle”(PORTO; SAMPAIO, 2013, p.92).¹⁴ Maybe it would be more appropriate to think about a shift: in Pêcheux’s proposal, it leads to the notions of *meaning effects* and *imaginary formations*; in

¹² One of the few instances occurs in Pêcheux’s *La langue introuvable* (1983), coauthored with Françoise Gadet.

¹³ In original: “[...] Pêcheux ampliou a reflexão de Althusser para pensar o papel da linguagem na sociedade: para ele, a linguagem “refletia inevitavelmente a luta de classes, trazendo, intimamente ligada à sua produção, as marcas de formação/reprodução/transformação das condições em que foi produzida” (INDURSKY, 1997, p.20), porquanto a linguagem era uma das formas de manifestação da ideologia, e os aparelhos ideológicos do Estado eram lugares de transformação das relações de produção, e não simplesmente a reprodução da ideologia da classe dominante, conforme argumentava Althusser.”

¹⁴ In original: “[...] noções de Bakhtin, como a heterogeneidade constitutiva (GREGOLIN, 2008), embora não tenha sido possível ampliar esse diálogo, provavelmente por falta de acesso a outros textos de Bakhtin e do Círculo.”

Bakhtin/Voloshinov, it materializes in the concept of *everyday ideology* based on the linguistic sign.

By building bridges between the *I* and the *other*, I propose a dialogue between Bakhtin's thought and the historical materialism perspective of Pêcheux that he calls "a materialist theory of discourse" (1982, p.60),¹⁵ considering their different epistemological positions. This dialogue will help to broaden the purview of my theoretical-analytical take on the body present in different textualities, from its representations in Art.

Body, Chronotope and Discourse

Starting from the thought developed throughout the work of Bakhtin that the collective body is established through an experience of transgressive union (not being a mere unitary entity), I will focus on the question of the body as discourse and on the body textualized in different signifying materialities, such as the artistic image, film and documentary scenes, video snapshots. In this sense, I seek to show "that corporality itself is also a signifying materiality: it is discursiveness inscribed in boundary conditions of production" (AZEVEDO, 2014, p.322).¹⁶

In the research corpus, the body is marked by the political and the symbolic. It occupies different spaces of protest and meaning in different ways, given the different conditions of meaning production, in the relation between body, space, time, and subject.

Thus, for Bakhtin, on the one hand, the body "is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.26).¹⁷ Then, on the other hand, it is essential to observe it from the materialistic discursive perspective, as reflected by Azevedo (2014), considering "the movement of meanings production about / of the body" (AZEVEDO, 2014, p.322).¹⁸ From this understanding, the author states that "the modes of signifying

¹⁵ PECHEUX, M. *Language, Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious*. Translated by Harbans Nagpal. London: The Macmillan Press, 1982.

¹⁶ In original: "[...] que a própria corporalidade é também uma materialidade significante, discursividade inscrita em condições de produção fronteiriças."

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 5.

¹⁸ In original: "[...] o movimento de constituição de sentidos sobre/do corpo."

and the signifying materiality are plural: the body is a place of opacity that acquires meaning through the gaze” (AZEVEDO, 2014, p.323).¹⁹ Thus:

[...] through the theoretical affiliation to historical materialism, the material form is always historical. In other words, taking the body as a material form implies removing any conception that treats it as an empirically understandable and biologically functional reality, common in areas such as health studies, where the body is natural, segmental, controllable, and transparent (AZEVEDO, 2014, p.323).²⁰

Reading the body under this materialistic perspective, taking into account Pêcheux’s legacy in discourse studies, represents an investment in the interpretation of different materialities, such as images and *visual formulations* (LAGAZZI, 2013; 2014a; 2014b) of the body. The analyst is required to seek beyond the meanings in evidence, in a methodological path between description and interpretation, making opacity work around the body and the representations of the body. In this perspective, “[...] for us human body was and remains covered with signs, even if their nature, the gaze that deciphers them, the position of the interpreter and the intention of the person who expresses them have historically changed” (COURTINE, 2013, p.78).²¹

In the case of art, it is possible to observe different representations of the body. Some of them, which are the object of our analysis, appear in certain *prototypical scenes* of protests (bodies marching, raised fists, crowds on the streets, hands raising banners and posters). Therefore, such representations of the body are not only constituted in its performative aspect, in the dialogical confluence and imbrication between bodies and images, but they also interpellate different meanings (around)(of) the body in the interlacement between the verbal and nonverbal (ORLANDI, 1995), crossed by the political, the ideological, occupying different spaces, different temporalities that are determinant in the processes of signification.

