



Lara Martim Rodrigues Selis

**At the edge of language:
Rereading Subalternity through misrecognition and sinthome**

TESE DE DOUTORADO

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais of the Instituto de Relações Internacionais, PUC-Rio as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutor em Relações Internacionais.

Advisor: Prof. Paulo Luiz Moreaux Lavigne Esteves

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I think I could say, without risking any absurd sentence, that this dissertation was born from a unique encounter that I had with words and silence. Throughout its chapters, I explain the meaning of that encounter in its intellectual, political, and social facets. But now, at this moment, I would like to speak of my experience at the edge of language as an intimate story. And, in order to tell that story, I chose the only path possible: through those who helped me to cross and sometimes create my own words and silence. Therefore, in the passages below, I hope to be able to show my gratitude to all who filled this journey with support and affection.

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Abstract

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This dissertation starts with Gayatri Spivak's diagnosis on the subaltern. More specifically, in Chapters 2-3, Spivak's conclusion about the subaltern disability to speak becomes a sort of gravity center around which orbitate theoretical problematizations, conceptual articulations, critiques and argumentative proposals. In many degrees, this dissertation follows Spivak's proposition, in that it does not intend to prove Spivak's diagnosis wrong. It does aim, however, to show how such diagnosis is incomplete. In that sense, Chapter 3 questions whether the subaltern translates a life form of the modern/colonial system that can only be demarcated by its 'exclusion' from the symbolic arena. With this problematization, the general objective is to move away from a strictly epistemological take on the subaltern problematique towards an ontological turn capable of appreciating the experience of indeterminacy as having an ontological status of its own. In order to construct that turn, the dissertation articulates subaltern studies with Lacanian psychoanalysis contributions. Drawing in Lacan's concepts, chapter 4 tries to find a grammar capable to interpret both the subaltern's expulsion from experience and the subaltern's experiences of denial. Hence, while that first level of interpretation is accomplished through a rereading of Lacan's theory of foreclosure along with subalternists' reflections, the second one is sustained by a critical engagement with Lacan's conceptualizations around the register of Real and its operations as drives - generally related with inverted returns, desublimation, and crossing of fantasy. The Chapter 5 combines such theoretical preoccupation with concrete examples, meanings, and historical contexts related to Latin America reality. In particular, Chapter 6 focus in the case of female workers, which points towards political dynamics that embrace the diagnoses of loss mentioned above. The role of this final moment is to bring an analytical piece capable of offering a historical application of the conceptual

grammar about the subaltern as it was developed along the previous chapters of the dissertation.

Keywords

Subaltern Studies; Psychoanalysis; Political Theory; Latin America.

Resumo

Selis, Lara Martim Rodrigues; Esteves, Paulo Luiz Moreaux Lavigne. (Orientador). **Na borda da linguagem: relendo a subalternidade como falha no reconhecimento e sintoma.** Rio de Janeiro, 2019. 243p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

A presente tese parte do diagnóstico de Gayatri Spivak sobre a subalternidade. Mais especificamente, os capítulos 2 e 3 tomam a conclusão de Spivak sobre a incapacidade de falar do subalterno como seu centro de gravidade, ao redor do qual orbitam as problematizações teóricas, articulações conceituais, críticas e argumentos. De forma geral, a tese acompanha a proposição de Spivak, de modo que não é sua intenção provar tal diagnóstico errado. No entanto, é um dos objetivos da tese demonstrar como tal diagnóstico pode estar incompleto. Nesse sentido, o capítulo 3 questiona se o conceito de subalternidade expressa uma forma de vida moderna/colonial que pode ser identificada apenas pela marca da exclusão na arena simbólica. Com tal problematização, o argumento da tese busca distanciar-se das análises que lêem a problemática do subalterno através de lentes estritamente epistemológicas, propondo, em seu lugar, um giro ontológico capaz de apreciar a experiência de indeterminação. A fim de construir esse giro, a tese articula os estudos subalternos com contribuições advindas da psicanálise Lacaniana. Assim, a partir dos conceitos de Lacan, o capítulo 4 busca encontrar uma gramática capaz de interpretar o subalterno em duas dimensões diagnósticas: como perda da experiência e como experiência da perda. Portanto, para dar conta da primeira dimensão, a tese realiza uma releitura da teoria Lacaniana da forclusão em conjunto com as reflexões dos Estudos Subalternos. Em segundo lugar, relativo à leitura da última dimensão, a experiência da perda, a tese mobiliza um engajamento crítico com as conceituações de Lacan sobre o registro do Real, com foco nas suas operações no campo da teoria das pulsões, as quais aparecem no texto através das discussões sobre o retorno invertido do real, sobre a dessublimação e a travessia do fantasma. O capítulo 5, por sua vez, combina as preocupações teóricas da tese com exemplos concretos, sentidos e contextos históricos na América Latina. Em particular, o capítulo 6 enfatiza uma análise do caso das trabalhadoras pobres e

racializadas, cujas experiências políticas estão relacionadas às duas dimensões do diagnóstico da perda mencionadas acima. A função desse momento final é, portanto, acionar uma contribuição analítica que traga aplicação histórica à gramática conceitual proposta e apresentada pelos capítulos iniciais da tese.

Palavras-chave

Estudos Subalternos; Psicanálise; Teoria Política; América Latina

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Pois a vida é impronunciável

– Clarice Lispector

1. Introduction

*Quando trovo
in questo mio silenzio
una parola
scavata è nella mia vita
come un abisso¹*
(Ungaretti, 2000, 58)

Some people might say that, at the beginning of every work, or even every existence, there is a word. A word capable of naming, of establishing order, or bringing truth to our chaotic reality. However, I am tempted to say that such a statement does not apply to this work. My dissertation has a more ironic start, not relying on words to find consistency, but to be thrust into an abyss. Yes, an abyss, as a symbol of the ineffability that surrounds political, social and cultural experiences. It was not the desire for a word, for order, or for a name that brought me here. At least not through the usual mobilizations of those terms. My relation with language actually emerges as a paradox, my own Sisyphus crisis, I could say, through which I try to use words to search for the intangible, to use words to find their own border, and then to thrust myself beyond it. Just like in Giuseppe Ungaretti poem that opens this introduction, in which the word was just a means for a jump into his intangible being. In a way, this study promotes a sort of jump into the being as well, or, more specifically, a jump into an ontological spot that I further articulate with the position of *the subaltern*.

Thus, in a way, it is not language that I look for, but its impossibilities. For that reason, I think it would be more adequate to say that at the beginning of this work there is not a word, but a fall. According to a Brazilian song written by Caetano Veloso, words, like rivers, also have margins, dark margins, through which waters we dive searching for the between, for where it goes the "ripe light" and "pure silence"². This is another way to approach the abyss mentioned in Ungaretti's verse, which appears in Veloso's poetic transmuted in the metaphor of

¹ English version: "When I find in this silence of mine a word it thrusts into my very being like an abyss".

² These are the translation of two verses of Caetano Veloso's song, called "A Terceira Margem do Rio" [The third margin of the river], which was inspired in a tale with the same title written by João Guimarães Rosa, another Brazilian author.

a crossing in search for the "wing of the word", as he calls it. Ultimately, the fall that marks the creation of this dissertation represents my compromise to dive into the edge of language. That is my abyss, into which I fall in search of the unconscious, irrational and non-linguistic dimensions of political experiences. That is, a fall into those ambiguous and contradictory elements that do not cease of not writing themselves in language, and which keep offering complex communications whose meaning seems impossible to grasp.

To talk about a fall presupposes a hole, or a sort of destination that confronts our cartography of boundaries with an "errant map", in Fantini's words, which in this case is "made of spaces without a place, times without duration" (2003, 160, my translation). Thus, the challenge of this work lies exactly on the interpretation of that moment where language finds a hiatus. More precisely, translating those figures to the field of political analysis, it would mean that I take language as a socio-symbolic network, through which subjectivities and social bonds are produced. From this perspective, power relations involve modes of representation, logics of recognition, scenes of interpellation. It is a productive type of power, as Foucault proposed, but a power that also produces a condition of un-being, i.e., an abyss. That is why Lacan's theory emerges as an important conceptual source for this dissertation. His ideas on a split type of subjectivity and a lost object offer a specific relation between metaphysics and politics, one that allows us to be engaged with a negative ontological reference: an emptiness, a lack, a hole.

In other words, methodologically, the Lacanian background sustains a reading of power as a force that engenders the inverse of consistency, what implies an ontological and political consideration about contingency, division, alienation, and difference. As I am going to present throughout the following chapters, Lacan's ontology critiques the metaphysical concept of necessity, which dismantles any attempt to base a metaphysics of presence. As a result, it suggests an investigation of those things that do not belong to the existing arena of "any discourse but that can affect us nonetheless" (DUNKER, 2019, 99). In sum, Lacan's theory brought a notion of power related with subjectivities and discourses perpetrated by margins produced by the entering of the letter: the 'letter kills the body', as he stated.

Again, similar to Ungaretti's poem, the word in Lacan's theory splits human experience, launching it into an abyss of the unconscious and of other ineffable dimensions. To put it differently, power produces impossibilities, which, according to Lacan, later return as sources of affection and symptoms to the divided subject. My mobilization of Lacanian perspectives goes in that direction, that is, in search for ways to improve a grammar capable of approaching such impossibilities created by power in both its epistemological and ontological dimensions. Particularly, I am interested in investigating such grammar along with postcolonial and subaltern perspectives, which offer consistent associations between the oppressed subjects and those negative references produced by power.

