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**BODY RESPONSE:
glimpses in theater education**

RESPOSTA DE CORPO:
vislumbres em educação teatral

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Abstract: A theatrical work with focus on the production of subjectivity can only be observed through glimpses. The subjectivation processes, likewise, always manifests itself through flashes; only at very crucial and specific moments is it possible to witness their occurrence. This text seeks to analyze and reflect on the establishment of processes of subjectivation through Theater Education in theater workshops as part of the project approved by the University of the State of Minas Gerais under the Outreach Support Program Announcement 01/2022. To meet this text objective we based our reflections on the understanding that there is a possibility within the somatic work proposed by Theatre Education for the invention of worlds, serving as a tool for interventions in other aspects of life. In this way, the article analyzes a theatrical action experience through what we will call “body response,” a concept created in light of experience that problematizes and articulates the somatic activity carried out during the theatre education workshops and the coordinated processes that create the plan of consistency. In such plan, the materials of expression, theatrical cognitions, qualities of bodies, the mobilization experienced, and the action, achieved in contact with other bodies, establishes and sustains itself in a true invention of existence.

Keywords: theater education; subjectivation; education; subjectivity; body.

**Resposta de corpo:
vislumbres em educação teatral**

Resumo: Um trabalho teatral com o enfoque na produção de subjetividade só pode ser observado por meio de vislumbres. Os processos de subjetivação, da mesma forma, se manifestam sempre por meio de lampejos; somente em momentos muito cruciais e específicos torna-se possível testemunhar seu acontecimento. O presente texto procura analisar e refletir sobre a instauração de processos de subjetivação por meio da educação teatral em oficinas realizadas no projeto aprovado na Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais no Edital do Programa de Apoio à Extensão 01/2022. A partir do entendimento que existe no trabalho somático proposto pela educação teatral uma possibilidade para invenções de mundos como uma ferramenta para intervenções em outros aspectos da vida. Desta feita, o artigo analisa uma experiência de ação teatral por meio do que chamaremos “resposta de corpo”, conceito forjado à luz da experiência, que problematiza e articula a atividade somática realizada durante as oficinas de educação teatral e os processos coordenados que criam o plano de consistência. Nele, as matérias de expressão, as cognições teatrais, as qualidades de corpos, a mobilização experimentada e a ação, então conquistada no contato com outros corpos, estabelecem-se e sustentam-se numa verdadeira invenção de existência.

Palavras-chave: educação teatral; subjetivação; educação; subjetividade; corpo.



1 Introduction

Fireflies glowed faintly on the hill on a dark night in fascist Italy. That was what young Pier Paolo Pasolini, then 19 years old, saw in January 1941. While studying Languages and Literature in Bologna, Pasolini encountered not only the full range of contemporary literature but also came across a reinterpretation of The Divine Comedy that led him to rethink the relationship between the human condition and divine light (*luce*) and the tiny light (*luciolina*) of the fireflies that illuminated the souls doomed to the eighth circle of hell, reserved for bad politicians, the “perfidious counselors.”

It is from Pasolini’s narrative that Didi-Huberman (2011) constructs an important notion of resistance. According to the author, during World War II, specifically in Italy, the great light that Pasolini seemed to seek no longer resided in the divine realm but in the infernal realm, where “the ‘perfidious counselors’ basked in full luminous glory” (Didi-Huberman, 2011, p. 17). In other words, during that time, an inversion of sorts took place, transforming the resisters into elusive fireflies, who, while trying to remain discreet, emitted their signals very faintly. Their encounters always seemed like “a gathering of miniature specters, bizarre beings with more or less good intentions” (Didi-Huberman, 2011, p. 14).

It would not be an exaggeration to transpose the construction elaborated by Didi-Huberman in the book “Survival of the Fireflies” to the contemporary times of the late 2010s and the early 2020s both in the Brazilian context, and also globally. Apparently, the spotlight still shines upon those who usurp the *luce* to manufacture a politics of death. But how does this impact the theatrical discussion? The current context leads us to question what kind of theater we have been producing, both in terms of classroom instruction and “artistic” productions.