¹⁹ In original: “[...] os modos de significar e a matéria significante são plurais: o corpo é um lugar de opacidade que ganha sentido pelo olhar.”

²⁰ In original: “[...] pela filiação teórica ao materialismo histórico, a forma material é sempre histórica. Em outras palavras, tomar o corpo como forma material implica afastar qualquer concepção que o trate como realidade empiricamente compreensível e biologicamente funcional, comuns em áreas como a da saúde, por exemplo, em que o corpo é natural, segmentável, controlável e transparente.”

²¹ In Portuguese: “[...] que a própria corporalidade é também uma materialidade significante, discursividade inscrita em condições de produção fronteiriças.”

Taking into account, for example, the time-space relation, the Bakhtinian notion of *chronotope* leads me towards the reflection on how *body* and *subject* are placed on borders of meaning, from the experience of the streets and public spaces and from the discursiveness of the protests, which is forged in the temporality of manifestations and social-political struggles. The spaces of protests are the meeting point between heterogeneous bodies discursively crossed by ideology and history. In this sense, as Marília Amorim points out, “[...] in the encounter, the temporal definition (at that moment) is inseparable from the spatial definition (in that place)” (AMORIM, 2006, p.102).²² Hence, it is possible to understand that the protests are the chronotope from which transformations stem and in which (as observed) bodies and individuals are placed, displacing themselves and (re)signifying different meanings, such as “union,” “struggle,” “confrontation,” “resistance.”

Art, Protest and Body in the Works of Dan Halter

In some of Dan Halter’s works²³ the body images emerge in the constitution and construction of the artist’s critique of the political system of Zimbabwe in the postcolonial era. A descendant of Swiss refugees after World War I, Dan Halter was born in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, a small African country that in 1980 was no longer a British colony. In 2005, he witnessed the forced exile of his parents. Commenting on the political situation of his country, Dan Halter mentions the important step that must be taken by the revolutionaries who have fought against repression and, today in power, are also corrupted. The recognition of Dan Halter’s work has resulted in his participation in several art exhibitions, such as in the 10th Havana Biennial (Cuba), the 3rd Triennial in Guangzhou (China), the 9th Biennial of Contemporary African Art (Dakar, Senegal), and the Smithsonian National Museum (Washington, USA).

²² In original: “[...] no encontro, a definição temporal (naquele momento) é inseparável da definição espacial (naquele lugar).”

²³ My first contact with Dan Halter’s work was in 2014. I met him at the art exhibition titled *Memórias Inapagáveis*, at SESC Pompeia in Sao Paulo (SP), where *Untitled – Zimbabwean Queen of Rave* (2005) was played.

In the convergence between art, the social and the political, the images in Dan Halter's documentary titled *Untitled – Zimbabwean Queen of Rave* (2005) present some prototypical scenes of social protest in the interlacement of different images of black demonstrators on South African streets contrasting with flashes of rave parties throughout Europe in the early 1990s.

Using an artistic technique of overlaying images in scratch videos, Dan Halter created *Untitled* in a music video format (3m32s). The soundtrack is the hit song *Everybody's Free (To Feel Good)* by the Zambian singer Rozalla, whose stage debut was in the 1980s in Zimbabwe. She reached international fame with this dance-style song released in 1991. In the interlacing between the verses of the song and the video images, the visual and verbal materialities are articulated together in dialogical links which constitute Dan Halter's work. The chorus *Everybody's free (to feel good)* – repeatedly reiterated, (re)sounds the production of meaning effects as of a “mouthpiece song” that moves in the discourse threads. It stands on the borders between the scenes of the European raves in contrast to the different movements of resistance and protest in the streets of Africa against the *Apartheid* regime, which appear in parts of the music video.