Accordingly, to start, I bring Gayatri Spivak diagnosis which has described such impossibilities as conditions of silence, the subaltern's silence. Such Spivak's statement functions as a sort of a gravity center to this dissertation, around which orbitate the theoretical problematizations, conceptual articulations, critiques and argumentative proposals. Particularly, I take Spivak's debate on the subaltern as one manifestation of what Dunker has called the metadiagnosis³ of modernity, or in her case, of modernity/coloniality. In Dunker's views, the analysis of modern history has been mostly characterized by the aim to recognize life forms⁴ that can be taken as hybrid and provisional compositions that emerge from demands presented in the domains of "language, desire and work" (DUNKER, 2011, 115, my translation).

Such forms of life share a structuration around a loss of experience. It means that, in spite of their varieties, the diagnosis in modernity, being it "formal or informal, clinical or critical, disciplinary or discursive", would consist of "narrative, discourses and theories about a loss of experience (*Ehrfahrung*)" (DUNKER, 2011, 115, my translation). In other words, Dunker argues that most contemporary efforts of theorization resume a "diagnostic technique" whose function is "to characterize anthropologically and to define historically the modes

³ In Dunker's original language, he uses the term "diagnóstica", that would be better translated as "diagnostic". He uses such expression "to designate the continued activity of examination and clinical verification. The term is an adjective turned into a noun, which refers to expressions such as "diagnostic art" or "diagnostic technique" (2011, 115).

⁴ For Dunker, regarding a context of where the structuralist studies and dialectical thoughts are being updating, it is possible to qualify such expression, "life form", as a "concept capable of justifying a social pathology and of explaining both the penetrance of certain symptoms in the expense of others, as well as their connection with modalities, determinants and no determinants, of suffering and malaise.(2011, 118)

of subjectivation that we call modernity" (DUNKER, 2011, 115, my translation). Examples of these efforts are actually variable and quite popular among our academic debates. Among them, we can point to the idea of "social resentment" in the Deleuze-Nietzschean perspective; of "biopolitics" for Foucauldians; of "bare life", following Agamben; and so on (DUNKER, 2011, 116).

In no case the diagnosis is universal (the pathological society, for example), or particular (this specific social group called resentful, for example). Instead, it is about a relation between universal and particular, that is, of the contingent relationship between the subject and the law. The diagnosis should not be understood as classification or inclusion of the case in its generic clause but as a reconstruction of forms of life. (DUNKER, 2011, 116, my translation).

Thus, as I was saying, I take Spivak's statement about the "disability to speak" as one of those efforts of "reconstruction", whose novelty is to assume such *life forms* as part of ambiguous phenomena, then related with a double-bind: the modernity/coloniality pair. Despite of this supplementation, Spivak's diagnosis, like the others, involves a reading of subjective experiences of division. Because of that, the life forms that it tries to read brings reflection around "the inability of the subject to recognize himself in his own particular history and the difficulty of establishing universally shareable social forms", which also justifies "alienation and fetishism" as the two popular keys used by such metadiagnosis "for naming this type of blockage of experience" (DUNKER, 2011, 115, my translation).

For Spivak, such loss of experience is related with the artificial aspect of any attempt of representation, which, in the absence of an essence to be represented, creates a phantasmatic sense of coherence and consistency for the subject's consciousness. Such artificiality is maintained by discursive operations of hegemonic ideology that keep the prerogative to authorize the accepted forms of social existence. That is why the subaltern finds him/herself in a paradoxical position: they have to resist but also to dislocate the only socio-symbolic arena within which it is possible to exist. This paradoxical double-bind that traps the subaltern between the margins of elite's narratives led Spivak to diagnose such social symptom as a subaltern disability to speak, which also triggered a defence of a deconstruction move directed towards the epistemological performances of western-modernity.

In sum, the mentioned idea of a "loss of experience" reappears in Spivak's diagnosis as this alienated or blocked access of the subaltern to ideological modes of representation. However, resuming Dunker's argument, the metadiagnosis of modernity also embraces a second possible way to interpret loss, no longer as a "loss of experience" but as an "experience of loss". This second interpretation requires an engagement with a sort of ontological dimension of loss. With this in mind, I start my problematization with the way Spivak's take on such negative reference does not seem sufficiently attentive to non-representational dimensions of power relations. For that reason, her conclusion on the impossible speech of the subaltern (i.e. when she announced the inherent disability of subalternity to represent itself) ends up dealing with what seems to be a restricted ontological base, according to which being outside hegemonic discourse means a sort of disappearance from the social terrain of collective agency. That is, being unable to speak (that is, being condemned to be ventriloquized by other people's representations), the subaltern occupies an aporetic position from which s/he cannot escape, except when s/he leaves the condition of subalternity (that is, when s/he finally gets inside discourse).

In the wake of such diagnosis, Spivak sees the transformations of epistemological performances as a central horizon for the construction of a more ethical encounter with difference. In many degrees, this dissertation accompanies such proposition, in that it does not intend to prove Spivak's diagnosis wrong. It does aim, however, to show how such diagnosis is incomplete. In that sense, I question whether the subaltern translates a life form of the modern/colonial system that can only be demarcated by its 'exclusion' from the symbolic arena. This also allows me to question if the reconstruction of subaltern modes of subjectivation should be restricted to its operations in the socio-symbolic scene. In my perspective, these problematizations are necessary to move away from a strictly epistemological take on the subaltern problematique towards an ontological turn capable of appreciating the experience of indeterminacy as having an ontological status of its own.

Following Dunker's reflection, such turn would mean to assume the points of impossibilities created by power as being contingent, experiences of non-identity that cannot be treated only in terms of failure, negation or side-effect of a symbolic law (DUNKER, 2011). Besides, in order to promote such a

interpretative change, we have to alter our forms of approaching life itself, that is, we have to look to the logic behind our diagnostic techniques. In one hand, the centrality of the loss of experience as a metadiagnosis of modernity has helped a number of authors to understand why, in spite of discursive and narrative sources of representation, life forms of modernity are marked by fragmentation. However, on the other hand, the focus on such dimension misses the moments in which loss is not an effect of unproductive determination but of productive indeterminacy.

To better understand this conclusion, I go back to Dunker's argument, according to which the metadiagnosis of modernity retains two possible interpretations: one which takes the condition of loss to be a sort of "unproductive experience of determination", and other that describes the results of such loss as a "deficit of productive experiences of indetermination" (2011, 122, my translation). In the first case, modernity activates 'pathological' contexts of "hypertrophy of systems and devices of discipline", or of "rationalization of work, of language and of life", and other situations of an excess of determination that ends up producing subjectivities "incapable of enjoying social-symbolic recognition" (DUNKER, 2011, 122, my translation). In the second interpretation, in turn, the life forms embrace potential arenas of productive experiences of indetermination, in which indeterminacy does not appear as a logical negativity, but as ontological proposition, taken as an experience of encounter with the loss, as a condition of non-identity.

Dunker situates the reflections of Nietzsche and Bataille in that second group, along with other authors that analyze the failure of representation as 'pathology' associated with feelings of emptiness and social inadequacy.

Among the philosophers of difference, the diagnosis reappears as a recognition of the indeterminacy of the relations between beliefs and practices (Deleuze, 1953), or as recognition of the indeterminacy of meaning in its iteration (Derrida, 1966). In this schizoid strain, Crusoé and Fausto, later Hölderlin (cf. Laplanche, [1961] 1991), Baudelaire (cf. Jameson, 2005), Joyce (cf. Laberge, 2007) and, between us, Guimarães Rosa (cf. Rivera, 2005). (DUNKER, 2011, 123, my translation)

In general, such interpretations shed light on a plurality of experiences of loss, instead of emphasizing manifestations of the loss of experience. When read with psychoanalysis, such interpretation of the experiences of loss gains an anthropological dimension of negativity, in which the lack is articulated with the

position of the lost object. According to Dunker, the psychoanalytic perspective takes some distance from the philosophical focus on the logical manifestation of negativity. In that sense, the compromise with the study of the domain of desire invited authors like Freud to delve deep on the process of loss that does not involve only an (un)representational consciousness but which is also interested in bodily processes of fragmentation.

In Lacan's incursions on the domain of desire, the experience of loss can be addressed differently depending on how the "anthropological field of the Other is understood", whether as language and meaning or as bodily experiences (DUNKER, 2011, 123, my translation). If the Other is approached in that last sense, the experience of loss can be "reverted in its ontological dimension of emptiness", resuming its status of an encounter, even if negative, with the Real (DUNKER, 2011, 124, my translation). As discussed throughout this dissertation, the Real, in Lacan's terms, represents the traumatic hole, the domain of an unspeakable desire that keeps stressing the imaginary and the symbolic lines — and which, nonetheless, finds a way back into those domains through the figure of the *objet a* (as the cause of desire; the lack's reminder, etc).

According to Dunker (2011), it is precisely through those concepts of 'objet a' and 'the split subject', respectively, that Lacan was able to deal with both metadiagnoses of modernity: the one about the experiences of loss, and the other about the loss of experiences. As I argue, in part, postcolonial and subaltern studies have been committed with the re-reading of those two interpretations on the modern/colonial diagnosis. On the other hand, as also mentioned, in the case of Spivak's diagnosis concerning the subaltern, as in most scholars of subalternity, the attention seems to remain attached to an experience of fragmentation in relation to an Other taken as a field of language and meanings. For that reason, alternatively, this dissertation assumes that reading the double historical diagnosis of modernity/coloniality with Lacan brings us a chance to open both dimensions of loss at once.

