

Theater fabrication of the symbol-body in motion: thinking of communication through a performatic approach – weltanschauung, kraft and transformation

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abstract Bodies are fabricated through symbolic performances, taking restored behavior, Kraft (affections) and a performed and dynamic Weltanschauung. I focus on communicational aspect of bodies in fieldwork with Grupo Sonhus Teatro Ritual (Goiânia – GO, 2016-2017). My participant observation performance encompasses learning the group's craft. I proposed a concept: symbol-body, along with a Weltanschauung, and beyond the dichotomy between body and mind. Perceptions are taken as actions here, and so are discourses. Such bodies seek to transform their environment and this paper wants: a) to show how a performative framework of analysis can help and b) to expand the ways we understand bodies and communication.

Keywords Body. Performance. Symbol. Ritual. Perception.

A fabricação teatral do corpo-símbolo em movimento: pensando sobre comunicação por meio de uma abordagem performática - Weltanschauung, kraft e transformação

resumo Corpos são fabricados em performances simbólicas, envolvendo comportamento restaurado, Kraft (afecções) e uma Weltanschauung performada e dinâmica. Foco no aspecto comunicacional de corpos em trabalho de campo com o Grupo Grupo Sonhus Teatro Ritual (Goiânia – GO, 2016-2017). A performance de minha observação participante envolve aprendizado no corpo. Propus o conceito corpo-símbolo, com Weltanschauung, e além da dicotomia corpo e mente. Percepções são aqui tomadas como ações, assim como discursos o são. Tais corpos buscam transformar o meio e este artigo busca: a) mostrar vantagens de um aporte performativo de análise e b) expandir maneiras de se entender corpos e comunicação.

palavras-chave Corpo. Performance. Símbolo. Ritual. Percepção.

La fabricación teatral del cuerpo-símbolo en movimiento: pensando en la comunicación a través de un enfoque performativo - Weltanschauung, kraft y transformación

resumen Los cuerpos se fabrican en performances simbólicas que implican un comportamiento restaurado, Kraft (afectación) y un Weltanschauung ejecutado y dinámico. El artículo analiza el aspecto comunicacional de los cuerpos en el trabajo de campo con el Grupo Sonhus Teatro Ritual (Goiânia - Brasil, 2016-2017). La performance de mi observación participante implicó el aprendizaje del cuerpo. Propuse el concepto cuerpo-símbolo, con Weltanschauung, y más allá de la dicotomía cuerpo y mente. Las percepciones se toman aquí como acciones, como discursos. Estos organismos buscan transformar el medio y este artículo pretende: a) mostrar las ventajas de una contribución performativa del análisis y b) ampliar las formas de entender los organismos y la comunicación.

palabras clave Cuerpo. Performance. Símbolo. Ritual. Percepción.

Threshold

“Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth’d must be,
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use
Are like Atlanta’s balls, cast in men’s views,
That when a fool’s eye lighteth on a Gem,
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.”
John Donne

“Preciso ser um outro
para ser eu mesmo”
Mia Couto

How does a body come to be? Is society carved in bodies? Does it happen inside a body or through a body? Are bodies being taking in account? What is our understanding on bodies? When one looks at a body, what does one see? Many questions were posed by anthropological literature - but not only - concerning this subject. A body, a person. Walls between, bridges that link them.

Le Breton (2011) presented how bodies are understood on Western societies and on different societies. Western understanding on bodies operate by slicing our experiences in parts. The recurrent split between mind and body has been a base for much of Western

thought. The body is understood as a machine, and the mind would be living inside a bodily prison. People, taken as body and subjects, are apart from each other and from the environment. And as the Western body is seen as split, it is also apart from itself, being sometimes seen as an enemy.

The author brought many ethnographic examples of different ways to deal with the body in many cultures. This can be seen in distant communities, somewhat far from Western societies, and inside these societies.

Wacquant (2002) showed how complex it is to think about bodies inside a boxing training experience. He shows that the common understanding on a split between mind and body does not operate entirely in the ethnographic situation he lives. I tried to follow Wacquant's path and procedure. He was enrolled in a gym and trained, and I did the same with theater practices of Grupo Sonhus.

In my study (REIS 2018), I sought to think about bodies inside a theater group. Grupo Sonhus Teatro Ritual is a theater group based on Goiânia (Goiás), born in 1996. Students from Colégio Lyceu began, together, to study and practice theater. The fire grew stronger, as they started to search for workshops and pursued their interest by reading theater theories. The group is important for the city cultural scene, and it has many connections worldwide, such as Odin Teatret, butoh masters, mimic masters, and others.

Nando more than once said that they seek to be “experimental yet popular, just like Pink Floyd”, in order to affect as much people as they could. They take great attention to forming their audience and in many opportunities their plays were presented without a fee. Their focus is to present the possibilities of their dreams embodied in stage. Grupo Sonhus basilar understanding is that the body is the most essential component of theater.

As the group focuses on bodies, so did I. My question being: how do these bodies change from what they are in everyday life and come to be what they are presented on stage?