The *Apartheid* policy, led by successive National Party governments in South Africa over the years of 1948 to 1994, was a regime of racial segregation in which the rights of the majority of the population were curtailed by the government formed by a white minority. After the massacre in Sharpeville on March 21, 1960, in the context of the period of decolonization, international critics against that segregationist political regime began to emerge. As a result, many of the popular movements of the anti-*Apartheid* ideology gained ground in different African countries. In this sense, the first scenes of the video (0:08s) of *Untitled*, in which many bodies of militants appear in protest,²⁴ trying to break down the iron railings of the gates in a public space (Image 1), are thus crossed by an ideology of social struggle, the struggle for freedom against a segregationist political system (in contrast to images of crowds of young people gathered at rave festivals on the streets of Europe, indicating, in this case, not a political struggle only, but also a form of “expression” and “celebration” of freedom).

²⁴ Here the question of the discursiveness of the protest in the constant work of the political is considered in its relation with the symbolic.



Image 1 – Protesters fighting against Apartheid. Source: *Untitled* (2005)²⁵

It is possible to observe, therefore, the criticism that Dan Halter’s work makes by denouncing that some people are freer than others. These initial scenes converge with the utterances that echo from the verses of Rozalla’s song, producing a sense effect of a *spokesperson* in a type of “defense” of the black movement on the streets of South Africa. Thus, the sense of mobilization through / for the union of people is enunciated from verses such as “[...] *brother and sister / together we’ll make it through*” “[...] *we are a family that should stand together as one / helping each other instead of just wasting time.*” At this point, I reflect with Voloshinov, who teaches us on the essay *Slovo v zhizni i slovo v poezii* (Discourse in life and discourse in art), from 1926, that:

[...] In real-life speech the social essence of discourse stands out more clearly, more distinctly, and the connection between utterance and the surrounding social environment is more readily susceptible to analysis. Discourse in life is obviously not self-sufficient. It arises from the non-verbal real-life situation and maintains a very intimate connection with it. Moreover, discourse is directly filled with that life and may not be detached from it without losing its sense (VOLOSHINOV, 1983, p.10).²⁶

Based on the author’s reflections on the indissociability between life, discourse and art, it is possible to observe, on the other hand, that “it is the material interlacing between the verbal and the visual that enables the formulated criticism” (LAGAZZI-RODRIGUES, 2011, p.11).²⁷ In this case, it can be said that this is a criticism that goes

²⁵ The use of snapshots from both videos was authorized by Dan Halter. The signed authorization form was sent to *Bakhtiniana* on November 21, 2018.

²⁶ VOLOSHINOV, V. Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of a Sociological Poetics. Translated by John Richmond. In: SHUKMAN, A. (ed.). *Bakhtin school papers*. Oxford: RTP Publications, 1983. pp.5-30.

²⁷ In Portuguese: “é o entrelaçamento material entre o verbal e o visual que possibilita a crítica formulada.”

through the constant irruption of the sense from the political ideology of oppression/segregation as an element that can be overcome by bodies gathered in protest and in struggle, occupying a given space at a historical moment. It is also possible to identify other meaning effects that this work of Dan Halter produces, as the art curator of the Cultural Video Brazil Association (which hosted this documentary in Brazil in 2014) points out, highlighting that:

The dynamic editing, reminiscent of 1980s British scratch videos, draws a parallel between two situations that lose their confrontational potential upon being recontextualized through media. The rave movement, once linked to a denial of the yuppie lifestyle, becomes an empty fad; the contestation of African movements seems devoid of a cause. The freedom of dancing as a manner of protesting and of protest as a dance is framed by the rectangle of television, which is made into a metaphor for a process of appropriation and emptying.²⁸