Thus, the objective of this theoretical design, which articulates subaltern studies and psychoanalysis contributions, is to propose a reading of subalternity as modes of subjectivation produced through those two dimensions of loss. More precisely, the next chapters are crossed by the attempt to find a grammar capable to interpret both the subaltern's expulsion from experience and the subaltern's

experiences of denial. Hence, while that first level of interpretation is accomplished through a rereading of Lacan's theory of foreclosure along with subalternists' reflections, the second one is sustained by a critical engagement with Lacan's conceptualizations around the register of Real and its operations as drives - generally related with inverted returns, desublimation, and crossing of fantasy.

If we accept Dunker's proposition, according to which diagnosing means "to reconstruct a life form, defined by the way it deals with the loss of experience and with the experience of loss" (2011, 124, my translation), then, in a sense, like Spivak, this dissertation also tries to raise a diagnosis about subalternity. However, by combining the political theorizations produced by subalternists with a Lacanian metadiagnosis, my idea is to extend the existing interpretations to the point of including considerations about the non-symbolic aspect of such life manifestations. In sum, looking for different ways of reading and localizing the subaltern experiences, this research wants to investigate whether Lacan's conceptualization about the Borromean knot (that articulates the domains of symbolic, imaginary and the Real) could express a way to follow Spivak's diagnosis – turning around, however, the terms of her hyperbolic inferences about the subaltern silence.

By bringing an ontological turn that places the subaltern in the register of the Real, I aim to contribute to Spivak's argument about the subaltern's imprisonment in the paradoxal double-bind produced by language. That is, the objective of this research is to give an alternative response to the subaltern puzzle described as the permanent search for touching the intelligible through the margins of the symbolic. In that sense, I borrow this diagnostic ethos proposed by Dunker as a methodological disposition to seek the subaltern as a singularity that emerges from demands of exchange and production in the domains of language, desire and work.

To diagnose is to say how a form of life appears more determined or more indeterminate, how it creates its singularity between lack and excess and how it relates to other life forms through exchange and production. Language, desire and work are forms of relationship, hence our concept is appropriate not for a relativism but for a relationalism (Dunker, 2011, 124, my translation).

In that sense, the experiences of loss and the loss of experiences, related with inner dynamics at the three registers mentioned above (symbolic, imaginary and the Real), can be analyzed here as part of a relational (and social) process. However, the construction of this dialogue requires a gradual rhythm involving different levels of text mobilizations, from theoretical readings and rereadings to conceptual translations and applications. In that sense, the design of this dissertation assumes the pace of a puzzle, in the sense that each chapter offers one piece of a bigger picture, which cannot be fully captured until the final considerations. As such, from the initial interpretations to its final applied analysis, the dissertation is gradually structured around three basic directions.

The first direction is related with efforts of problematization, which require both the presentation of political theories on power, placing the position of Subaltern Studies between them, and an interpretative move towards the specific diagnosis proposed by Spivak. Through this last move, I try to understand how she presents the subaltern as a mode of subjectivation of modern/colonial power. Those first paths take place, respectively, along the second and third chapters. In order to construct the theoretical problematization of Spivak's concepts, from which emerges my research problem and argument, I assume a methodological direction articulated with hermeneutic reflections.

At this level, I combine two types of conceptual analysis that, according to Blau's categories, are described as analytical and philosophical interpretations. Such typologies translate interpretative efforts focused not only in what authors mean but in what their ideas can mean as well. In particular, I call attention to what Blau defined as reconstruction techniques, that involve claims of "testing and potentially supplying, supplementing, modifying or removing presuppositions, definitions, links between comments/ideas and steps in arguments" (BLAU, 2017, 251). In this horizon of interpretation, different types of explanations come along not only to make sense of authors concepts, but also to connect it with other ideas, to verify their consistency and to suggest critical engagements with them (BLAU, 2017).

Thus, regarding the hermeneutical approaches, this dissertation takes the defense of a creative interpretation, confronting the idea of a reproductive position. In other words, it assumes that the encounter between observer and object is crossed by subjectivity, difference and conflict. From this perspective,

the interpretive act of concepts is developed into a plan of ideas, beliefs and principles already assimilated which limit and also expand this activity towards a particular horizon of expectation⁵. From such position, this research adopted a critical approach to science, according to which knowledge should direct its study of ideational constraints of social order towards an analysis capable to embrace transformative avenues.

In short, in terms of heuristic strategies, this dissertation involves a political stance to agitate the boundaries of postcolonial thought through the discovery of conceptual counterpoints. Therefore, still in chapter three, after describing Spivak's diagnosis, I propose an initial rereading of it through the lenses of political theories that present some engagement with psychoanalysis, as is the case of Butler and Althusser's reflections. At this point, albeit timidly, I already begin to point out the paths through which I will structure my theoretical proposition. Hence, in this third chapter, I bring Butler's and Althusser's reading of interpellation to throw a different light on Spivak's diagnosis about the subaltern. Both authors offer instruments to discuss Spivak's ideas on that first level of interpretation presented by Dunker. That is, both Althusser and Butler allow me to open Spivak's conceptualization around the subjective experience of loss.

Particularly, Althusser's approach on interpellation improves my understanding on the limits of representational modes of consciousness by showing the symbolic reliance on processes of imaginary recognition. In that way, I can interpret Spivak's conclusion about "an impossible self-representation" not only as an inherent condition of subjectivation, but mostly as a singular condition involving a lack in recognition processes. In other words, Althusser brings to the

⁵ Imported from the hermeneutic field, the term "horizon of expectation", inaugurated by Hans Robert Jauss (1994), contributes to the clarification of our methodological support. Such a concept express a subjective point of view that comes with the process of apprehension of reality. Such horizon of expectation represents, then, one of the *loci* where theory and practice are linked. With this concept, the author translates a set of conditioned cultural, historical and psychological assumptions which act on the verbal meaning of a work or on the interpretive strategies of your readers. In that sense, the interpretation of the theoretical literature cannot avoid being constructed from the experience of the reader, who updates it into his/her contemporary contexts. In that sense, confronting the transcendental legitimacy of rationalism, the epistemological background of this research recognizes that the knowing subject is not absolute, but a finite being articulated to a historical, social and cultural context. In this perspective, theory and practice are interrelated, conforming a concept of knowledge close to the terms inputted by Haraway (1997), to whom the production of knowledge would be the expression of its political and cultural environment. In a similar way, according to Hacking, all styles of scientific reasoning have a cultural history and cognitive foundations.

debate about hegemonic power an important focus on the relations between symbolic operations and imaginary mechanisms. Thus, through those lenses, the subaltern silence that appears in Spivak's theory as an effect of a discursive function of power gains another dimension of production. In it, subaltern "silence" is linked with the operations of power taken as a force that also engenders recognition.

In that sense, the inability to speak becomes, then, a disability to respond to the hailing moment, which leads some groups to lose accesses to identity-unifier signifiers. After that, I start a dialogue with Butler, with which I give a step further in the interpellation scene, calling attention to the question of *misrecognition* that emerges as a potential source for approaching contestatory practices. Butler's theory of subjectivation inserts an accurate reading on the failures of the hegemonic law as a terrain for both subjection and resistance. When combined with Spivak's diagnosis, Butler's reflections offer a clear statement about how the limited ability for performative acts that cross the subaltern position is also related with a disability to enjoy the experiences of *misrecognition* in its resistance potentials. Prevented from having access to (mis)recognition scenes, the subaltern finds herself also deprived of the ability to dispute the signification process that surrounds the very failure inherent to hegemonic law qua language.

Following this articulated reading between Althusser, Butler and Spivak, I conclude that, despite their productive differences, they all share that first type of metadiagnosis, from which comes their attention on the subject (loss of) experiences within the domains of the symbolic and the imaginary — to use Lacanian terms. Thus, after that, I start the second direction of my methodical design, which invites the reader to a fall into the edges of language, that is, to a moment in which I lead the text to Lacan's discussions about the intangible dimensions of being. Therefore, that is the moment when I bring the interpretation of the subaltern to a metadiagnosis engaged with the ontological experience of loss. In order to do that, I call attention to Lacanian Borromean knot, that articulates the registers of Imaginary, Symbolic and the Real (ISR).

Therefore, during the fourth chapter, along the investigation of such knot, I put an emphasis on the function of the Real that appears as a source for bringing the debate of subalternity close to the domain of desire. Through that register, the

already produced subject and ego find its ways to also emerge as an object (*objet a*: as a place for the subject of desire). In that sense, I mobilize Lacan's debate on the three modulations of negation [repression (*Verdrängung*), disavowal/denial (*Verleugnung*) or rejection/repudiation (*Verwerfung*)] in order to understand how the position of subalternity is not only an aporetic effect of the hegemonic language that cannot grasp its divided subjects. Thus, considering a rereading of Lacan's theory of foreclosure, I propose a grammar to interpret the subaltern position as an experience with its own ontological status, so capable to stress the symbolic and its linguistic structures generating symptoms and malaise related with the return of the death drives.

In chapter five, I continue raising my diagnosis about the subaltern as a form of life produced by the ambiguous face of modernity. However, at this point, I introduce two new directions to my theoretical proposition, both related with a dialogue with Latin America that is taken as object of analysis and as source of knowledge. Regarding the logic of a puzzle that subscribes this dissertation, the role of this fifth chapter is to bring an analytical piece capable of offering a historical application of the conceptual grammar proposed in the last chapters. Thus, among the social contexts where subaltern singularity gains historical reconstructions, I chose to analyze those under the dynamics of political economy, as they appear since the last capital transformations of the 20th century. This means that I approach the modernity/coloniality forms of life through their operations within the contemporary capitalist articulations.