We make this connection not only because it seems impossible to separate theater and its teaching from the context in which it is inserted, but also from the understanding that “the arts can be perceived and thought of as both arts *and* as forms of inscription of meaning within the community” (Rancière, 2009, p. 18). Moreover, drawing on Deleuzian propositions, it becomes evident that theater, like any practice, can play an important role in processes of subjectivation. As a result, we come to realize that theater and all other contexts are part of one single whole. The reasoning

[...] it is that these processes of subjectivation are entirely variable, depending on the time period, and occur according to very different rules. [...] at every moment, power relentlessly reclaims and subjects them to relations of force, unless they are reborn through the invention of new ways, indefinitely (Deleuze, 2013, p. 127).

The analyses developed in this article are based on these understandings and the practice derived from the execution of theater education workshops, conducted in dialogue with the Center for Studies and Research in Education, Culture, and Subjectivity (NEPECS) at the Universidade



do Estado de Minas Gerais (UEMG) and through the project approved in Call 01/2022 of the Outreach Support Program (PAEx). The workshops took place from June to November 2022, totaling 14 sessions. We chose to bring specific moments from the work to illustrate specific points raised.

Before delving into the discussion of the theater education workshops, it is worth noting that after each session, an open circle was formed in which everyone could talk about their experience of the day, the relationships, and the compositions established during the activities. This moment became a key point for the present analyses, as it established a process of collective validation¹ and transversalization² of practices, allowing participants to be actively involved in the composition of the analytical process in a collective manner. As such, the implication of all participants was integrated into how the analyses were produced and validated. Following the workshops, monthly meetings were also held, with the aim of fostering discussions not only among the participants but also with those involved in the outreach project.

Most of the workshop participants had little or no experience with theater. We reiterate that the focus of this analysis is not on the “artistic quality” of the production, a characteristic supposedly expected as a criterion; but the logic of the event that prevails on stage during the workshops. What matters are the practices of resistance, the strategies, and tactics used to persist in the struggle, whether on stage or in everyday life. We are interested in how the bodies at play will react, how subjectivity can be glimpsed, and how, on stage, it is possible to visualize creation, subjectivation, transfigured into action. Alongside these analyses, we will compare statements and impressions shared by participants during discussions on the activity to further illustrate the various effects experienced by those engaging in an activity such as theater.

In one conversation we had during the outreach project activities, a participant said: “There was an increase in connections; the exercises connect us, as if we were more open, willing, and alert. You’d do something and I’d follow; it was as if there was a bodily response.” In theater, the prominent role that the body assumes is evident; it can be said that theater is an art of the body. “Every technique is a ‘body technique’” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 282). Thus, it is not novel to assert that many theatrical exercises and systems continuously foster the transformation of bodily thought.

1 Here, the term “collective” refers to the contribution of Yves Clot (2006; 2013) within the field of activity clinics, which positions the collective as a practice of producing the common in the exercise of work, linked to what is created as creative discord and established through the cooperation of those participating in the activity, sustaining difference and conflict. From this perspective, the collective also points to the sustained history as a repertoire of action in the activity and craft. We do not intend to exhaust the discussion of such an important concept but rather to situate it as an analytical guide for the work at hand.

2 “Transversalization” refers to the contribution of Deleuze and Guattari (2012) regarding the opening of the intensive field in the search for prudent experimentation and the creation of a surface that supports the expression of the event (Deleuze, 1974). Producing experiments that expand the degrees of transversality in events. Our endeavor is to trust in the political production of forces of resistance and the creation of other possibilities. We refer to these as *transversal aesthetic experiences*. They articulate the themes studied regarding the processes of subjectivation with the sensitive life (Coccia, 2010).



What is consciously understood by theater educators is bodily grasped by those who perform. To achieve somatic work through theater education workshops is to “immerse oneself in experiences that are conducted to touch something qualitatively theatrical: the perception of what occurs theatrically” (Magela, 2017, p. 28). It can be said that somatic logic establishes that the body will never emerge unscathed from what it is subjected to; it becomes scarred, as the effects of what happens to it are inscribed in its flesh. “Theoretically, the culture of the self is oriented toward the soul, but everything related to the body holds considerable importance” (Foucault, 1988, p. 9).

But what is, in fact, the significance of understanding the somatic perspective for theater education, and why use it as a framework? In other words, why talk about the body? This becomes necessary when we take into account David Lapoujade’s (2002) observation: the body can no longer bear it. The author says: “We are like characters from Beckett, for whom it is already difficult to ride a bicycle, then difficult to walk, then difficult to simply crawl, and later still, to remain seated” (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 82).