Schechner (1985) states that to fully understand a performance, one must look upon all its phases: training, workshops, rehearsals, warm-ups, performance, cool-down, and aftermath. Due to my interest, I was mainly focused on pre-performance practices as they are performatic too. Performance, here, is the moment when the group is on stage. But I came to understand that this temporal articulation is far more complex than a traditional idea of before and after.

As I experienced my relationship with Grupo Sonhus, I understood that ritual was indeed a fundamental practice for them. Their understanding of their practice was intertwined with ideas concerning rituality. Their name (“Teatro Ritual”, Ritual Theater) showed it explicitly, and it is linked to the way they see the world and themselves.

Ritual fabricates bodies, bodies are fabricated ritually (Seeger, Da Matta e Viveiros de Castro, 1979) for many amerindians groups. Practices related to adornments, reclusion, and relationship with ancestors operate to this fabrication. The body is not understood in a physical aspect in the same way as the Western understanding. Therefore, I think of fabrication of bodies. The body is fabricated throughout life and continuously and the body

goes beyond the skin. Viveiros de Castro (1979) uses fabrication for he translates Yawalapiti verb /umá- / for production, a conscious intervention. Only this cultural fabrication can turn a body into a human body. Such discussions are related to “person” constitution.

I think the word fabrication is productive, as it comes from fabric: fabrics can be put together to form new clothing. The metaphor of what we wear is also particularly productive. We do not act the same way in different occasions and we wear different clothes.

Amerindian body fabrication and theater body fabrication with Grupo Sonhus is not the same. The first takes place throughout their whole lives, and different moments of their life cycles are marked in their bodies. Their bodies, hence their identities, is never fully finished: they are forever changing, and this will happen until they die and after. Fabrication of their bodies is entangled in their cosmologies, related to transformation, to assimilation, and is not located solely in specific roles or situations. When the body changes, this transformation is permanent, until it changes again. Grupo Sonhus, however, fabricate their bodies for specific reasons and situations. This fabrication is not closed inside those moments. What was once fabricated becomes part of their collective body and of the body of each actress/actor.

Regardless of many cosmological differences, the understanding on body transformation is somewhat alike. I do not discuss all proximities and divergences. Amerindian body fabrication is related to person constitution, this is not exactly the case here. I do understand that there are many components, and each component is important. Grupo Sonhus, as Amerindians, do not see their bodies limited by the skin, and both believe that their bodies are everchanging.

Le Breton (2011) presented discussions on how the body is seen, perceived, and lived inside Western societies and many other societies. He states that cartesianism plays an important role on Western constitution, and this means a mechanical way of understanding the body. Mind and body would be separate, and the later would be seen somewhat as a machine. Inside Western societies, however, this understanding is not the same everywhere. Grupo Sonhus understanding is quite different from these hegemonic assumptions and is closer to those of Amerindians. It is important to stress that I try to mimic theories and this does not encompass the entirety of the discussion.

Grupo Sonhus body fabrication takes place inside ritual environments. I am going to present aspects concerning this fabrication with Grupo Sonhus stressing their ritual practices, such as the training-rehearsal, and their theories. And how are those ideas connected? “Rehearsals function to build a score, and this score is a ‘ritual by contract’: fixed behavior that everyone participating agrees to do” (SCHECHNER 1985: 37). What was the group understanding of ritual? How did they live their rituals?

Later, we will address such aspects. Inside such situations, I was able to see that the body they fabricate and perform is seeking to communicate. I was also able to understand that this communication happens in the most intricate ways, but mostly centered in creating effects. I tried to deal with this with a concept: symbol-body. I am centered in the

communicational aspect that can be highlighted in these performances, taking situations before the theater presentation.

Douglas (2012) focused on power and danger, and said that body functions and its parts can work as symbols to other structures. The body is a symbol of society, and it reproduces in a small-scale aspects of the social structure. This is inspirational, for I try to deal with wider aspects from each given situation. She was not a direct and conscious inspiration for my work. As I was recently reading her, I could not help to notice such connections.

Regarding bodies, I try to read in between actions, both discursive and non-discursive in a symbolic perspective. I do that through bodies, both mine and of the performers. Bodies¹ are taken as symbols, for they work as symbols, constructing/fabricating an inner and outer entanglement through readable practices. The inner entanglement may be seen, and the outer entanglement is fabricated through my understanding, born within my ethnographic work. I try to see a *Weltanschauung* (TURNER 1987), which is performed, and therefore is restored behavior (SCHECHNER 1985). The group is continuously and forever fabricating themselves and bringing back again what they once were. I try to look to bodies on stage, and not to bodies as people. Bodies as symbols, hence the symbol-body.

But can each body hear all a symbol can say? What about the fact that each new performance might take a symbol to establish new threads? I use *Weltanschauung* (TURNER 1987) to think of symbols, symbol-bodies, as intertwined with their environments. We have a specific fabric to the fabrication of each symbol-body. Therefore, from symbol-body fabrication moments, I will try to bring the whole body of the group.