The Latin America region enters as both source of analytical experiences and of conceptual lenses. In this last dimension, I take Dependency Theories as remarkable contributions to understanding the operations/workings of capitalism in postcolonial societies. Besides, I combine the original argument of that tradition with more contemporary scholars, such as Quijano, Escobar and Lugones, which offer important considerations about how contemporary systems of interpellation work through a combined operation between capitalist, racist and patriarchal discourses. With the help of these perspectives, my attempt is to construct a grammar capable of grasping how subalternity translates forms of life less determinate than others, along the historical domains of language, desire and work, in Latin America.

In short, this fifth chapter responds to the demand of putting my theoretical argument to test. To do it, I go to the applied researches and empirical experiences in/of Latin America. From this dialogue, I advance my proposal of an algebra created to analyze the historical manifestation of the capitalist discourse at peripheral economies, which I call "the discourse of dependent capitalism". Accompanying Lacan, the idea is to offer a scheme to explain the formation of peripheral subjects and its experiences of social bonds. With that scheme, it becomes easier to illustrate the discursive operations and subject relations developed on the previous chapters.

After that, I finally move to my sixth chapter, where I close the route of argumentation that sustains this dissertation. This chapter proposes an empirical study of the subaltern operations taken as Real. The style of analysis that I mobilize combines theoretical preoccupation with concrete examples, meanings, and historical contexts related to Latin America reality. In particular, I choose the case of female workers, which points towards political dynamics that embrace both metadiagnoses of loss mentioned above.

The way that I mobilize such empirics follows Glynos and Howarth's debate on the logics that inhabit social complexity. For them, there are at least "three-fold typology of logics – social, political and fantasmatic" (GLYNOS; HOWARTH, 2007, 106). According to those authors, each of those dimensions "when articulated together constitute the basic explanatory schema of our poststructuralist approach to critical explanation". Thus, to the reading of Latin American cases I focus on the fantasmatic type of logic, which "derives from a Lacanian ontology of enjoyment"⁶. Such typology it is associated with the ideological dimensions of social phenomena (GLYNOS; HOWARTH, 2007, 107). Therefore, such ontological framework embraces the mark of a radical contingency, which is able to disrupt the phantasmagoric sense of identity (GLYNOS; HOWARTH, 2007, 107).

⁶ "However, enjoyment is not to be understood as a synonym for pleasure, if only because such enjoyment is often – though by no means always – consciously experienced as suffering. Lacan, in fact, defined enjoyment in opposition to pleasure (Lacan 1992: 185). Closely associated with the Freudian notions of libido and primordial loss, enjoyment is a category used in conjunction with a set of other terms like fantasy, desire, repression, and so on, to account for a symptom's inertia. Thus the notion of enjoyment captures a subject's mode of being, whether individual or collective". (2007, 107).

If social logics assist in the process of characterizing what a practice is, and political logics show how it is challenged and defended, then fantasmatic logics can be said to generate reasons for why practices are maintained or transformed. All are necessary in any account of a problematized phenomenon and thus mutually implicate one another. It is, however, heuristically helpful sometimes to think of them as picking out different aspects of a critical explanation. (Glynos; Howarth, 2007, 108)

In that sense, I take the case of Latin American subalternity whose contingency's sense of impossibility sustains an interpretation about "productive experiences of indetermination". Thus, with this, I try to demonstrate how the subaltern's return as Real can break fantasy, or, to use the concept I evoke on the chapter, I try to demonstrate how that return operates a "crossing of fantasy". With this, I intend to address the forms through which the register of the Real opens channels for us to understand the ways through which the subaltern communicates his/her experience of loss. In the last move, I highlight how that inverted ontology of the subaltern authorizes a political consideration about a singularity which, if assumed, would impact the logic of recognition that guides hegemonic narratives.

In sum, my argument comes to an end, stating that: when approached as a symptomatic result coming from the discourse of the dependent capitalism, the subaltern position activates a bodily experience that, once incorporated, can then surpass its morbid feature. This means that, by raising a grammar that invites us to incorporate the unrecognized moves of the subaltern, we are also called to discuss how our political logic of recognition can itself be dislocated to include a more ethical engagement with the diagnosis of experiences of loss. Hence, by the end this dissertation, I hope to be able to deliver to the reader the complete image that I have promised here, and which should qualify us to grasp those impacts that the subaltern creates from the edge of Language.

2. On power, resistance, and desire

2.1. Introduction

Why have I always dreamed of resistance?

(Derrida, 1998, 2)

In *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, Derrida shows one of his few direct engagements with the concept of resistance. Based on that concept, he raises a debate on deconstruction as an important political and methodological strategy. As most of his texts, that book confronts us with a complex and abstract content, and its interpretation requires a consolidated theoretical horizon of readings. However, right on the first pages, we are caught by an interesting and less obscure approach, anchored on some sort of self-questioning, through which Derrida exposes his emotional relationship with a signifier:

This word [resistance], which resonated in my desire and my imagination as the most beautiful word in the politics and history of this country, this word loaded with all the pathos of my nostalgia, as if, at any cost, I would like not to have missed blowing up trains, tanks, and headquarters between 1940 and 1945 - why and how did it come to attract, like a magnet, so many other meanings, virtues, semantic or disseminal chances? (DERRIDA, 1998, 2).

As we can see, with this statement, the author seems to call our attention to a space other than that of Enlightenment reasoning, acknowledging that resistance can result from non-rational forces, so that, to the same extent of a dream, resistance can also be target of interpretations, since it is fully charged with meanings. Moreover, it is worth noting that resistance is not a trivial narrative, but one of the "most important and enduring expressions of twentieth-century political imagination" (CAYGILL, 2013, 6). Yet, the resistance subject remains surprisingly unanalyzed by our philosophical traditions, a situation that, according to Caygill (2013), is probably related with the plural, contingent, and empirical heterogeneity aspect of its historical phenomenon. Therefore, taking resistance experiences as multiplicity means to realize that they also resist to the unification process inherent to any conceptual formation.

Consequently, such "counter-movement" against "both unification and dispersal" places the concept of resistance as closely related with self-vigilant

practices (CAYGILL, 2013, 7), as indicated by Derrida's reflexivity. In that instance, any sort of reflection on resistance cannot abstract the need for starting with a similar move, following questions such as — “why have I always dreamed of resistance?” or, after all, “must one resist?” (DERRIDA, 1998). Analyzing the “one must” of resistance desire has become an important step to problematize what Bowman (2010, 46) defined as “one of the most enduring metanarratives that has long organized cultural studies and cultural theory (and much more beyond)”. According to such statement, in their lifelong period, such metanarratives keeps questioning the ability or capacity of an individual to act, or react, in response to power, without making it clear the precise nature of the relationship between power, desire, and agency.

By presenting his own heteronomous interest on resistance, Derrida's reflection comes as a reminder of the relevant role played by the relationship between subjectivity and power. The clarification of such connection opens up our ability to read forces that sabotage the sovereign imposition of a stable narrative about it. This is when, looking through micro-sociological lenses, our hermeneutical horizons can finally have access to ambivalent aspects that subscribe resistance practices. For example, it allows us to see those contexts in which “even resistance organized by explicit appeal to the idea of (its own) freedom may not be free or self-determining, and may instead be entirely overdetermined, symptomatic – possibly even more an expression of the power that is ostensibly being resisted than something independently resistant or alternative”⁷ (BOWMAN, 2010, 48).

Therefore, throughout this chapter and further on, my attempt is to read political theories by paying attention to the multiple ways through which some perspectives have defined those subjectivity directions in relation to power. In “Can the subaltern speak?”, for example, Spivak makes an urgent call on two critical thinkers, Foucault and Deleuze, to whose texts she asks: who is the Subject of desire and power? This demand for reflexivity responds to what I identify as a requirement for an investigation of resistance that touches (and

⁷ The consistency of a desire for change is confronted by Žižek's notion of drive, for example, which links the political reactions to domination to a logic of pleasure motivated by repetition. “Hence, in a Žižekian reading, ‘politics’ and ‘resistance’ might be regarded as alibis covering a drive to repeat certain gestures (such as ‘politicizing’ or ‘seeking resistance’) rather than anything like an ‘authentic’ desire to make a change” (BOWMAN, 2010, 47).

problematizes) its own dimension of impossibility. As shown by the quote that opens this introduction, the focus of Derrida was to put the agent (in the case, himself) into question, in order to avoid any risks of totalizing practices during the reading of political interventions.

Therefore, as a path to go deeper in such an undecidable aspect of resistance struggles, it is important to be engaged with its derivative and, in some sense, to prior questions, as well: How to account for the subject of resistance? Is it a coherent, self-identical and reasonable consciousness? Or is it comprised by unconscious dimensions that respond to a transitory and contingent identity? Does power interact with that subjectivity as a negative force, offering only domination, or does it operate as a productive force, from which there is no way out? And, ultimately, is there a universal history of power and resistance? Or are they dynamic categories that should fit in multiple and diachronic languages?

The responses to such questions have opened different traditions of thought and sustained a wide terrain for political calls, from feminist and postcolonial stances to anti-globalization movements, among others. Departing from a contemporary perspective, the debate between two distinct views of resistance — as defiance in the face of oppression, or as an internal opposition that leads to complicity with it — has had a grid of contributions: from Marxists lineages, such as Gramsci, Lukács, and Althusser, to post-foundational approaches, as those drawing on Foucault, Freud, Derrida, and Nietzsche. The conceptual avenues opened by these authors have sustained another huge scene of resistance studies starred by recent works of thinkers as Butler, Spivak, Žižek, Bhabha, Quijano, and so on.