This matters because, by understanding this as the condition for the existence of the body, we understand that the body is always a construction of resistance. It is always enduring, as it can no longer bear it. This is “a profound aspect of the body: its power to resist, its resistance to fatigue and suffering” (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 84). The sick, confined, dissected, and docile bodies of Foucault (1988) confirm this. The bodies no longer form, as Lapoujade (2002) points out; they only deform, twist, and slowly drag along.

To recognize that the body, which can no longer endure, is in constant agony, and that its inability to bear any more is to understand that suffering is caused by contact with the outside world (Lapoujade, 2002). If the body always resists, it signals, as the author concludes, that it is possible to find health where there is only suffering.

The body must first endure the unbearable, live the unlivable [...] Appropriation comes from the fact that the body cannot withstand the wound, that it can no longer bear it. The power of the body (what it is capable of) is measured by its exposure to suffering or wounds. [...] What makes the strong weak is that they strive to persevere and even increase their vulnerability, controlling their degree of exposure to the wounds of the outside (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 87).

Betting on a somatic approach, like theater education, is to consider the possibility of work that reminds the body that it is capable of other things. Not that the body will cease to suffer, but that it can, at least, exist in an interesting way. “A body is primarily an encounter with other bodies” (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 86). A more refined theatrical perception contributes to the construction of a sense of self. Additionally, it draws attention to the fact that “the theatricality embedded in life is also the more complex perception of space, time, and human relationships, or the collaborative invention of other worlds of experience and new ways of living” (Magela, 2017, p. 28).



In this way, one could say that engaging in activities like those in theater education allows for the construction of a new body, while recognizing the perception that there are already-constructed bodies in play—bodies that are out there, awake and tired, and whose power is almost always stolen. We must also consider that “if the pages devoted to the suffering of bodies seem crossed by a comic force, it is because, perhaps, they evoke the subtle joy of a body that at least has this power to resist” (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 84). Essentially, finding the power of the body, enduring both the bearable and the unbearable, is getting as close as possible to glimpsing a certain line of escape that theater education is capable of producing.

2 Danger: Theater – A Matter of Life or Death

That day, we started with a playful gesture. Something needed to be placed over the glass door to provide more privacy and comfort for the participants during class, so we suggested making a sign that read: “DANGER: THEATER!” The suggestion was made in jest, a humorous idea: attributing an imminent risk to an activity like theater. To our surprise, the idea was welcomed by everyone.

We took a large piece of brown paper, and everyone sat on the floor to write the suggested words. Not satisfied, some began contributing with other drawings and/or writings. When the sign was finished, we placed it on the door. It could be said that “these are unpredictable phrases in a place ordered by the organizing techniques of systems” (Certeau, 1998, p. 97), like those collectively written by everyone, demonstrating that theater does not pose a risk of death, but rather a risk of life.

If we understand that theater education classes are directed toward everyday life, that is, they are aimed at having an effect on daily life through theatrical exercises, it can be said that they pose a risk to beaten up and exhausted bodies. But what is this phenomenon that puts life at risk and makes potential flourish, leap, and reveal the joyful nature of desire? It may be the construction of theatrical cognition (Magela, 2015), collective attention (Kastrup, 2019), or perhaps even the process identified by Foucault (2010), which, through exercises and practices (in the case of theater), provides a process of self-care, allowing the subject to construct their truth. In general terms, the collective work carried out there, whether in creating the sign or in the exercises themselves, is the construction of a surface that causes bodies to interact. “A ‘surface’ is not simply a geometric composition of lines. It is a way of sharing the sensible,” according to Jacques Rancière (2009, p. 21).

If we assume that “these practices act in a metabolic, somatic way, in the sense that they overflow into life not as themes, but as modes of cognitive operation—a body thinking theatrically in everyday life” (Magela, 2017, p. 35), then what is at stake is a reclaiming of the sensible. If



everything lies within an aesthetic regime, as Rancière (2009) suggests, what the activity analyzed here does is recognize that theater education functions “as a transformation of thought into the sensible experience of the community” (Rancière, 2009, p. 67).

One of the exercises performed, named Manipulation 3/1, generates a certain surrender to the collective and a kind of shared theatrical space. In this exercise, one of the participants lies down on two rubber mats, eyes closed, body fully relaxed. The other participants (on that day, four people per group—one lying down, and the other three manipulating) were tasked with manipulating the body in any way they saw fit, placing it in different positions, folding and twisting it. Of course, they respected the limitations of their colleague to avoid possible injuries or harm.