Symbol-body within a ritual

Ritual has been a recurrent theme in anthropological literature. Tambiah (1985) brought some aspects: collective and rhythmic practices, and it is noticed how important the body is. Also, to say something is to do something. Different medias and indexicality are put in motion. There is a specific order for practices, a shared understanding of communality, and the idea of an extraordinary moment through symbolic communication. Some of it is rigid, different ideas can be merged, and there is always some kind of repetition.

Turner (1974) presented to us the liminal aspect of rituals. The idea is that liminality and *communitas* arise together: possibilities given within a culture are altered and novelty is made possible, for the previous patterns are reconfigured. The sense of communality surpasses each person and they feel as if they are all in one. We have “anti-structure”, which is the altering of structural elements that would not take place otherwise. Cultural change is a fundamental aspect of this analysis. In my ethnographic work, I could

¹ Grupo Sonhus has always dedicated themselves to their self-understanding. They reflect upon their own practices and seek to better control them. In REIS (2018), I try to reach some subjective experiences for their subjective nature, and I discuss with Schechner (1985) ideas on “me”, “not-me” and “not not-me”.

see Grupo Sonhus fully connected to this perspective. “Communitas” would arise, and they had a shared environment for creation and experimentation that would not be individual, and it was mandatory for each of them.

Schechner (1985) proposed differences between ritual and theater. The author discusses how the audience is engaged differently according to shared cultural background. It is fair to say that Grupo Sonhus Teatro Ritual blurs aspects of this distinction. They mingle different fabrics. Ritual is a specific emic concept for them, that they bring from anthropological literature as well, such as Turner. More on this significant discussion is found on Reis (2018). Schechner (1977) states that performances are both efficacy and entertainment, but when they aim to effect transformation, they are closer to rituals. As I center in rehearsals and trainings, taking them as performances, these are situations mainly focused on transformations. Nevertheless, Grupo Sonhus aims to transform their environment through their work, as I will later show.

Turner (1974) performed an anthropology connected to symbolic understandings. Reflections on Kraft (TURNER 1987), a concept restored from Dilthey, are important here. Regarding performances, experiences cause effects, and when these effects can lead to other experiences after, they are called Kraft. Therefore, Kraft is an affection that comes from an experience and can change another experience.

Nando has presented some of the understandings of Grupo Sonhus on rituals on the beginning of my fieldwork. They are not the same as the anthropologists have proposed, but they are connected in many ways. It is important to understand that the group is linked to a long tradition that address theater and ritual. Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, and the group has also read anthropological literature.

Nando's words: to ritualize is “to take care of the way you do what you do, to be attentive”, “to pay attention to it all”. Each time Grupo Sonhus would train, they would ritualize their practice. To train is to find a second nature, and that can only happen through mastery of one's own body. The beginning of each train had some ground rules. A shared understanding was in place, but, some days, Nando would put some prior instructions for the group, to remark their practices and connection.

Entering in the room, everyone took off their shoes before stepping on the linoleum-covered floor. The training should not be interrupted by any circumstance. “Only in the event of a fire”, Nando would say. The group should only talk about what is related to their practices. Their focus should be active and persistent.

Grupo Sonhus has a practice called rehearsal-training (ROCHA, 2014; REIS, 2018). It is centered on creation by restoring the practices related to a given performance. They would conduct rehearsals entangled with practices to achieve different bodily states and new performances possibilities. Their plays, therefore, are everchanging.

Turner (1987) brings differences regarding liminal and liminoid inside practices. The first is related to obligatory practices. The second refers to practices that are not mandatory. Inside each culture, when liminal takes place, everyone is affected. Rituals are

always liminal in this sense. Liminoid phenomena, however, is far more related to ludic occasions. They both create environments related to transformation for those inside. About Grupo Sonhus, they present liminoid experiences to their audience. Nevertheless, the experiences in which they engage inside their own environment have mostly liminal characteristics. They are mandatory for them, and so is the transformation that happens with each of them and the group. That is why I refer to ritual and transformation. My focus is on the group practices, theories, and objectives. They understand what they do as mandatory for themselves, not as roleplay. As Turner (1987) states: “(...) all these acts and symbols are of *obligation* (...)” (TURNER, 1987, p.42).

Turner (2008) emphasizes transformation within rituals, showing that even time and space operate differently, as liminality is happening in these situations. In addition, these occasions can be a way to understand the underlining structure of a given culture. Schechner (1985) thinks of transformation, and also of transportation.

Schechner (1985) proposes a difference between transformation and transportation within performances. They both work together in performances and rituals. The first would mean a changing of the persona status and is “(...) clearly evidenced in initiation rites (...)” (SCHECHNER 1985: 127), “(...) directly making changes in ordinary life (...)” (SCHECHNER 1985: 132). Transportation stands for the person can be brought back from the situation. Transportation would be restricted to the “subjunctive mode” of the performance. When Jô says “feel transported”, as we will see, she is talking about something much similar to what Schechner brought. Schechner (1985) brings transformation in a sense close to the Amerindian rituals I brought before.

He states that Euro-American theater is that of “transportation” rather than “transformation”. Schechner (1985) compares the performance with a printing press. However, I see no imprinting here, rather construction/fabrication. One may look at the process as an origami: the performer, and the performance, are both the paper and the one who molds it. Therefore, they are forever transformed, even though their social status remains the same. They are always, and in all situations, a person and an origami at the same time. As is everyone.