According to Hirst (2015, 8), paying attention to the “respective accounts of the subject of resistance, the persons or groups conceptualized as the agents of dissent” is a necessary condition if we want to address the differences among several approaches to the study of resistance. Besides, the very concept of subject⁸ has been differently mobilized by social theorists and philosophers, from

⁸As Rebughini synthesizes: "It [the subject] can be extended from an ontological idea of mind and rationality – or, on the contrary, from an idea of the body and its passions – to a purely textual, discursive or semiotic position; it can be conceived as the result of subjectivation and interiorization of domination, or that of an emancipating action based on free will; it can be conceptualized as self-referential or as relational, when the subject is the result of the relationships he/she has with other subjects and with the immediate environment." (REBUGHINI, 2014, 2).

ontological and metaphysical approaches to its phenomenological and embodied takes. In common, all these uses of that concept work to improve the debate on domination, regarding tensions between contingency and structuration, or emancipation and constraints. Thus, the decision for the following topics comes in that direction: as a close look to how political traditions, and its reformulations, have defined power and agency and, what is more, how both answers are related with the level of subjectivity.

More precisely, the first topic focuses on Marxist and post-Marxist approaches. I justify such clipping by stating my need to address the two theoretical directions that have most affected the postcolonial critique, and which later will help me understand current developments of that perspective. That division, yet not antithetical, presents differences that change the course of social theory, and could also be described from the mark of their methodological directions (structuralist vs. post-structural), from their ontological possibilities (materialism vs. idealism), or from other plural philosophical horizons (dialectical vs. deconstructive approaches, and so on). What is important is that each of these paths have somehow contributed with understanding social relations of power and resistance.

After that, the aim of the last section is to address the *Subaltern Studies Group*, which is a highlight in its focus on the political operation of power theories from a perspective of the disenfranchized people (YOUNG, 2001). Their normative horizon is committed to the present, yet also associated with the revolutionary acts from the past, from which it takes elements for a diachronic reading of the history of power. Therefore, my attempt is to look for this *praxis* inclination, trying to understand how it affected the *Subaltern Studies* claim to write about those who were formerly the objects of hegemonic discourses, reallocating them into a subject position. Dialoguing with the pace dictated by Marxist and post-foundational traditions on the previous section, this second moment presents the political debate inside the South Asian group regarding the internal dissidence around those two traditions. The main objective of this part is to understand the particularities that power and resistance take within a colonial environment. Such investigation proves to be indispensable for the construction of the second chapter, in which I try to further the analysis of the complex

relationship between power, subjectivation, and agency regarding subaltern resistances.

2.2. Which Power? From domination to subjection

During the early 1970s, after a series of global transformations on capitalist forms of accumulation, the agenda of international political economy achieved a considerable popularization among 'Third World' intellectuals. The global scale of financial crises offered an ultimate call for a critical engagement with internal and external effects produced by the economic and political structures of exploitation. In such context, an acute influence of Marxist and neo-Marxist inheritance stood out, providing support for a renewed debate around the dialectical relationship between oppressor and oppressed groups.

In this setting, the 20th century reflected an important phase for what Young (2001) called “tricontinental perspective”⁹. It basically consists of an ethical-political position oriented towards denouncing the conditions of oppression, of which the epistemic facet assumed a plural grid of directions. *Dependency Theories* in Latin America, Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire contributions to African decolonization movements, and the *Subaltern Studies* interventions in Indian historiography are all examples of such academic echo coming from different traditions and parts of the globe. Among their diversity of thought, there was at least one certainty; that the European-Marxist tradition was both an unquestionable influence and a primordial target of critique.

Coming from different fields and locations, authors as Gayatri Spivak, Anibal Quijano, Saul Newman, David Harvey, and others, argued that the rebel manifestations against the social, economic, and financial crisis, that have been reaching the core of global capitalism, unveil not only a material failure of the system, but also a crisis of thought. Following this context, the traditional lens of political theory, frequently related with an exclusive state-citizen model of agency, or with a materialistic notion of power, or even with a methodological

⁹ According to Young, this term approaches the political discourse that is “located in the three continents of the South” (i.e. Latin America, Africa, and Asia) and comes as a substitute for the term ‘Third World’ that “gradually became associated with poverty, debt, famine, and conflict” (2001, 4). Therefore, in the author's opinion, postcolonialism is better named ‘tricontinentalism’ since this term “captures its internationalist political identifications, as well as the source of its epistemologies” (YOUNG, 2001, 5).

search for causality categories, among other points, have posed difficulties on the reading of different experiences of political contestation.

Such theoretical scene was partly related with the positivist philosophical inheritance, which has mobilized European debates on social theory since the end of 19th century. The intellectual legacies of such period, like those left by Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, have become inescapable references to later conceptual constructions. In this sense, as the twentieth century advanced, the debates on social power became more and more attached to all kinds of methodological concerns. The behaviorist movement was one expression of this. Guided by names as David Easton, Harold Lasswell and Herbert Simon, this perspective reshaped the epistemology of social sciences combining instrumental pragmatism, typical of North American thought, with the emerging logical positivism. Hence, throughout the fifties, the main features of the political science discipline reflected that scientific outlook informed by an empiricist philosophy of sciences, which affected both concepts of power and agency.

The search for causal relations as the fundamental aim of social science was one important result of that tradition. Not coincidentally, the principle of causality permeates a series of political theories, like Robert Dahl's (1968), to which power relations constituted a subset of relations, bonded by correlated forces. In this sense, causation properties, as covariation, temporal sequence, and asymmetry become central issues for his political analysis. A second consequence of this search for scientific rigor was the belief that political sciences should involve empirical observations. Such belief led the behaviorist movement to reduce political science to a study of observable actions of autonomous individuals situated in a particular social system. Again, Dahl's theory followed this proposal. According to him, power analysis must involve a "careful examination of a series of concrete decisions" (DAHL, 1958, 466), in order to discover "the ways in which power is distributed among leaders and between leaders and nonleaders" (DAHL, 1968, 405).

What I want to highlight here is the type of conceptual relationship between power and agency that followed such idea of science, since it has a global impact on the political uses of theory, whether resistance takes on it or not. Most of the authors that departed from a behavioral power analysis end up, to some extent, assuming an autonomous or sovereign description of the subject. This, in

part, results from their attempt to fill the gap between structural effects and agent behavior, without giving up on a positivist rigor. Such commitment led them to assume the important notion of rationality, in instrumental terms, which ensures the intellectual control over agency directions. Therefore, considering the unexpected behaviors inherent to social relationships, positivist traditions regarded self-interest assumption as a way to secure a type of agency “instrumentally oriented toward identical expectations” (WEBER, 1978, p.29).

In summary, within that perspective, the subject is used as an ontological idea related to cognitive reason, a kind of self-referential element whose action has derived from free will. Consequently, that mode of action becomes a predictable and stable support for those authors interested in building an objective theory of socio-political rationality, as can be seen in *Rational Choice* traditions. The solipsistic vector catalyzes the simplification of social action establishing fixed behavioral elements, which increases the possibility of anticipating the observed behavior. Thus, although following an individualistic account of power, those positivist analyses usually ignore Weber's perspective on the three, and not one, possible types of agency orientation (rationality of values, by affection, and by tradition). Such abstraction of social and cultural dimensions of action ultimately reduces the subject's reason to a role of mere execution, which helps to prescribe a reproductive behavior at the expense of political changes.

Additionally, when framed within a theory of action, most of those power analyses assume a negative sense of political relations, taken as hierarchizing process in which one person, group, or staff imposes its wants over the other. The inevitable use of coercive force, and the imprisonment of politics inside institutional and public spheres, is usually linked to a private understanding of power. This means that power works as a property that can be owned by some groups in expense of others. In that sense, among the critiques of that scientific horizon, many were directed to the pluralist and the elitist approaches to which it gave rise.

Baratz and Bachrach (1970), for example, problematized Dahl's engagement with concrete decisions, since it ignores a second dimension of power, in which agency is orientated to prevent the expression of political conflict. According to them, “power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that

limits the scope of political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A” (1970, 7). Hence, this second face of power could be understood as an ability to control/influence public agenda, going beyond the material and coercive exercise of power.

The notion of power as an act of limitation of decision-making, by influencing community values and political procedure, would constitute what those authors called 'non-decisions' realm. The idea of non-decision making, as opposed to decision-making, translates acts of power orientated to *latent* challenges to the values of the decision-maker. Moreover, non-decisions also imply a sense of no-awareness, by which the actors involved have no awareness of the full implications of their actions, as well as of their purpose and intentions. As we can see, another way to address the notion of subject takes place as one that starts to give the first steps into the debates around subjectivation and interiorization of domination.

In this sense, this idea of “mobilization of bias”, as an existing set of benefits and privileges, echoed other traditions that were experiencing a fertile renewal in the second half of twenty century, namely, the neo-Marxist perspectives on hegemony. Therefore, this other face of power (allocated in tactics as intimidation, cooptation, symbolic appeals, and so on) sustains an idea of power as a theory of domination, instead of a theory of action. Such change of direction was possible because of the return to structural tradition, especially of Marxist inspiration, into the field of political reflection. Such move affected the causality direction of power and resistance categories, and changed the philosophical base about the agent. Concerning the former point, the critiques of elitist approaches are important achievements, since they pave the path to think power as an instrument acting beyond institutional arenas. This move was mostly constructed through a debate with ideology theories. Therefore, although with different degrees of political engagement, the second half of the 20th century witnessed an amplification of (neo)Marxist structural approaches coming from both south and north communities.

The contributions of Guha, Marini, Lukes, Strange, among others, exemplifies how Marxist lenses brought a range of new elements to the ongoing debate about power and ideology. Then, the former positions usually alternated between elitist and pluralist approaches received important critics related with

their methodological, theoretical, and political grounds. Among the methodological novelties brought by that horizon, most of them were directed towards two instances of behaviorism: first, the behavioral focus on individual decisions, and, second, its insistence in confining power debate within the limits of observable conflict. Supporting these critical instances, Gramscian concepts occupy a prominent place. Gramsci's debates about hegemony and superstructure dynamics offered support to a broader form of addressing power and resistance, focused on the operation of social forces and institutional practices (instead of individual behavior), as well as in *latent* conflicts (instead of observable ones).