It is possible to say that this exercise involves a process of constructing a shared space, a common ground in play. How is it possible to work with touch and manipulation of the body without being invasive? Something of the device was at play here, but there was something else that hovered over the work. According to the participants, “it is a ‘not knowing’ that one knows.” “Silently and commonly, there was an agreement on the permission to use the other’s body,” they said. Perhaps this is the clearest indication that, through this exercise, a common plan of understanding was reached. According to Kastrup and Passos (2013), the experiential consistency of the common is produced through procedures that accompany concrete practices shared by the participants. This is exactly what is at play in this experience—it is what enables all participants to reach an agreement, even without “speaking.”

Theater provides and plays with them in an unplanned movement, the participants commented; it is as if “at every moment a reality emerges, the reactions and interactions are always enigmatic because the person with whom you ‘co-act’ does not have the same vision as you, and you must be open to what is going to happen. It is like jumping into the world and having to keep going.” It is about being completely open and willing, “like a child in a supermarket”, continues one of the participants. Through the theatrical class device, within the common plan constructed, there was an opening for what the body and its impulses would demand.

In a class, there is always an attempt to gradually increase the complexity of the proposed exercises. Through physically concrete tasks that are somatically and theatrically connected to the work, the goal is building a process of attention that, once it reaches its peak, will render the tasks unnecessary. Then, there will be automatic engagement in what has been organized in the background.

On many occasions, through the exercises and later in the group discussions about the work, we found similarities between the philosophical and technical structure of the theater education system and what was experienced by the participants during practice. In one of our sessions, a participant said: “Things will go wrong, but we have to keep going because we can’t be at the mercy of that. So, we take advantage of it for our everyday lives, remembering the rules during moments of despair.” When we come across a construction like this, we realize that, during the exercises,



with proper guidance, it is possible to say that the participants, through theater, learn to “deal with the diversity of occurrences, placing themselves in modes of attention to perceive (invent) new problems, sustaining the anxieties of these ‘unknowns’” (Magela, 2017, p. 31).

Inventing new problems within a common plan, sliding this into life, perceiving oneself through exercises and bodily techniques, constructing oneself from the new problems that, suddenly and unpredictably, erupt, deconstruct, and colonize the body, is precisely to produce a process of subjectivation with singular effects on each working subject.

It is a matter of knowing when to open your eyes at the right moment. Of glimpsing a narrow door, a breach. Of seeing beyond what is there: theater. But theater is everything else. Fireflies: events glimpsed in passing. Having your eyes closed to the event but opening them at the exact moment. How does this involve the other senses? Not seeing, not wanting to say, not bearing witness. One always sees in different ways. The breach that theater opens, the line of flight that erupts, is a fleeting moment, a small piece of life that powerfully shines like a firefly. It is this escape route, nicknamed theater, which separates the subject from life and death.

3 Established Relationship

Within the exercises of theater education practice, as well as in Foucault’s philosophy, there is a critical aspect that receives closer attention: the relationship. It is a key point in producing anything; in relating to the world, in wounding the body. This is also what Lapoujade (2002) discusses in his text: the promotion of encounters.

It is based on this premise that the exercise adapted for the theater education system from an Augusto Boal proposition, called Colombian Hypnosis, is proposed. According to Magela (2017, p. 25): “This exercise is an interesting means to promote that someone gradually and consistently perceives their body as significant, expressive, capable of altering the space and the people around them.” By reclaiming the perception of the body as an expressive, creative possibility, it becomes possible to understand the encounter with the other, since “a body is primarily an encounter with other bodies” (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 86).

Through the A and B Improvisation exercise, which expands the relationship between participants through the use of the body, the importance of the body in building relationships and in encountering the other becomes clearer. This exercise was one of the most frequently practiced during the classes. It basically involves two participants and a chair.

The instructions are as follows: “A wants to sit down; B does not want A to sit down. You act, you are not. It starts when signaled and ends when signaled.” At this point, the participants often express a sense of not knowing exactly what to do, but since the instructions are relatively clear, they manage to engage and play. Michael Tomasello (2014) says that human thought emanates from



deeper and older forms of social engagement than language and culture necessarily do. According to the author, there is a common structure that arises from the survival needs of the species, making human communication cooperative. For this to happen, those communicating must somehow develop a range of intentional and inferential processes to recognize their shared intentions within themselves and others. It is a set of collectively coordinated processes that can be classified within the studies of normativity (Tomasello, 2014; 2016).