In Grupo Sonhus, the performer, this body, is not alone in this process. Inside an environment, they interact with other bodies through their practices. The origami will be molded differently later. To keep going with the fabric metaphors, we can recall Penelope: knitting, setting apart, and again knitting the fabric, dying it differently, bleaching it later, using previous fabric, and putting altogether new fabric too. The fabric is forever transforming because it is always performed.

Since the 1960s the Euro-American performing arts have been introducing the process of transformation inside their practices (SCHECHNER 1985), and Grupo Sonhus is part of this wider movement. They understand their practices as linked to physical theater tradition rather than interpretative theater. Grupo Sonhus has drunk a lot from non-Western traditions, and they do not make direct changes in ordinary life, but they do seek

to change ordinary life. As much as Schechner's distinction is important, when I talk about transportation and transformation, I am not saying the same he did. Inner subjective changes and bodily changes, here, have the same importance of social status changes.

Turner brought the *Weltanschauung* concept, restoring Dilthey (TURNER 1987). He says that differently from cosmologies, or systems, this concept comes to underline a dynamic aspect of the way a group live and change. There are some ideas about what the world would be, value judgments, and guidelines to the practices, and each of them is performed, what comes to say that they happen through restored practices. I bring this concept inside my ethnographic environment so to create a sort of map. Those would be somewhat like the group's guidelines. This map, as said before, is forever changing. I simply had an opportunity to capture a moment of this process. To perform their rituals is to perform their *Weltanschauung*. As I was experiencing their rituals, I started to understand how they communicate inside these situations. That is why I had to take in account symbols.

All human communication is symbolic because our original references do not exist, yet they are always restored. How to access the symbols? To understand the shared meanings of people who fabricate them is one possibility. However, what happens when one does not understand what is seen? And if communication is the key to understand a symbol, the lack of understanding is also part of the symbolic communication. Not all communication delivers its message. Other than that, the receiver never gets exactly the delivered message intention.

As we complexify communication, we also go to its fulfilment and possible completion, but always looking at its barriers, which are part of communication itself. A message is taken for a meaning at one moment, and is read differently at a different moment, and this is part of our bodily experiences, for our bodies are always changing with culture and changing our culture.

When I talk about a symbol-body, I try to use this concept so to get closer to the experiences inside a field. When one tries to look at a ritual environment as a communicational field of forces, one would maybe be able to highlight specific aspects. When I think of a symbol-body, I try to address how practices are linked to the group structure, and how they are refabricating this own structure.

Regarding Grupo Sonhus, I am focused on situations that happen before they are on stage. Those moments are ritual ones for them, and it is when they fabricate their symbol-bodies. I am going to address the symbol-body as entangled with the group's *Weltanschauung*.

And now we are entering a specific rehearsal-training day, September 2017. Most of the rehearsal-trainings were conducted by Nando Rocha. The other components of the group were Jô de Oliveira, Lorrana Flores and Pablo Angelim. Nando Rocha worked as actor, director and teacher. The others were actresses/actor and teachers. In different occasions, they would also conduct the practices, but it was less common. At this day, Jô was

conducting their lived experience. She would propose that the body had to move feeling the resistance. But not the resistance of air, that we normally do not take in account.

“Resistance... you are in the bottom of the ocean”. Liminality was there: one should not imagine to be in the bottom of the ocean. One should in fact be there. Some of Jô’s directions: “Control your muscles, you can control each cell of your body... go beyond showing the resistance. Feel yourself transported to a different time”. I will try, from this practice, to address many of the communicative aspects put in motion through the symbol-body idea. I will also put in motion, from this rehearsal-training, entanglements with many different situations I experienced in my fieldwork. It is amazing to notice how a single scene can lead to so many places.

Symbol-body: "to feel"

Csordas² (2008) proposes the embodiment framework to think about the interaction of bodies. I use his understandings as a possibility to put light of the fabrication of bodies, or, as I understand, the fabrication of the symbol-body. He deals with an analytic distinction between practices and perceptions. Practices are related to the habitus concept, as posed by Bourdieu. Perceptions are related to Merleau-Ponty theories. Right now, I will focus on perceptions.

Perceptions can be seen as cognitive or affective, relating to what is perceived and creating possibilities of interaction. Those can be understanding about what a body deal with, such as emotions, sensations, judgements, feelings. They are put in motion in interactions between bodies. Inside Grupo Sonhus practices, I was able to see different situations that can be understood using these conceptual lenses.

When Jô says about feeling deep down the ocean, an image is proposed. This image dances inside the body creating specific actions and sensations. This entanglement is crucial for the process to fabricate a different body. This body, that I call symbol-body, for it encompasses communication practices, discursive and non-discursive, is also a bodymind. Actresses and actors of the group understand that body and mind work together, but they can also be seen as different, because of the way we understand them. Once Nando told that part of the work we do with our bodies is related to surpass our mind’s conditioning. This was a key for the body work, for they are mutually interacting.