Thus, the focus on systemic phenomenon, where the mobilization of bias results in consent rather than coercion, adds another less visible face of power to literature. Now, the idea of *potential* has become also related with an ability to ensure compliance with domination. Through this perspective, power is not the exercising of resources in a dyadic relation (from A to B), but a process of domination in which a collectivity addresses power over another. As pointed by Lukes (2005, 13), under the invisible face of power, "those subject to it are led to acquire beliefs and form desires that result in their consenting or adapting to being dominated, in coercive and noncoercive settings". Consequently, the study of power should focus on the "attempted or successful securing of people's compliance by overcoming or averting their opposition" (LUKES, 2005, 34). In other words, power would rely on the act of misleading people to act against their will. And domination starts to be addressed as a force that operates through strategies of subject alienation.

As we can see, a specific idea of interest formation comes to place, one that confronts the previous notion of a coherent and autonomous consciousness. In these terms, people's interests would not result from individual pre-given preferences, but rather from a system that often works against it. Thus, by throwing light on notions such as values, beliefs, and interests, the Gramscian notion of 'hegemony' explains how domination can also operate through subjectivity — and not only upon it. With this direction Gramsci assumes, but also revises, the Marxist problematic of class-consciousness formation, offering some important changes on the way that orthodoxy usually reads the relationship between power and resistance.

Undoubtedly, like most Marxists, Gramsci remains attached to a notion of political agency as a collective substance, within a dialectical play. In this sense, when he talks about will, it necessarily translates into will of class, which is thus united and coherent. In this perspective, there is no political significance for the individual will outside a collective unity. Therefore, for him, when in its atomistic forms, the subject cannot generate political action — i.e. power — but only arbitrary voluntarism.

Voluntarism? The word is meaningless, or it is used to mean arbitrariness. Will, in the marxist sense, means consciousness of the ends, which in turn means an exact notion of one's own power and the means to express this in action. Thus it means, first of all, making a distinction, the identification of a class. It means a political life independent from the other class: a compact organization disciplined towards its own specific goals, without deviation or hesitation (GRAMSCI, 1975, 11).

In these terms, politics is sustained by a binary ontology that always involves a conflict between social forces. Because of that, such political imagination requires a notion of agents as united collectivities, i.e., as unified groups performing acts of power and resistance. Any possibility of self-consciousness depends on the agent's ability of being aware of those social struggles. Note that to achieve consciousness is not an individual or psychological process. Rather, "class", as an ideological identity and a material reality, is both the subject and the object of cognition.

The "collective worker" understands that this is what he is, not merely in each individual factory but in the broader spheres of the national and international division of labour. It is precisely in the organisms which represent the factory as a producer of real objects and not of profit that he gives an external, political demonstration of the consciousness he has acquired (SPN, 1971, 202)¹⁰.

By consequence, subordination is a collective condition as well, since it configures a position through which the subject remains unaware of its *class* beliefs and interests.

Gramsci uses the term 'subaltern' interchangeably with 'subordinate' and 'instrumental' in his class analyses. Its sense of 'inferior rank'

¹⁰Throughout the text, I employ the abbreviation SNP in reference to Gramsci's texts reunited on the book "Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci", edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith.

means that it is particularly well suited to describe the diversity of dominated and exploited groups who do not possess a general 'class consciousness' (YOUNG, 2001, 353).

For now, it is interesting to realize how Gramsci brings subjectivation into his theory, taking it as an ongoing practice crossed by hegemonic forces. As indicated, in his opinion, the process of becoming a subject walks hand in hand with the process of formation of a class consciousness. Hence, instead of departing from a coherent individual base to create social reality, Gramsci inverts such solipsist ontology, posing the very possibility of self-realization as a function of social complexity. In other words, to be a subject of history requires a conscious state of the (super) structural terms that respond for its own formation.

In a way, when considering this notion of class interest and alienation process, Gramsci seems to distance himself from Marxist false-consciousness model. On the other hand, at a lower degree, his theory remains attached to an idea of agency as the capacity to access, through infrastructure rearrangements, the institutional validity of one's own class interests. Such institutional recognition, however, presupposes a subjective struggle against the force of 'common sense'. And here is where Gramsci starts to mark his heterodox position in relation to traditional readings of Marx's theory, giving an important weight to power manifestation within micro-sociological arenas.

The idea of 'common sense' basically translates the ideological process of normalization of a particular worldview to all social segments. In other words, it is a process capable of designing mass consciousness, by merging individual will into collective will. That is how common sense ensures consent, or how common sense establishes an "uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become 'common' in any given epoch" (SPN, 1971, 322). The ultimate result of this process —i.e. of politics — is the ideological consolidation of hegemonic orders.

As we can see, this perspective tells us about a particular *modus* of power operation working in a specific domain that will be designated by Gramsci as civil society¹¹. According to him, the function of such an arena, based on consentment,

¹¹ Gramsci proposes a broader idea of the State, which embraces both hegemony and coercion, which appear as power operations related, respectively, with the civil and political societies. Hence, whereas civil society translates the organizations in charge for the construction and distribution of ideology, such as churches, schools, trade unions and so on, the political society, on

contrasts with the coercive type of domination that takes place in the political society. With this move, Gramsci changes an important aspect of the traditional Marxist readings on political struggles, supplementing the previous focus on structural mechanisms with a superstructural concern. In that sense, “Gramsci raised man's thought (consciousness) to a newly prominent place in the philosophy of praxis. Control of consciousness is as much or more an arena of political struggle as the control of the forces of production” (DALDAL, 2014, 157). Regarding this horizon, Gramsci's theory of ideology expresses his main difference from orthodoxy. Therefore, whereas orthodox Marxists usually dispose of an absolute centrality of structural variables upon superstructure, Gramsci replaces it for a kind of autonomous existence of that latter level.

Taking ideological dynamics as not reducible to structural constraints opened new directions for power analysis, expanding the very idea of politics attached to it. According to Spivak, the mobilization of ideology theories allows the activation of (inter)subjective levels which are responsible for bringing debates on representation into power (and resistance) analysis. Because of that, when Gramsci asserted that “all men are philosophers”, he was also making a call for all oppressed classes to be critical about the representational schemes under which they were coopted. In that sense, being a philosopher and achieving class consciousness are interrelated moves, both connected to the idea of praxis. However, to say that all men are intellectuals is not the same as saying that all men “have in society the function of intellectuals.” (SPN, 1971, 9). So here enters the central idea of organic intellectual, who should work as a kind of superstructure “functionary”, mediating the interests of classes through ideas and aspirations.

For Gramsci, both working and ruling classes are able to develop their own organic intellectuals. However (and this is important to realize), the peasantry experiences a different condition when it comes such matter: it “does not elaborate its own ‘organic’ intellectuals, nor does it ‘assimilate’ any stratum of ‘traditional’ intellectuals” (SPN, 1971, 6). Because of that, such group lives in a specific form of subordination, one characterized by the lack of autonomy, in

the other hand, describes the coercive instruments mobilized by the ruling class that detains the control over the State's repressive and bureaucratic mechanisms.

which place lies a position of intellectual dependence in relation to hegemonic classes.

But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in "normal times"- that is when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate. Hence the reason why philosophy cannot be divorced from politics. And one can show furthermore that the choice and the criticism of a conception of the world is also a political matter. (SPN, 1971, 327).

The limits of the peasantry to formulate its own ideological resistance (or leadership) had a great impact upon Spivak's reflection on the Subaltern. Additionally, such reflection also motivated important revisions from others 'epigone' thinkers, such as Guha. In his work, Guha supplemented Gramscian relationship between hegemony and subalternity by, first, asserting an autonomous status to peasant domain (understood by him as equivalent to the subaltern class), and secondly, by opposing the positive aspect (cooptation strategies) of hegemonic domination when analyzed from a subaltern's position. However, before getting into these revisions, it is important to realize that the concept of 'subaltern' is not a universal proposition, especially if we consider the different uses it has among Asian authors and Gramsci original writings.

For Gramsci, in fact, subalterns are the in-between class - the lieutenants of the ruling class as opposed to the masses. The equivalent in India would be the Babus (i.e. the indigenous elite who speak English and were the principle mediators for the colonial power), not the peasantry (YOUNG, 2001, 353-354).

On the other hand, despite these different directions, one point deserves our attention: when describing subaltern insurgencies in Italy and Spain, Gramsci seems to add a particular value to their creativity strategies. These strategies had been equivocally judged by orthodox Marxism as pure spontaneity, arbitrary in its means, and without any historical necessity.

It may be said that spontaneity is therefore characteristic of the "history of the subaltern classes", an indeed of their most marginal and peripheral elements; these have not achieved any consciousness of the class "for itself", and consequently it never occurs to them that their history might have some possible importance, that there might be some value in leaving documentary evidence of it. Hence, in such movements there exist multiple elements of "conscious leadership",

but not one of them is predominant or transcends the level of a given social stratum's "popular science" - its "common sense" or traditional conception of the world. (SPN, 1971, 196-197)

So, what modern theory of class consciousness saw as deviation, Gramsci described as a "living and historically" way of subject education. In his words, "this unity between 'spontaneity' and 'conscious leadership' or 'discipline' is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, in so far as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses" (SPN, 1992, 198). From this breaking with modern approaches to resistance came one of the central legacies that Gramsci left to postcolonialism theories, which is: the idea to take masses spontaneity as a necessary methodological path into historical materiality. In that sense, subaltern movements, whether assumed as peasant or not, could be seen as a new form of 'consciousness domain', one that is not produced within a systematic leadership of a coherent group, "but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by 'common sense'" (SPN, 1971, 199).