We can only understand that creation involves something that erupts and inaugurates a new relationship with oneself and the world if we compare it to something that already existed. There must be rules in order to break them, but more than that, it is essential to know which rules should or should not be ignored and transcended. “Free him with too violent a gesture, let the strata burst imprudently, and you will kill yourselves, stuck in a black hole or even caught in a catastrophe, instead of tracing the plan” (Deleuze; Guattari, 2012, p. 22).

During the first few times the A and B Improvisation exercise was executed, it was observed that the participants had difficulty articulating relationships with each other, often focusing on their interaction with the chair. It is important to understand that in this exercise, the chair is merely a pretext, or rather, a catalyst, for the interaction. However, when it becomes the focus of the scene, the most important aspect is lost: the relationship built collectively.

Similarly, when we performed the Colombian Hypnosis exercise, participants pointed out the difficulty of maintaining a state of focused attention. This only highlighted the widespread difficulty with the topic of attention. However, when Hypnosis was followed directly by the A and B Improvisation exercise, it became evident that the participants were more capable of producing relationships on stage more easily, even with people who were not their partners in the previous exercise. The focus provided by Colombian Hypnosis on the face/hand relationship, along with its gradual progression through hand/chest, chest/chest, and torso/torso work, seems to facilitate relationships in more complex terms.

A pact emerges between the bodies and movements, allowing for a more genuine exchange. Compared to the first time the group performed the A and B Improvisation, the focus of the scenes shifted more toward the interaction between the participants and less toward the chair, a perception that both we and they had. There was consensus in the group that the connection on stage had become, in some way, easier. This statement came from them without our having communicated the same perception.

What is noticeable during the practice of the workshops is what theater education relies on: the importance of somatic activity for effective work in the production of subjectivity. The activation of the body through the Colombian Hypnosis exercise also enhances theatrical cognition due to its gradual progression; as the bodily elements become more pronounced, cognition becomes more refined.



When these theatrical cognitions are more activated through Colombian Hypnosis, and we move on to A and B Improvisation, it is evident that the skills worked on in one exercise carry over into the next. This happens because the interactions are effectively grounded in the body. In a way, by activating somatic logic in the first exercise, the body becomes a more pronounced interpretive key during the second. The focus shifts from relying solely on rational and verbal communication—especially since the participants hardly speak during the game, even though it is not prohibited—and instead predominantly, though not exclusively, employs somatic communication logic. What could have been merely a relationship of dispute, when the right cognitions are activated, becomes “an event, a dance, an occurrence where everyone builds a spacetime through active perceptions of temporality, movement, intentions, qualities of bodies, articulations between norms and dynamics” (Magela, 2023, p. 133).

Some moments that occurred on stage demonstrate how, through contact, it was possible to establish a relationship. We understand contact through Jerzy Grotowski as “a possibility of openness [...] of availability, from which the impulse for creation would emerge through a profound relationship between actors” (Berselli; Isaacsson, 2016, p. 25), which highlights the importance of the relationship with the other for joint composition.

At a certain point, one of the participants was hitting the chair, as if dusting off the seat. Immediately after, she looked at the other participant. At that moment, an interesting game of relationship between the participants was established, which also included the chair *within* the interaction. This was done without excluding the other. It was a demonstration of affectation, of an action transformed into affectation (Magela, 2017). This relationship became even more evident when there was more eye contact and interaction between the participants, even while keeping the chair in the equation. Affects and affections were at play at that moment. This means that there was a state where the body was affected, which necessarily implied the presence of an affecting body (affection). There were also transitions of states that increased or decreased the capacity to act (affects) of certain participants (Deleuze, 2002, p. 56).

On stage, different modes of existence collide, and through the friction of the encounter, produce some form of composition. “An existing mode is defined by a certain capacity to be affected (III, post. 1 and 2). When it encounters another mode, it may happen that this other mode is ‘good’ for it, that is, it composes with it, or conversely, it is ‘bad’ for it and decomposes it” (Deleuze, 2002, p. 56). The chair was used as an intermediary to create the interaction, that is, to allow affects to flow and connect the participants with one another. The interest in the chair was still present, but it alternated with the interest in the relationship, which positively shaped a different means for the two to construct the situation.