To feel is the key to perform. And through performance fabrication happens. The symbol-body interacts with given propositions and create different realities related to feelings. To access these possibilities is part of the ways one can understand the communication being proposed. Through images, feelings are put in motion, and therefore symbol-bodies are fabricated, as images work inside each actress/actor to guide the experience. The previous body changes into a new body.

² The author has discussed specifically both of Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu. This is not my goal here.

Each of Grupo Sonhus' practices aim to affect the audience as a final goal. However, this direction is not part of the entire conception of the symbol-body fabrication. They remind themselves of this in various moments, but not as a conditioning to their practices. The idea that the pursuit for realness in stage leads them to affect the audience works as a tacit agreement. When Jô states that one must feel to transform their practices, this is part of their *Weltanschauung* as well.

Symbol-body: "transported to a different time"

In this moment, I understand that it is possible to see clearly how the symbol-body moves in a different relationship with time and space. The experience of time and space is not the same to everyone, even though they share the same interactional situation. This particular entanglement consists in an inner experience unfolding in relationship with outer experiences. One would see bodies belonging to the same time-space situation, but, in fact, this is only the observer point-of-view. The given interactional situation shows us differently.

Each time a behavior is restored, many past experiences come along. I remember one situation when I had to restore a specific movement. It had to be something that was once usual in my bodily practices. I remembered and performed a dance movement from a past performance I had presented. To feel this connection was also to feel as if I had a direct link with the past. I was living a past in present in that situation. But such consciousness was not linear, neither was the experience, nor can be its analysis. What once was and what was at that moment were happening at the same time. It was and it was not simultaneously.

As part of the fabrication of my symbol-body in performance, I also had to bring back a childhood experience. I chose to remember my first time at the beach. I live far from the sea, but I have always loved the ocean. It was an amusement at first sight and first touch. And scent, and taste, and sound.

The previous listed practices took place inside the "Complete Ritual Training" conducted by Nando Rocha. This practice, that I could experience with the group during a workshop, performed in my body, and by my body, and through my body, is based on a full practice of yoga. It consists in eight moments and it is a search for a transcendental truth, that would be scenically performed. This training seeks to new fabrications and compositions of the bodies so they can be more conscious and mobilize energies. (ROCHA 2014; REIS 2018).

The moments I here restore happened during a part of the training that sought to create scenes. I was there, experiencing my body and seeing the ocean and playing with it. The ocean was not there, but there it was.

Liminal experiences. There are many stories that tell us about situations like these. Maybe it is time to understand that the bodies do not necessarily live at the same time-space as we think they are living in. Maybe, the fact that we seem to be at the same time-space is

not true. Maybe we should not look at this as a given datum of reality rather than a fabricated one.

In Jô's conduction of the rehearsal-training, she mentioned the transportation to a different time. The performance she proposed was going in a different speed than the usual. What is performed, and what we see, changes the perception of the environment, ergo space-time. The group's *Weltanschauung* does not take time nor space as given data. They are being fabricated in the symbol-bodies performances.

Symbol-body: "go beyond" / "you can control each cell of your body"

One of the main aspects envisioned by the fabrication of the symbol-body performed by Grupo Sonhus was expressed by Nando verbally. I was engaged in the "Complete Ritual Training" workshop when Nando said that to train is to repeat a practice many times so as it would become part of the body and restored naturally. Hence, they seek some sort of control over their bodies.

This control takes in account a sort of dialectic process. It is a dynamic transformation, and it encompasses the disassembling of previous bodily states. The possibility to control is also the possibility to recreate, to restore previous states, to fabricate new combinations and to understand and go beyond limits.

The "Complete Ritual Training" had a practice called "personal dance". Its objective was mainly creative, related to expanding body movements. We would dance until the point of exhaustion. At that moment, one could find novelty inside of oneself, movements would arise, and those would not come from reflections. They would come from a part of each person that is normally untamed. From a sort of disaggregation, to new possible paths. The path to achieve control over oneself is into the wild.

Control of the body, as they present it, is not to tame the body. It does not come from something opposite to the person. It must come from inside, from experimenting and developing one's possibilities. It is a path directed to a state of freedom. And I understand that this is the case for two main reasons: a) to understand one's own body is to better deal with it and with oneself, b) to go beyond one's own limits is to better rebuild oneself.

Jô's propositions are part of this. An image, the ocean, is put in place. But it is not enough to fabricate the reality. One must actively seek this reality, and one must control their own body so to get to the state pursued. And it is essential to believe as means to control each cell of the body.

I have been a part of the Physical Theater Workshop in February 2017. Nando was the conductor on that day. I was in a group with other actresses and actors from the city, and we were all searching to learn more from Grupo Sonhus's practices. Nando said that to believe is a precondition to achieve. This would also relate to a scenic truth, to believe that you are another in scene. Me, not-me, and not not-me (SCHECHNER, 1985, REIS, 2018) are part of the transformation process.

Freedom and self-consciousness are two sides of the same body and are constantly performed in their daily practices. They are also part of their conscious discursive practices. This is based on believing on possibilities that can be achieved and thus performed. I bring this as part of their *Weltanschauung*. Their symbol-body communicates that one can go beyond their own limits.