This emptying (deleting) effect, put in evidence, passes inevitably through the process from which other senses are silenced (ORLANDI, 1992), producing certain textuality. We can see the superposing of images of young people (and their bodies) in the crowd, in Europe, and the bodies of militants occupying the streets of Zimbabwe in South Africa:



Image 2. Crowd of young people in European raves



Image 3. Bodies gathered in Zimbabwe protests

These scenes (Images 2 and 3) mark, thus, the confluence between different temporalities and different spaces, which passes through the filming spectrum of the

²⁸ Synopsis by *Associação Cultural Videobrasil*. Available at: <http://site.videobrasil.org.br/en/acervo/obras/obra/618350>.

dynamic edition through art, and operates discursively, producing these meaning effects. Reflecting with Nilton Milanez, images register “the movement of bodies in a succession of scenes [...] making other images resurrect in us, which form a chain of displacements in the movement of meanings” (MILANEZ, 2011, pp.36-37).²⁹ From this analytical perspective, it is important here to emphasize, according to Lagazzi (2011), that both the “intersection of different materialities” and “the significant material imbrication”:

[...] emphasize that it is not a matter of analyzing an image and the speech and musicality, for example, as additions to each other, but rather of analyzing the different signifying materialities one intermingled with the other (LAGAZZI, 2011, p.402).³⁰

Hence, the visual language which is also the place of failure, holes, mistake, erasure is constituted by producing such meaning effects that escape from the total apprehension of the symbolic, being that something which always returns through different modes of signification. According to V. Vološinov:

A sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality – it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore, it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth. Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation [...] (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.10).³¹

In this analysis, considering the important parallel between the materiality of the body and the visual formulations of the body in contrast (on the one hand, of bodies in spaces of protest; on the other, of bodies occupying the spaces of rave parties), I question about how the relations of otherness (of the body in relation to the *other*) are structured in the images in terms of regularity.

These parallels leave marks on the discourse threads, which I seek to examine from the images here in question. The massive concentration of people, for example, brought together by a common interest, the permanent movement, the climate of

²⁹ In original: “o movimento dos corpos, numa sucessão de cenas [...] fazendo ressurgir em nós outras imagens, que formam uma cadeia de deslocamentos na movimentação de sentidos.”

³⁰ In original: “ressaltam que não se trata de analisarmos uma imagem e a fala e a musicalidade, por exemplo, como acréscimos uma das outras, mas sim de analisarmos as diferentes materialidades significantes uma no entremeio da outra.”

³¹ VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

exaltation, and the streets taken by bodies in protest suggest that the visual formulations of the body “unfold in different images of the subject and show us the importance of the remission of the intra-discourse to the inter-discourse” (LAGAZZI, 2014a, p.111).³²

“Rave” as a term in English designating outdoor electronic music festivals can be understood as “moving or advancing violently.” The contrast of meanings (constituted by a discursive heterogeneity) highlights, in this case, some white young people who have the privilege of meeting to celebrate, while some black people of different ages (not just young ones) need to come together to claim the most basic human rights.

Thus, taking into account the idea of a collective body as a discourse support (the discourse of resistance, the discourse of social and political protest), it is possible to understand the issue of otherness as a dialogical bridge, in Bakhtin’s terms, and formulated in terms of distinction, contrast, in spaces of signification in which the bodies are interpellated by memory, the social and the different positions occupied by the subjects in the discourse. From this perspective, I consider how the meanings go through these bodies and how the meanings of occupation put these bodies in motion. Therefore, there are meanings occupying these bodies, and these bodies occupy the spaces discursively and ideologically.

An example of this is the case of the typical African dance from Zimbabwe, present in the protests in *Untitled* (Images 4 and 5). The movements and gestures of the bodies marching (in the dance called *Toyi-Toyi*, very common in the forces of ZIPRA – Revolutionary Army of the Zimbabwean People) represent signs integrated in different meanings. According to Gilbert (2008), *Toyi-Toyi* is a “militant dance,” organized in protest marches and accompanied by songs and watchwords. In the following snapshots from Dan Halter’s documentary, it is possible to see images of the body being placed in the borders of signification between the political, the ideological, and the social, from the *Toyi-Toyi* marches.