In a third moment, one of the participants stood up from the chair to prevent the other from sitting down. She concluded her action by patting her pants as if dusting them off. It was a minimal gesture but pointed to an interesting relational “behavior.” That pat on the pants indicated a kind



of perception of the interaction which, in that context, functioned almost like the final punctuation of the action and the establishment of a hierarchy. It was as if the gesture communicated: *we have decided*, or rather, *I've already finished my part, and I hope you got the message*. This type of message, this perception of relationship, places the participant in direct consideration of the other's existence and allows her to develop certain aspects of collective composition and engagement.

What presents itself as a challenge for the other to compose is also a form of interaction. This happens as there is a response from the affected, who delivers a different answer to the affecting party, that is, it allows the various series of affections and affects to fill the bodies on stage (Deleuze, 2002, p. 57).

At another point in the workshops, during the same exercise, a rather curious interaction was established between two participants. On some occasions, we admit, they were guided by us, though we weren't entirely sure whether we were helping or hindering them. According to Magela (2017, p. 33): "Often the facilitator does not know what is occurring in terms of meanings, but rather in terms of intensities that are placing the student in a state of potential, as they are in contact, alive." However, it was clear that there was a distinct tone of provocation between the two in this relationship. Although this might not make much difference to an intensive analysis of the action at first, it nonetheless punctuates how the relationship will develop for both sides. For example, one of them stood in front of the chair, looked at the other, and slowly sat back down. At specific moments, she merely pretended to sit, only teasing the possibility. After all, A knows that B does not want her to sit. This information is a given. The main point is that there was an overt relationship at play that exposed the whole series of agencies being composed by the participants, revealing a repertoire of styles, gestures, and procedures they used (Rolnik, 2011, p. 33).

The most interesting aspect was the maintenance of a connection mediated by the pretext of the chair, which proved extremely fruitful in terms of the connection between the participants. Still in this same scene, the participant playing A at that moment threw herself onto the chair, positioning herself horizontally, with her stomach on the seat, head and arms on one side, and legs on the other. At that moment, various ways of using the body came into play—different ways of creating uses for the body, different ways of following instructions.

It is in the way of working, "in its resistance to these external forms, which impose themselves on the inside to organize it and impose a 'soul,' that the body expresses its own power" (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 85). It is inevitable that "the body organizes and subjectivizes itself under the authority of the system of judgment" (Lapoujade, 2002, p. 85). This leap onto the chair was a way of showing not only how vibrant the mobilization was, but also how intensive relationships allow for different forms of occupation.

At another point, with two other participants, one of them tapped the chair as if testing the wood. This action provoked curiosity in the other participant, who then checked the chair he was seated. Thus, he stood up to look at the chair. The first participant quickly repeated the action of



tapping, but instead of tapping the chair with his knuckles, he performed the same action on the other participant, lightly tapping him on the back.

According to Magela (2015, p. 151): “The participants are called to make adaptations, coupling their impulses (desires?) to the movement-impulses of the other body.” If subjectivation consists, as Deleuze (1992, p. 116) points out, in “inventing modes of existence, according to optional rules, capable of resisting power as well as evading knowledge,” in establishing oneself differently within the prevailing aesthetic regime, using the body in different ways becomes a possibility raised by the action developed during this exercise.

4 Bodily Response

And suddenly, the sky shall thunder. The rain shall fall. Spring may arrive.
There, you will get used to the “suddenlies,” my child
(Rulfo, 2021).

And here comes a sudden thought: the body exists. This is what seemingly happened during the theater education workshops. The exercises and moments of collective narration of the workshop experiences gave the participants the perception that other dimensions of existence are possible, as well as the power of affectation that bodies produce. They generate their effects and blend affections: erotic, aesthetic, sentimental, perceptual, and cognitive (Rolnik, 2011). It is on stage that the movement of affections and their games of simulation are also perceived. These are those that compel bodies to act together. This is what, in a way, we sought to capture. It is as if a question is asked, and the answer is given through what the sensitive body produces under the influence of the encounter with other bodies. What attractions, repulsions, and affections manifest there? (Rolnik, 2011). The bodily response.