Therefore, according to Gramsci, between the elementary (subaltern) organizational patterns and the modern forms of consciousness formation we can find a difference given in terms of "greater or lesser degrees of 'homogeneity', 'coherence', 'logicality'" but not in terms of a qualitative standard (SPN, 1971, 347). Such aspect makes communication between those two realms a question of epistemology, instead of an ontological problematique (SPN, 1971). In other words, the political challenge for the organic intellectuals, when dealing with the subaltern issues, lies more on a problematization of the existing conceptual schema — that often constraints historical practices into a historical conceptual horizon —, than on the pedagogical need for a transformation of subaltern subjectivity. As Gramsci put it: "It is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity" (SPN, 1971, 330-331).

From that, I suppose, came part of the postcolonial defense for an empirical and theoretical engagement with that historical deviation represented by subaltern groups, which should then be taken as a creative source for *praxis*. In these terms, philosophy of praxis implies necessarily an awareness of the inescapable effects of historical structures upon subject formation.

Empirical research on the subject as citizen concerns mainly social research on social movements; feminism has been central to the promotion of research on the embodied subject, on sexuality and gendered subjectivities; the issue of plural and non-Eurocentric conceptualizations of the subject has been investigated mainly by research on cultural difference, racism and discrimination, as well as by postcolonial studies [...] (REBUGHINI, 2014, 7).

In a wide scope, we can say that Gramsci's critical engagement with one's own conceptions of the world is in close relation to what Foucault calls the "positive" or "productive" aspects of power. In other words, Gramsci's revision of traditional Marxist approaches to ideology started a decisive move away from negative and materialist approaches to power. Undoubtedly, it paves the path for the analysis of subjectivation, and more discursive notions of ideology. In other words, it became possible to think knowledge as power, as Foucault stated, and resistance as implying a reflexivity action to representational systems. Yet, we cannot forget that Gramsci's take on subjectivity remains within the terms of a philosophy of consciousness.

Taking the approach a bit further, Althusser exemplifies a more 'radical' reading of ideology, from which he proposes its direct impact upon the production structure. Through these lenses, more than sustaining domination in civil society, ideological apparatus would work as a primary cause of material relations. Furthermore, unlike Gramsci, Althusser places emphasis on the disciplinary aspect of such apparatus, highlighting the education power that works within family, school, etc. In this sense, "in contrast to Gramsci's emphasis on will as the basis of all philosophical actions, Althusser totally rejects the existence of an independent human will that can function outside the superstructural (ideological) determinants" (DALDAL, 2014, 159).

With this, the notion of the subject is even more distanced from its ontological meaning, generally attached to rationality skills. Now, it appears as a situational element, always in a relational position with the world that surrounds it. In that sense, Althusser's take on subjectivity shares with Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and others a critical position against "the self-sufficiency of the Kantian enlightened, rational subject" (REBUGHINI, 2014, 4). Thus, in the analysis of subjectivation, the so-called post-structural perspectives respond for the addition of a deeper level of engagement with linguistic dimensions. Consequently, such

lenses helped to improve analyses of spheres of identity formation, as well as discursive ‘dressage’. Nevertheless, and more importantly, “the poststructuralist attack against the subject and his/her rationality was directed towards the themes of autonomy and authenticity: the subject is not self-transparent and is always entrapped in some form of domination and conditioning” (REBUGHINI, 2014, 4).

As we can see, for those scholars, opening the box where domination, subjectivity and agency remained unproblematic became an indispensable strategy to walk away from the traditional approaches to subject and power. In this horizon, Foucault's historical sensibility and micro-oriented perspective represented an unquestionable contribution. Drawing on Nietzschean notions about effective history, Foucault confronts the historical narrative that used to work with notions of constancy, mechanical force, or destination, which were then replaced by a particular commitment to subject level of discontinuities (FOUCAULT, 1977).

Compared with the Gramscian perspective that presents a structural neo-Marxist focus on social movements, Foucault proposes a different horizon, related to a less uniformed identity concept. Therefore, whereas the Gramscian lenses see agents as united collectives positioned within a large spectrum of conflicting interests, the Foucauldian approach captures “no unified subject performing acts of resistance”. Thus, the diffuse and positive idea of power, inherent to his post-structural analysis, allows Foucault to assume that resistance acts as emanating from “an always incomplete subject” (HIRST, 2015, 8 *APUD* ESCHLE; MAIGUASHCA, 2007, p. 292).

The insertion of discontinuity in the political debate dislocated our analytical tools to a different space of manifestations: the body. In this sense, in Foucault's theory the *locus* of history and its political struggles is not linked to structures, but to the physical and sensory emanations of the body. Taking this into consideration, the author studies a complex series of strategic articulation of knowledge and power that works upon and through those bodily targets¹². By

¹²Such characteristic made power an essentially historical concept, whose mechanisms and techniques have been transformed throughout the centuries. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, the mechanisms of power are specifically related with the disappearance of public demonstrations of force. According to Foucault (1995), the 19th century witnessed the construction of a specific regime in which power to punish was no longer related with a public spectacle. In its place emerged techniques that work upon an abstract consciousness, mediated by the certainty of being punished. In such a framework, power is not applied *on* the body but

consequence, such direction has a closer relationship with the way Foucault conceptualizes power, embedded within notions of subjects and mechanisms of disturbance. In that sense, power is no longer something negative, unified and consistent, or even something that could be acquired, seized, or shared. Instead, power is understood as a social practice that is immanent to several domains, being both intentional and non-subjective, and constituting a productive practice. Therefore, to the known aspects of coercion and punishment, Foucault added a set of other techniques and practices, now related with normalization and control (FOUCAULT, 1978).

It is worth noting that these new tactics of power presuppose a process of individualization through which a particular system of subjection operates. Thus, power is not something that institutions and state apparatus can hold, i.e., power is not a property, but a strategy spread throughout a multiple grid of force correlations. Split among a whole series of subsidiary authorities — psychological experts, professors, priests, judges, etc. — power is entangled with a *corpus* of knowledge, techniques, and scientific discourses. This *corpus* acts between the institutions and apparatus, creating a field of validity where a microphysics of power operates. Hence, in summary, power is exercised over everyone, and everyone is an agent of power.

This conceptualization of individuals as subjects whose preferences and rights are the target of control produces new ideas of collective power technologies, where power and resistance are taken as inseparable elements: “where there is power, there is resistance” (FOUCAULT, 1978, 95). The central implication of such conceptual proposal is that resistance became an immanent aspect of power structure: “if resistance and power go hand in hand, then there is no possibility of a grand refusal overcoming power relation, since refusal is already part of what produces a power relation as such” (EDKINS; PIN-FAT, 2004, 5).

The assumption about the embeddedness of agents within power relations, as presented by Foucault's genealogical approach, shares with Derridean deconstruction method a commitment to conceptual disturbances. Such compromise, in Derrida's words, could be read as a “critico-genealogical return”

through the body, achieving the spheres of thoughts, will, and inclinations. In this sense, power lies more on life than on body, and its effects are articulated inside the modern soul.

(HIRST, 2015, 14). As shown by the reflection that opens this chapter's introduction, the idea behind Derrida's approach is to put the agent into question, in order to avoid any risks of totalizing practices from political interventions.

There is more to Foucault's argument than this. It is not a version of Hegel's dialectic, in which power is a response to power, responded to by counter-power, in which agents and agencies are locked in identificatory battles, antitheses and syntheses. Of course, this also happens. But what is key in Foucault's thinking about power, agency and resistance is a line of thought opened up by this crucial question: what is the status of the popular idea that power 'oppresses' us and demands 'resistance' anyway? (BOWMAN, 2010, 48).

Therefore, according to Bowman (2010), the perspectives drawing on writings of Derrida, Nietzsche, Freud, and other post-foundational approaches to subjectivity share the general opposition to what Foucault has called "repressive hypothesis". This term, announced in the first volume of *History of Sexuality*, marks the negative idea of power, taken as a repressive force. By implication, the rejection of this hypothesis leads to an equal rejection of resistance as a simplistic search for "a way out", for a rupture with prohibition. In that sense, another effect of this analysis falls on the problematization of the subject-object division, which frequently has sustained politics of identities based on an absolute distance between oppressor and oppressed (BOWMAN, 2010).

Thus, the productive aspect of power, from which derives the notion of subjectivation, has made it increasingly difficult for associated authors to disregard the reciprocal affectation between the poles in dispute (colonized and colonizer, oppressed and oppressor, etc.). If the process of becoming a subject goes hand in hand with the process of becoming subordinated to power, then it would not take long for them to conclude about the inherent (and internal) constraints that work upon resistance, as well. Judith Butler is one of those authors who have addressed the possibilities of a subject to desire the condition of its own subordination (MILLS, 2003). Butler presents such reflection in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), where she demonstrates how both the subject's existence and actions are attached to the terms of power. As a result, she also offers a strong interrogation of the ways that resistance can (and cannot, at the same time) overcome the limits of complicity.

In order to reach that conclusion, Butler had to detach the interchangeable uses between the concept of subject and the idea of “person” or “individual” in her writing.

The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as Introduction in a "site"), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language. The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency. No individual becomes a subject without first becoming subjected or undergoing "subjectivation" (a translation of the French *assujettissement*). It makes little sense to treat "the individual" as an intelligible term if individuals are said to acquire their intelligibility by becoming subjects. Paradoxically, no intelligible reference to individuals or their becoming can take place without a priori reference to their status as subjects (BUTLER, 1997, 10-11).