³² In original: “se desdobram em diferentes imagens do sujeito e nos mostram a importância da remissão do intradiscurso ao interdiscurso.”



Image 4. Bodies occupying the spaces of the street Image 5. African militants in the Toyi-Toyi marches

Used not only to intimidate the African police forces during the anti-apartheid protests, the *Toyi-Toyi* “is still present in some specific contexts, such as political protests, rallies and union movements” (BRAZ DIAS, 2012, p.100).³³ In the words of the anthropologist Juliana Braz Dias, “toyi-toyi is part of a sequence of practices that refer to the armed struggle in a symbolic way only because it is impossible to carry out the actual armed struggle” (BRAZ DIAS, 2012, p.103).³⁴ In her reflections, she points out that in this form of protest “we would have a case of ‘symbolic compensation’ for the absence of power” (BRAZ DIAS, 2012, p.103).³⁵

Thus, by observing the images of these bodies in struggle, the author describes that:

[...] the approach of the protesters is announced by a sharp cry: “Amandla!” – which, in zulu and xhosa, means “power.” The answer comes from the crowd, in chorus: “Awethu!” (“For us!”). The images start to [...] focus on the movement of resistance to apartheid. They are young people who at gunpoint sing songs of protest, evoking their leaders: Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. They carry posters in which we read: [...] “Freedom, justice and peace, now!”; “How long will we be humiliated, kicked, strangled, beaten, raped, and killed?” (BRAZ DIAS, 2012, pp.110-111).³⁶

³³ In original: “ainda se faz presente em alguns contextos específicos, como protestos políticos, comícios e movimentos sindicais.”

³⁴ In original: “o toyi-toyi é parte de uma sequência de práticas que se referem à luta armada de maneira simbólica, apenas pela impossibilidade de realização da luta armada de fato.”

³⁵ In original: “teríamos um caso de ‘compensação simbólica’ para a ausência de poder.”

³⁶ In original: “[...] a aproximação dos manifestantes é anunciada por um grito cortante: “Amandla!” – que, em zulu e xhosa, significa “poder”. A resposta vem da multidão, em coro: “Awethu!” (“Para nós!”). As imagens passam [...] a enfocar o movimento de resistência ao apartheid. São jovens que, sob a mira das armas, entoam canções de protesto, evocando seus líderes: Oliver Tambo e Nelson Mandela. Carregam

Braz-Dias' reflection interlaces Eni Orlandi's words on a discursive theory of the subjects' forms of resistance, when the discourse analyst states that "there are forms of omnipotence also in the social domain: '*together we can do anything*', a position that is supported by the quantity and the intended collective conscience" (ORLANDI, 2012, p.213).³⁷ Such consideration equally echoes Braz Dias's (2012) description of the bodies assembled in the *Toyi-Toyi* marches as a form of struggle and popular resistance:

[...] many of them carry a piece of wood, like a spear, in their right hands. Others only have their hands closed. Several wear school uniforms; some with the tie – a traditional part of the uniform – tied to the forehead, remembering the adornments worn by the Zulus warriors. Many wear a serious expression on their faces. Others show a slight smile as they sing the songs and let their bodies follow the movement together: with their knees high, alternately, and fists in the air (BRAZ DIAS, 2012, p.111).³⁸

Taking into account the discourse of the body mobilized in the relation with the *other*, there is the sliding and (re)displacement of meanings in the memory paths in which *the said, the already said* and the *pre-constructed meanings* are reformulated.

In this sense, the *imbrication*³⁹ between the verbal materiality (the watchwords, the chants sung in the marches) and the visual formulations of the body (fists in the air, arms given in movements together) seems to resonate also Voloshinov's reflection that the intonation establishes a firm link between the verbal discourse and the extraverbal context – genuine, living intonation moves verbal discourse beyond the border of the verbal (VOLOSHINOV, 1983, p.18).⁴⁰

faixas em que se lê: [...] "Liberdade, justiça e paz, agora!"; "Por quanto tempo seremos humilhados, chutados, estrangulados, espancados, estuprados e mortos?"