Symbol-body: “you are in”

To restore what I previously stated: the performer should not feel as if, they should feel because they are living it. They are inside a ritual system that makes them live differently, and therefore experience and act differently. One of the main aspects of the group’s *Weltanschauung* is realness.

This is linked to the way bodies are experienced: they are not limited to what is visible. Yet, they are filled, and their stuffing is what they want to make visible. Their fabric is what they experience and feel. When they are in the bottom of the ocean, one should be able to see they are different at that moment. We do not have an idea of a limited body in spacetime: the environment is not a given datum. Nor we have the idea that the apparent lack of movement of a body would mean the interruption of its affections: the body is not a given datum. It is quite the opposite.

It is rather complex to think about movement here. There is no such thing as a still body for Grupo Sonhus. Stillness is movement. Or, at least, it has to be. A body has to present itself in stage as always alive. To live is to be in everlasting movement. This means, inside the group, that there are energies that flow from a body. Those energies have to be in motion so they can affect the audience.

The body is fabricated to be able show where they are at, as we can see when bodies are moving in the bottom of the ocean. Even when they seem to be still. There is no stillness, in fact, and there is no such thing as a still body. Stillness is movement, as the *butoh* lesson would pose. To think with *butoh* is to remember that even when a body is decomposing, worms are feasting, and this is also part of the body, and a dead body also lives.

Inside, one may see, and to be inside is to go beyond.

Movement, stillness. We have been in a practice called “personal dance”, where we would move our bodies freely. We aimed for exhaustion. The group understood that when one is extremely tired, the movement comes freely and comes with freedom. Much of the conditioning patterns thus limiting patterns would drop.

I remember quite clearly those moments. The more tired I would be, the more I would feel myself in a different state. And movements would come from me without prior reflection. It was a state of observing ourselves because we also needed to be able to connect with what we felt and did in moments after. I would many times be surprised with myself.

Then we would have to suddenly stop.

But not that suddenly. Nando would warn us first. “Prepare yourselves to freeze”. “Brace yourselves!”, “Brace yourselves!”. After, he would say “Stop!”, and he would say it in

English. It is common to use this expression in English in different situations in Brazil, especially in games. But that was not a game. Not entirely a game, not only a game.

He would say “Freeze!”, as well, but In Portuguese this time, and would go on. “Dance inside yourself.” We would dance in stillness, we would feel as if we were dancing but we would be still. Therefore, we were not still. We only seemed to be still.

Beyond stillness, to be is to be beyond. To be is to be entirely. To be is to fulfill the being.

Nando would say a lot about this apparent stillness of the body. These trainings would lead us to affect people with our stillness in an intentional way and to send energy to whomever would be watching. Energy was one of the most important concepts for the group, and they reflected upon the influences of energy in space and people. It comes to show how bodies are not limited to the skin frontier, nor limited to what is visible.

I think about these affections using the idea of Kraft. They affect experiences to yet be. I center on affects, and I do not split cognitive and affective perceptions, nor I think only of verbal communication. And I try to go further: when something is not understood, this is also an act of communication. And I have a question: the unnoticed affections are being communicated?

We have been facing ourselves with questions concerning what is made visible, and what can be seen or understood. My movement brings back what happened during the symbol-body fabrication. Therefore, I show what I saw and what I understood. Each way to understand is partial. But I have to say: I felt the energy, I have seen the energy, ergo it was in fact there for me and for those who were part of the experiences.

But what do we perceive? In a rehearsal-training environment, when they face each other and their director, they are also facing themselves, inside themselves. The same happens when they face an audience. To become other to themselves, as Schechner (1985) discusses, and to try to affect others in ways that they would also become others.

These transformations would happen at moments, or for the time to come. They live situations and they live them again in a different way on stage. Their symbol-bodies are in fact different bodies when in stage, trying to change the audience. The symbol-bodies change so they can be. And they are so they can transform their surroundings. Their communication is far more complex than what can be perceived in each situation. To better understand communication, one must track their entanglements.

In my personal notes, I have something Nando once said: “There is no ego in this scene”. Therefore, the actor is not really there. We have the symbol-body in fabrication, not the person who fabricates them, for the fabrication is collective and we will later see its outcome, its entanglement. Transformation is essential to think about how they understand what it is to be. The body must be so it can be.

Much has been thought upon the unintentional consequences of social actions in many different social theories³. They are a big part of what we are. Part of our practices are

³ Ortner (2011) presents some of this discussion

related to fabricate the links that try to explain the experiences we live in. Nevertheless, the experience I lived put possibilities that tremble much of our ways to comprehend the daily experiences we live. I personally believe this is the best we can do as anthropologists.

Thinking again upon this symbol-body, I see transformation as one of its main notions. Transformation through the energies in motion through practices in performance. A symbol-body mobilized to fabricate a different reality. Their main idea here is becoming and being in stage: it is beyond the given reality.

Symbol-body: “the bottom of the ocean”

A body is fabricated through their interaction with other bodies. Those bodies can be there at a given moment, like Jô conducting the training, or they can be brought to the present moment. The bottom of the ocean is brought and then it becomes a body in interaction. The body fabrication goes through different selves and lead to a different self as well (SCHECHNER, 1985).