A participant said: “My body would follow, impose, and yield, and the same happened with the other person. However, at certain moments, it was hard to tell which movement was solely mine and which was just a response to a movement that was ours.” The intensities of the encounter, when experienced form a plan of consistency, allowing affections to take shape (Rolnik, 2011, p. 32). This is where the importance of somatic practice lies. It ensures that the participant is not simply attentive but immersed in a shared attentional field, participating in the composition of a territory.

The concept of “bodily response” emerged during one of the moments of collective analysis, in a text written by one of the participants. Later, this spontaneous concept, initially traced as a clue, evolved into an analytical tool for the practices in progress, becoming a theme that highlights the somatic event established in the relationship between the work of the theater education workshops and the processes of subjectivation.



Using the body makes the participants more open, willing, and alert to respond to what the other proposes. But this way of using the body goes beyond the superficial; as Tatiana Motta Lima (2012) reminds us, the actor's training serves precisely for the actor to forget—or, rather, to surpass—the training. Having domesticated the body, understood its nuances, strengths, and impulses, it is then possible to clearly let it speak. What is proposed is a bodily literacy.

The participant “knows without knowing, that silent movements of simulation are being operated in new subjects of expression” (Rolnik, 2011, p. 32). The bodily response, an expression used by one of the participants, brings into play that sense of “not knowing what one knows.” It is the construction of an attentional field, a shared plan that enables collective creation. “The actor had to train their body, control it, and overcome their blockages step by step so that, at the moment of performance, they could use it unconsciously” (Motta Lima, 2012, p. 96). Suddenly, something would happen and then quickly disappear. We always observed the processes in passing, things would suddenly come together and then fall apart. This is how the perception of the body unfolded. It is also how we understood its responses: through clues, traces.

What is done on stage quickly fades away—it is a work of events, actions that erupt, present themselves, and then vanish. Regarding its subjectivity, the scene is never clear; it is composed collectively and, naturally, begins to dissolve, only to become something else, and so carries on. Territories do not cease to emerge. As the workshop participants said, “Regardless of what happens and the responses people give each other, yielding, imposing, approaching, talking, playing, arguing, helping, trusting, these are what hold life and the scene together.” What emerges are worlds different from those traditionally regulated; actions appear that can compose a different way of thinking, feeling, perceiving, and acting (Motta Lima *et al.*, 2021).

The A and B Improvisation exercise proves to be

a generator of transformations in the participant on stage, more specifically in their “will” (the “will” of the proposition). Paradoxically, because it is so fundamental, synthetic, and minimalist, and because it is maintained throughout the improvisation, A’s “wants to sit” and B’s “does not want A to sit” can take on any configuration, both qualitatively and in degree (Magela, 2015, p. 152).

In fairness, the exercise is the complexification of all the practices and skills developed throughout the workshops. However, by keeping the instruction as simple as possible, one can perceive that “all life is already a form of expansion and containment of forces; all life requires a certain contour and limit or else it evaporates” (Schöpke, 2017, p. 288).

Precisely because of this shift in the field of perception, it becomes evident that the exercise fosters the creation of strategies for stepping outside oneself (Motta Lima *et al.*, 2021), inviting the subject to act without necessarily rationalizing their action. To act, in this case, was “to suspend certain modes of voluntarist, hyperactive, and excessively self-referential presence (which casts, like a shadow, experiences of fatigue, impotence, and guilt)” (Motta Lima *et al.*, 2021, p. 8).



The work developed allowed the participants to find ways to estrange (and internalize) themselves, to not initially recognize what presents itself as “I,” but to understand that their notion of self can be expanded and revised (Motta Lima *et al.*, 2021). Even more so, the notion of “I” must be brought into question, torn apart, and transformed into threads because “what is often not realized is that one must experiment by pushing limits, in accordance with a certain degree of plasticity, for some singularity to arise from the capacity for mutation inherent to becoming” (Peixoto Júnior, 2010, p. 183). In a way, it can be said that when a body experiments with its own limits on stage, some response can be extracted from it.

5 “To the Despisers of the Body”: Clues for a Certain End of the World

In “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” Nietzsche (2016) refers to those who despise the body and issues the following warning:

“To the despisers of the body I wish to say my word. It is not their error that they change their teaching, but rather that they bid farewell to their own bodies—and thus become silent. ‘I am body and soul,’ so speaks the child. – And why should one not speak like children? But the one who is awake and alert says: —‘Everything is body and nothing else; the soul is merely a word for something about the body.’ The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd. [...] Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there is a powerful ruler, an unknown sage. It is called ‘I am.’ It dwells within your body; it is your body. There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy” (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 40-41).