³⁷ In original: "há formas de onipotência também no domínio do social: 'juntos podemos tudo', posição que se sustenta na quantidade e na pretendida consciência coletiva."

³⁸ In original: "muitos deles carregam na mão direita um pedaço de pau, empunhado como uma lança. Outros trazem apenas as mãos fechadas. Vários vestem uniformes escolares; alguns com a gravata – parte tradicional do uniforme – amarrada na testa, lembrando os adornos usados pelos guerreiros zulus. Muitos trazem o semblante sério. Outros revelam ligeiro sorriso enquanto entoam as canções e deixam seus corpos seguirem o movimento conjunto: joelhos ao alto, alternadamente, e punhos em riste."

³⁹ In her work *The equivocacy in the imbrication of different signifying materialities*, from 2008, Suzy Lagazzi proposes the notion of imbrication, considering the materialistic theoretical-analytical frame to which the author is affiliated.

⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 26.

Bodies and Subjects Under Surveillance

At another point in my analysis, I also look at other aspects of the relation of otherness of bodies and subjects in different spaces. When observed, for example, certain prototypical scenes of protests and images of bodies occupying the urban spaces, in Dan Halter's work, different relations *between* the "I" and the *other* are easily identified. Examining, further, the documentary *Untitled*, it is possible to see, for example, some scenes that highlight the different positions occupied by both the African militants and young people having fun at rave parties in Europe, in contrast (by the visual) with the positions occupied by the police who are on the streets watching the crowd (Images 6 and 7).



Image 6. Police watching young people in raves



Image 7. Armed guards and African protesters

These scenes allow sliding, in the discursive thread, different meanings attributed to the body. There are, on the one hand, bodies expressing certain meanings of freedom during the parties, others expressing people's union to fight and to protest for the conquest of freedom, and there are, on the other hand, bodies that stand on the social frontiers, exercising power in positions of control and vigilance. Nascimento (2017) reflects on this, remembering that which, for Althusser (1971), works as a Repressive State Apparatus, which guarantees the power to rule to certain agents of the dominant classes and assure their domination over other classes.

There is the body that watches another body under surveillance. And there is also the surveillance of the body and the body being watched by the eye of the "guards." Meanings slide, and others are being slid. There is the body, the image of the body and

consequently a mutual relation being shaped from the perspective of the viewer and the visual materiality. In this sense:

[...] the observed body of the other can be distinguished from a ‘cognized’ whole precisely because “the contemplator occupies a perfectly determinate. place, and that he is unitary and embodied” [...] [...] While my thought can place my body wholly in the outside world as an object among other objects, my actual seeing cannot do the same thing; my seeing, that is, cannot come to the aid of thinking by providing it with an adequate outer image (BAKHTIN, from MACCAW, 2019, pp.39-40).⁴¹

What is fundamental to take into account, from the words of Suzy Lagazzi, is that “we do not have materialities that are completed by each other, but that are related by the contradiction, each working the incompleteness in the other” (LAGAZZI, 2009, p.68).⁴² As Sabino points out, there is in the film process the displacement of meanings in a continuous (un)cadence of scenes that, according to her:

[...] get together, overlap each other, merging each other into the images that, together with words and music, play with the rhythmic senses of modernity. Rhythm of music, of images that get together (and separate), find disparate images, of images that are in between (within) other images [...]: conjunction and heterogeneity from the observer’s view and listening. They are different textualities that conjugate, in this filmic fabric, allusive meanings, alluding to a modernity in the daily life of 20th century, and that opening in intertextual and interdiscursive windows plays with meanings that (dis)organize, unravel, which highlight and erase the relations between events and meanings, exposing daily life in a relationship of confluence with memory (SABINO, 2008, p.49).⁴³

⁴¹ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴² In original: “não temos materialidades que se completam, mas que se relacionam pela contradição, cada uma fazendo trabalhar a incompletude na outra.”