A different self. We have many theories about how people develop themselves as people through the contact with others. With The Other. A symbol-body is in a path to become a different body from what it was before. The connections with others, inside oneself, or outside, in an interactional situation.

The others inside oneself. Schechner (1985) has presented performance as a concept by thinking about “restored behavior”. Inside theater, Schechner says this may happen consciously. I here recall a scene I brought before: my practices relating to bring back bodily practices I had previously performed. Another example would be the training-rehearsal practices: the performer repeats the scenes and they can also be remade in the process. I was able to observe many training-rehearsals on the play “Travessia Kanü-Shi”. I had the opportunity to understand that one of the scenes was based on Kung Fu practices.

Those practices came from a master, therefore their body was emulated and a different performance is born. It is as if the influences are eaten and strengthen a different body. Again, I understand how an entanglement with others is fundamental for this analysis and brings a possibility to better understand how bodies are fabricated.

Their bodies seek to communicate, and hence they focus on the others. The symbol-body is constituted by others and constitutes themselves in this relationship. We have the group’s *Weltanschauung*, which is intertwined in bodies, and performed by bodies, and performed inside the bodies. In a coconstitutive process, they are informed with directions and they give birth to yet another possibility through their symbol-bodies performances. It all takes place at the same time. Their acts of speech and their non-discursive practices carry and rebuild this shared dynamic body of understanding about the world and the group’s practices.

The symbol-body fabrication seeks to affect others. The group’s horizon is to affect to promote change. To change the sensibilities and possibilities of those who watch them, and to do so, they change their own sensibilities and possibilities. Their personal affections

are put in motion: questions, discomforts, dreams, longings, limits, treasures, images, love, desire, beauty, dread, fear. They understand that the world does not necessarily has to be taken as a given space. This is ethical and political. It is a part of everything they perform, even though one may not necessarily see this at a first glance.

To think about such entanglements, I restore a story they told me about their working space. It feels somewhat funny to say working space about Espaço Sonhus. One must understand that a dream is also a work.

Grupo Sonhus started to work on the construction of Espaço Sonhus when they had a possibility to use an abandoned space that is part of Colégio Lyceu de Goiânia, a traditional public school where the group was before born. Little by little, they worked together and had help from collaborators to transform the space. By the end of it, they had a pocket-theater, a pocket-cinema, an office, a café, books, and people could be there and chat before and after performances. Many different groups from the city performed there. Located in the center of the city, it has been an important space for Goiânia's cultural scene. Nevertheless, their activities have ended in the beginning of 2020, despite the group's many efforts. This dream has lived for a while, now they are pursuing different dreams.

They changed space and this has affected their environment. In a similar way, they change/fabricate their bodies in order to do the same.

This symbol-body is fabricated through communication, both verbal and non-verbally. Their goal is to affect those who are watching them, the audience. They know that they do not possess control over how the affections will be perceived. Neither they had control over how the affections that came to me. The interactions happened within our bodies and throughout our bodies, bodies interacting with boding inside and outside, with our histories being restored.

Therefore, the communicational aspect only completes itself interactively. The symbol-body has specific interpretations according to the aspects put in interaction and according to the observer. In my fieldwork, I tried to connect their understandings about themselves with my own. I pursued an entanglement: what I experienced in my bodily practices as a participant and as an observer. To observe is also, somewhat, to participate. But the experience is lived from a different standpoint. The affections are different, yet they are experienced. To live an experienced is to be affected, to be in contact with others, both inside and outside oneself. The more aspects that one tries to reach on a given ethnographic situation, the bigger is the possibility to come closer to the group and to move everyday assumptions. I think that what I experienced with the group lead us to think bodies on communication, time, space, and practices.

Another fabrication: Beyond

Much of our anthropological reflections are related to deal with the Other. This may lead to turn ourselves into others as well: to look at our practices from a different standpoint, a different perspective. Shall I say, to look from a different body?

Our Western tradition has been avoiding the idea that we are bodies. The body has been largely addressed as prison of the soul, or as an automate led by the mind. Anthropological reflections started to directly confront these understandings. Recent debates bring a common idea on the fact that the split between mind and body is a western sociocultural construct to be surpassed.

The body, for Grupo Sonhus Teatro Ritual, is mainly productive. They fabricate their bodies. Bodies that are made from the experiences lived. This can happen either consciously or without any rational perception about the process. This is a performative approach on social interaction and construction/fabrication. It is important to remember that all behavior is learned and put in play through repetitions and new elaborations.

The performative approach also allows us to see how actions are put in a scene: that comes to say that repetition does not fully exist or, at least, does not fully encompass any given social reality. Each present situation is different from the previous: actress and actors are always different somehow, even though they may seem the same. The stage can be different too.

So, bodies are fabricated in interactions that can happen inside or outside themselves. I stage these lines to expand the understanding we have about bodies and about social reality. That is why the performative approach is so productive. We can emphasize what is being produced, and this production happens in interactions with the given realities we try to reach.