We have seen that the “bodily response” created in the analyses and exercises of theater education refers to a process of articulating the somatic activity performed and the coordinated processes that create the plan of consistency. Within this, the materials of expression, theatrical cognitions, body qualities, the experienced mobilization, and the action—gained through contact with other bodies—are established and sustained in a true invention of existence.

Yes, the body is always an encounter with other bodies, and its greatest wisdom does not come solely from the intellect, but from what it can move, activate, touch, entangle. From what a body can do in conjunction with other bodies.

In the field of work analysis through ergology, Schwartz (2014) makes a distinction that becomes relevant here and, in convergence, helps us reflect on “work” in theater education: that every activity is always a use of the self, by oneself and by others, and thus ultimately composes a “dramatics of the use of the bodily-self” (Schwartz, 2014, p. 260). We will not delve into Schwartz’s (2014) concept at length here, nor do we intend an exhaustive or detailed analysis of it. For now, it is sufficient to indicate that this formulation resonates with the Nietzschean passage and with the proposition observed regarding the bodily response elaborated here. Schwartz (2014) establishes



that the “self,” in this sense, is used to convey the paradox of the body, simultaneously living and historical, which becomes presentified through complex debate on subjectivation. We also add that the word “dramatics,” for the author, refers to what, in a life’s observable sequence, is grasped as the unpredictable, the irreducible history with which we contend as long as we are alive.

This philosophical perspective revisits a notion of the bodily self also inscribed in the world of values. Encountering other bodies involves a sharing of living, which points to the inscription of the environment in the self, as well as the self in the environment (Muniz, 2018), bringing the debate on norms and the potentials for singularization and production back into focus. The bodily self is, at the same time, memory and a myriad of circuits of force, expansion, and creation. The self indicates normativity, the possibility of production, and the desire for health. Thus, the bodily response does not imply essentialism but rather an understanding of the social construction and the clever mobilization of the bodily-self’s intelligence; historicity that integrates the debate on the production of living, laborious ecosystems, the processes of subjectivation, and the event; and all this alchemy of bodies that produce both collective and singular histories. The bodily self is a produced body (Muniz, 2018), which does not allow the separation of the axiological and epistemic dimensions of life. “Thus, the bodily self is a concept that reminds us that the effort to live is intrinsically related to the effort to know, there are no norms without knowledge and vice versa” (Muniz, 2018, p. 76).

In *Spheres of Insurrection*, Rolnik (2019) invites us to imagine: to project a Möbius strip onto the surface of the world, to reach a “topologicalrelational” dimension made of variable connections. The author points out that, through this exercise, it becomes evident that there is no form that is not a concretization of the vital flow, and conversely, no force that is not shaped in some form. But what is fundamental in this fabling is that life is a process of vital sustenance, in dissolution, and a continuous process of differentiation. If this movement of life is paradoxical, it is because our subjectivity is distinguished, yet inextricably, in a way that it constitutes this “topological-relational” dimension, simultaneously and inseparably. The author also emphasizes that, under the domain of the colonial-capitalist unconscious, our reserves of alternatives are continually captured, reproducing impoverished logics of living and sustaining serialized worlds. Despite this colonial force within us and in the world, we need to build and rely on the knowledge of the body, Rolnik (2019) suggests.

An intensive knowledge, distinct from the sensitive and rational knowledge typical of the subject. Such a capacity, which I propose to qualify as “extrapersonalextrasensoryextrapsychologicalextrasentimentalextracognitive,” produces one of the various experiences of the world that shape subjectivity: its experience as “outsidethesubject,” immanent to our condition as living bodies—which I have called “vibrational body” and, more recently, “pulsional body” (Rolnik, 2019, p. 53-54).

Thus, through resonance or reverberation, it is from this vibrational body that it is up to us to seek other world forms. This could be one way to understand the bodily response. At the same



time, it situates the end of certain worlds and steers the experience in other directions. Resuming the discussion proposed by Nietzsche and linking it more closely to the “bodily response,” which emerges as an analytical concept in the work of theater education, it becomes clear that the ends of worlds that interest us, and consequently the invention of other worlds, pass inexorably through the body and its wisdom. To ignore this is to ignore the multiplicity and potential of what a body can do. A body that falls in the right place has the power of causing a world to collapse.



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