⁴³ In original: “[...] se juntam, se sobrepõem, se (con)fundem umas às outras nas imagens que, junto às palavras e à música [...] jogam com sentidos rítmicos de uma modernidade. Ritmo da música, das imagens que unem (e separam), (des)encontram imagens díspares, das imagens que estão no entre(dentro) de outras imagens [...]: conjugação e heterogeneidade no olhar e na escuta do espectador. São diferentes textualidades que conjugam nesse tecido fílmico significados alusivos de uma modernidade num quotidiano do século XX e, que se abrindo em janelas intertextuais e interdiscursivas, jogam com sentidos que (des)organizam, que des-atam, que realçam e apagam relações entre acontecimentos e sentidos, expondo o quotidiano numa relação de confluência com a memória.”

Metaphorically, it is observed how image projects, in the object in focus, the repressed meanings in condensation (LAGAZZI, 2014b). Thus, it is possible to notice, from these scenes, a relation of otherness by a drifting process. Metonymically, the image marks the lack in the meanings sliding by the reiteration of the close-up view of the object in focus: the guns (in hands or at waists) of the policemen watching the crowd. Being metaphorized into prototypical images of protests, these sense-of-vigilance effects work on the boundaries between saying and not saying, silence and gesture in an ever-moving structure.

Another work of Dan Halter that I have selected for this analysis – which also addresses this crucial issue of the body under surveillance – is the video *Beitbridge Moonwalk* (2010). In it, the artist portrays the political-social problem of xenophobia directed at Zimbabwean refugees living in South Africa. The video (part of the *Videobrasil Cultural Collection* since the 17th edition of the Festival) is inspired by the story of an immigrant who illegally crosses the border between these two countries, without being noticed by the police authority and without leaving traces that pointed to his direction. The immigrant states that he has crossed the bridge between the two countries. In this case, its mention to Michael Jackson's "moonwalk" dance reinforces the ironic tone of Dan Halter's sociopolitical and cultural criticism.

Here, I try to understand, according to Vološinov, that if a "word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is the territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor" (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.86), body language is also the link of this relationship, for example, through the reconstitution (artistic intervention) of the crossing of the Zimbabwean immigrant, who is seen at the border between the citizen and the refugee (image 8).



Image 8. Reconstitution of the immigrant's crossing – *Beitbridge Moonwalk* (2010)

The bridge mentioned by the immigrant is the focus of the image. On the right side of the snapshot, from the beginning of the video (0:09s), there is a represented image of the individual who (through the artist's eyes) would correspond to the immigrant who leaves Zimbabwe towards South Africa in search of a refuge as well as better living conditions.

The movement of the man who walks backwards between the two ends of the bridge (from right to left, through the angle proposed by Dan Halter) is in relation to the movement of a woman walking in the opposite direction of his. At the borders of the (image) visual materiality it produces certain meanings that are not in evidence. There is no statement, no word thrown on this bridge. There is a relation between the self and the other in the movement of walking. Walking forward and walking backwards (a movement associated with the "moonwalk" dance) are placed as counterpoint.

The allusion to the *moonwalk steps* in Michael Jackson's dance is an invitation to this exteriority of the discourse that runs through space, time, and visuality, and works as a strategy used by the refugee. The steps backwards in dance, in relation to the origins of the "moonwalk," have historically been used by different artists since the 1930s, such as Fred Astaire, Bill Bailey, Cab Calloway, Sammy Davis Jr. Daniel L. Haynes, Eleanor Powell, among others. The step became popular around the world after American singer Michael Jackson performed it during his presentation of "Billie Jean" in the TV special *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever*, which occurred on March 25, 1983 and was

broadcasted on May 16, 1983. Subsequently, this came to become Michael Jackson's most famous dance step.⁴⁴

By bringing this element (*moonwalk*) as the title of the work, the artist takes a critical look at the criticism of xenophobia against Zimbabwean refugees. The *moonwalk* movement is confused and intertwined with the "walking backwards" used by the refugee as a strategy, a kind of juggling, of a trick not to be caught (nor to be identified) by the authorities that control and monitor the borders between the two countries (Zimbabwe and South Africa). Body, immigrant, bridge and movement are very well articulated in the work that operates as criticism in an ironic tone. In this case, the strategy of social survival becomes a political-ideological weapon. A(n) (ideologically) dominant subject and the dominated individual (under surveillance, at risk of being caught) slide on the borders of meaning. The *body under surveillance* is placed on the bridge between the *I* and the *other*, in the relation with the *vigilant body*, which is not present (but possible and threatening), but is implied.