Some groups of amerindians go through body fabrications throughout their lives. And more: they are self-conscious about it, and many times this is put in motion through different rituals. As I said before, the word fabrication is productive, as it comes from fabric.

Part of our clothing cover ourselves and cover our theories, but we can never be fully covered. We can be naked and believe we are dressed. The colors we see might not be the same colors the others see. Therefore, the interpretative aspect is fundamental to an approach about how social reality takes place in given scenes. Or even, on the entanglement of scenes that we organize as means to approach what we understand as reality. Each theory is an attempt to fabricate some blanket. Thus, what does each of these blankets/theories cover or leave out? Or what does each theory embody?

Again, on amerindians we have that rituals are part of this body fabrication. Rituals and symbols communicate. Symbols are shared by a specific group and different groups. A body cannot perceive all a symbol can say. Each new performance might take a symbol to establish new threads. Symbols are entangled on a *Weltanschauung*. To get to that, I had to be attentive towards the explanations and directions given to each body practice inside their rehearsal-trainings and on our dialogues. First, the pursuit for freedom, as a horizon, as a guideline that conducts their bodily practices, as the mold for each clothing, or, better to say, as the mold for the symbol-bodies that are being fabricated.

In many moments, they created different realities that would even deny the structural constraints. For example, the way a body acts when deep down the ocean is almost

as if walking on the moon. The forces are different, resembling a different gravity, that alters the daily assumptions. Therefore, it is an expansion of bodily possibilities regarding limits given by what we understand as nature. But that does not seem to address well the matter. This is an expansion of possibilities. This is the essence of such symbol-body: expansion of possibilities, freedom, and we have different ideas on nature as well.

The expansion of possibilities takes place by creating another reality. “Don’t dream it, be it”. This symbol-body, which is mind and body at the same time, can create their reality. To believe is a requirement for one to actually be.

We are talking about what they seek to be, but we are talking about a shared understanding I tried to fabricate in my fieldwork. It is centered on bodies that seek to communicate through processes that open sensibility to different affections and that try to open thresholds for the audience. The body is fabricated throughout practices that seek self-consciousness and seek to overcome limits to achieve freedom. It is necessary to believe so one can create, and to create means fabricating different realities. This can only happen interacting with others, inside and outside, being restored in practices. Such interactions put energies in motion that alter the space and time, for they are not taken as mere data of the experience, being fabricated through each performance. It is a different understanding on reality that works through creation of a different reality, therefore also different time and space.

What do symbol-bodies communicate? To think about their communication, one has to think about the conscious and unconscious understandings of each symbol-body, of the group, of the culture and of the audience. And to remember that they are everchanging. I tried to put some of these in motion and I can only reach to a partial understanding of a given time space situation. As part of the ethnographic experience, I focused on some aspects rather than others. It is the only way.

The symbol-body, along with the *Weltanschauung*, may perhaps be an interesting way to understanding many situations. My effort is a performatic approach, and I do believe this fabric could be extended to other ethnographic fields. Any given interactional situation has many performatic characteristics, such as restored behavior, efficacy and entertainment, and some of the subjunctive mode. Maybe we can go beyond a given situation by stressing such entanglements.

How to translate a situation? Donne is one of the authors I put in motion as an opening to my performance put in paper. It is always important to remember the saying “*traduttore, traditore*”. And, in these so-called treasons, we have our only possibilities to communicate with the other and/or about others. Donne says that “All joys are due to thee”. He is stating that joy is to be found relating to the person he interacts with. Caetano Veloso has a song based on Donne’s poem. It is a translation and, as with any translation, we have differences.

He says: “*Todo prazer provém do corpo*”, which can be literally: “Every pleasure comes from the body”. In order to better pursue the sewing I here perform, I have to go on. As a

translator myself, I put the exercise of retranslating from Caetano's song back to the original language: "Every pleasure is born in the body". This moves me further. Everything is born in the body. Because we are bodies, and to forget that is to leave out much of what we are trying to understand: life, as we live in it, as we are made by it, as we make it.

One more time, on translation, we have Mia Couto. "*Preciso ser um outro / para ser eu mesmo*". "I need to be another / to be my own self" and "I need to be a different other / to be myself" are two possible translations. When we have "my own self", we stress the agency of one over oneself. "To be myself" seems a bit more as a performance, but in the original sense: to fulfil a possibility. And what about transformation? A person would turn into another person as a person apart from them? Or to a different self, but still a part of themselves? I like to work with all these possibilities at the same time, for all of them carry important discussions on fabrication and creation. Also, to be and not to be at the same time is much related to liminality as I experienced in my fieldwork.

In Portuguese we have an expression: "*coisas que fazem diferença*", that literally is: "things that make difference". A good translation would be: "things that matter". Therefore, the differences matter a lot. It is important to understand that when we address material and non-material practices, they all do matter and that such choices create substantial differences. We have to think about our choices, in order to choose, and not only to be chosen by choices previously made. To restore behaviors consciously is different than to only repeat acritically the common discourses. I understand the only way to fabricate different anthropologies is by restoring behaviors and let them affect our bodies of work.

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