This relation between different bodies is configured from a set of angles, in an interplay of images and reference. The spectator of the video, from an X-angle, can observe the immigrant doing his *moonwalk*. For an observer in that scenario this perception is only possible in a certain position and in a certain angle.

Similarly, this relation of walking backwards cannot be grasped by the static image (as observed here), but only through a succession of moving body scenes. It is important to make this observation to elucidate precisely from the thoughts of Lagazzi (2012) that language "is structurally flawed, constitutively incomplete, and capable of (re)associations" (LAGAZZI, 2012, p.1).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Here we bring the *moonwalk* dance step, popularized by Michael Jackson, and place it in relation to the historical conditions of its emergence and updating / re-appropriation, used as a strategy by the Zimbabwean refugee.

⁴⁵ In original: "[...] é estruturalmente falha, constitutivamente incompleta, e capaz de (re)associações."



Image 9. Crossing the bridge between Zimbabwe and South Africa

During the video, the body-landscape-silence relationship comes into play, contrasting with the sound of the wind and the noise of some vehicles passing by the bridge – as it is possible to observe in one of the video scenes (0:29s), in which the image of a refugee walking backwards when crossing the bridge is represented. Body, space and individual divide the screen with the passage of a white truck (Image 9). In this sense, to think about the silence, according to Sabino (2008, p.14):

[...] is to consider the other meanings (that are also possible) [...] It is to pose, as Orlandi tells us, “questions about the limits of the dialogue” [...]: “the relationship with the other as being a contradictory relation” (p.49). In this case, to understand the connection of the subject with the silence is to see the opacity of the other manifest, which, like silence, is not visible, but becomes visible by discursive theoretical-practical methods.⁴⁶

Final Considerations

The Bakhtinian chronotopic relationship, thus, considering the analysis done at the end of this article, places the works of Dan Halter at the confluence between the verbal and non-verbal materiality of space, crossed by silence, by image and also by the body sliding in the interlacement either by the senses mobilized by the song of the Zambian

⁴⁶ In original: “[...] é considerar os outros significados (também possíveis) [...] É colocar, como nos diz Orlandi, ‘questões a propósito dos limites da dialogia’ (...): ‘a relação com o outro como sendo uma relação contraditória’ (p.49). Nesse caso, compreender a ligação do sujeito com o silêncio é ver-se manifestar a opacidade do outro, que, como o silêncio, não é visível, mas torna-se visível por métodos teórico-prático discursivos.”

singer Rozalla or by the presence of the dominant *other* in a position of vigilance. The marches and the bodies on the streets and the public spaces, the meanings of the dance (the raves, the *Toyi-Toyi*, the *moonwalk*) slide in the discourse threads, for example, in the crossing of the refugee, which has, in the bridge, the symbolic place (space) of reference marked by an instant (temporally) marked by the very duration of the crossing, which allows this body to mean differently from its movement: movements of meaning, meanings in movement, bodies that place discourse in the borders with the social (also in movement).

In view of these considerations, therefore, what is perceived, in the fabric of the social, political and discursive, is that both the immigrant's account and the South African movements against Apartheid are rebuilt by the gaze of Art as a sort of (re)constitution of movements that are indissoluble in history and interpellated by (re)formulated senses that are updated in memory. Thus, one can observe the experience, for example, of a refugee operating "in confluence with memory as a type of discursive window where meanings overflow: many are revealed; many are silenced" (SABINO, 2008).⁴⁷

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⁴⁷ In original: "em confluência com a memória enquanto janela discursiva onde sentidos transbordam: muitos expostos, muitos silenciados."

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