The linguistic turn brought a new way to address the subject, including the notions of performative act and interpellation process. In that sense, despite her theoretical innovations, Butler shares with Foucault the treatment of subjectivation as a discursive or linguistic matter.

In other words, the power that produces subjects is cast as a question of the efficacy of speech to call the subject into being, or alternatively, of the subject's identification with and reiteration of the terms and names given by a discourse which both precedes and exceeds it. Hence, the descriptive reference points for an explication of the productive operation of power shifts from social practices and technologies to speech and language. The medium of the production and social existence of subjects is “linguistic practice”, where “linguistic practice” encompasses the activities of speaking and writing, both in their immediate forms of intersubjective address and in discourses, utterances and signs that have no obvious subjective origin. (MILLS, 2003, 258).

Therefore, rules and socialization are not only enabling instruments for action but also for constructing instruments of discipline and control. This means that subjectivation produces not only the mechanisms for social intelligibility, but also the very conditions for the reproduction of power (MILLS, 2003). As a consequence, in Butler's terms, resistance became also a matter of linguistic “reappropriation and resignification” (MILLS, 2003, 261). This analysis of resistance as not being an opposition to but a reinforcement of power sustains a series of reflections on complicity strategies. For the anti-colonial movements, the

idea of a double-bind trapping the oppressed subject within the limits of colonial power has supported a long debate on the impossibilities surrounding the subaltern's emancipation.

According to Young (2001), the tricontinental perspectives highlighted the embodied and colored aspects of the subaltern subject in order to confront the western ontological claim of a universal experience of the Self. In that sense and considering that power does not work upon everyone in the same way, those studies call our attention to the element of “difference” within the process of subjectivation. For some, the main point was not only to understand how power produces the subject, but also how that same power can actually sustain a position of quasi-existence, non-existence, or even anti-existence for the oppressed subjectivity. Frantz Fanon, for instance, resorted to Freud in order to construct his approach to the colonized as dead-in-life. For him, the maintenance of colonial system in Algeria was strongly dependent on a constant refusal of any humanity of the oppressed classes. As he said, “the arrival of the colonist signified syncretically the death of indigenous society, cultural lethargy, and petrification of the individual”, in that scenario, “for the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist” (FANON, 2004, 50). In these terms, resistance became a case of necessity, as the only possible way to recover the sense of humanity lost in the social division between the colonized and the settler.

As Bhabha explains (2008, p. xxiii), “the body of his [Fanon's] work splits between a Hegelian–Marxist dialectic, a phenomenological affirmation of Self and Other and the psychoanalytic ambivalence of the Unconscious, its turning from love to hate, mastery to servitude”. Therefore, from the Hegelian-Marxist influence, Fanon “restores hope to history”, which comes along with the oppressed language about the need of a “revolutionary awareness”. However, while the process of unpacking the colonial oppression confronts the Enlightenment concept of history as a progressive whole, on the other hand, the dialectical restoration of humankind, through revolution, runs the risk of reproducing the teleological movement aiming at the universal.

In other words, the Hegelian negation opened Fanon's reflection to a replication of Manichean boundaries, so much so that, as Bhabha suggests, “Fanon must sometimes be reminded that the disavowal of the Other always exacerbates the “edge” of identification, reveals that dangerous place where

identity and aggressiveness are twinned” (2008, xxxiii). Because of that, the essentialism of black identity has been operated with caution by postcolonial movements. It is recognized that the creation of unity and self-conception around an essentialist identity could be temporarily employed as a positive (and strategic) tool for specific historical purposes, but with the condition of not neglecting the historical and theoretical ironies that can emerge along this process.

Spivak (1999), for example, defends a punctual use of unified notions of identities, which she calls “strategic essentialism”. Such move configures a political response to the paradox involving the space between power and resistance. For her and other authors from the so-called *Subaltern Studies* Group, the resistant subject does not conform to a dead presence, as Fanon suggests, although it does share with it elements of erasure provoked by colonial power. Thus, to investigate such erasure, Spivak, as did other authors before her, decided to take a different path from that taken by Fanon. According to such view, critical thinkers should not accuse, but also not excuse Marx’s arguments, and should thus be “attentive, and situationally productive through dismantling” (SPIVAK, 1999, 81).

In this context, Spivak’s engagement with Marx after Derrida can be read as challenging Marx’s early thought on philosophical and ethical grounds: on philosophical grounds because the early ‘humanist’ Marx suggested that the working-class struggle for economic equality and political emancipation in nineteenth-century Europe represented the political interests of all humanity, in all places, and at all times; on ethical grounds because the universal claims that were made in the name of the industrial working class in Europe excluded other disempowered groups, including women, the colonised, and the subaltern. (MORTON, 2003, p.96)

Therefore, against universal categories, both Spivak and Chakrabarty criticized (each in their own way) the Marxist binary ontology. As an example, such perspectives showed how the opposition between capitalism and socialism, which has been present throughout the history of western philosophy, had a crucial effect of producing a theoretical erasure of difference. For them, it holds the fact that western philosophical tradition, based on the idea of a universal human being, enacted a narrative of history that annuls difference whereas introduces it within the “self-sameness of the normative [and transcendental] subject” (SPIVAK, 1999, p.78).

Regarding all this grid of theoretical developments, in the following section I start my investigation on the idea of subalternity, searching for ways to understand why the subaltern category expresses a specific kind of resistant subject. Besides, assuming that questions of resistance are above all questions of power relation, I am especially committed to understanding how the concept of subalternity translates particular theoretical descriptions at the level of subjectivity formation, and how those contents have implications upon its mobilization on the level of political agency. To start the dialogue that goes further until next chapter, I pose myself this question: considering the theoretical traditions presented above, how does colonialism incite a different mobilization of the concept of power?

2.3. Subaltern Studies: supplementing Marxism

As pointed before, the idea of resistance has been one of the most enduring narratives of our modern political imagination. However, the history of power is radically composed by fragmented, hybrid, and unstable gestures that resist themselves to a unitary political language. This 'non-commensurability' of power, as we saw in the previous section, poses inevitable challenges to our representational skills, confronting any theoretical endeavor with the philosophical theme of "difference". In that sense, many thinkers have spent their work on such problematique, from Derrida, Lyotard and Levinas, to more recent names, from non-western modernities, as Spivak, Bhabha, Inayatullah, and others (CHAKRABARTY, 2000).

For these last authors, what is at stake is the curiosity about the particularities of colonialism, if any. So, when addressing political theories, one is required to ask: is colonialism any different from other manifestations of power? In this dissertation, I assume that our ability to understand the present configurations of resistance is inevitably attached to our willingness to look at the ongoing implications of modern-colonial dynamics. Certainly, such epistemological challenges raised by colonialism are not a new agenda. In Young's perspective (2001, 6), even the postcolonial critique "can hardly claim to

be the first to question the ethics of colonialism: indeed, anti-colonialism is as old as colonialism itself”¹³.

However, when approaching such colonial phenomena, which dates back to the 15th century, in 1492, going forward until 1945, Young argues that it configures a particular manifestation of global structures of power. So, when reflecting upon European expansion processes, Young (2001, 5) confronts Ernest Gellner's argument, to whom colonialism “[was] really no different from those of any other conquest or assertion of power in the past, or indeed from those practiced within either traditional or modern societies”. Against that horizon, Young asserts:

To sweep colonialism under the carpet of modernity, however, is too convenient a deflection. To begin with, its history was extraordinary in its global dimension, not only in relation to the comprehensiveness of colonization by the time of the high imperial period in the late nineteenth century, but also because the effect of the globalization of western imperial power was to fuse many societies with different historical traditions into a history which, apart from the period of centrally controlled command economies, obliged them to follow the same general economic path. The entire world now operates within the economic system primarily developed and controlled by the west, and it is the continued dominance of the west, in terms of political, economic, military and cultural power, that gives this history a continuing significance (YOUNG, 2001, 5).

In this sense, assuming the specificity of colonial experiences does not necessarily imply a denial of capitalism as a global force, but it definitely draws attention to the impossible universalization of its effects. In other words, colonialism problematizes the idea that capitalism produces always "the same history of power" (CHAKRABARTY, 2003, 197). Thus, to break with a monolithic relation between the categories of power and capital is at the core of postcolonial critique to traditional European-Marxist political thought. In general, the postcolonial literature particularizes its contributions by focusing on cultural and subjective effects of power, which, yet, does not imply the rejection of class studies. As Spivak (2000, 325) stated: “considerations of cultural problematics in Subaltern Studies are not a substitute for, but a supplement to Marxist theory”.

In part, this search for a theoretical revision of western political thought, without rejecting all Marxist statements, explained the famous interventions of

¹³ For Young, the particular contribution of the former would be a thorough research into “the continuing cultural and political ramifications of colonialism in both colonizing and colonized societies” (YOUNG, 2001, 6).

Ranajit Guha on the prevailing Indian historiographic paradigms. For this author, the colonial experience in India “created a domain of the political that was heteroglossic in its idioms, irreducibly plural in its structure, interlocking within itself strands of different types of relations that did not make up a logical whole” (CHAKRABARTY, 2003, 197). Because of that, Eurocentric lenses were insufficient instruments for reading colonial power struggles, yet it continued offering some important elements of inspiration. The English Marxist historians, for example, were certainly an unquestionable influence for the Indian critical debate until the seventies.

The *Subaltern Studies* project was created drawing on such critical spirit. Having started as a series of historian debates in the beginning of the 80's, the main claim of that project was to find a way to read "the autonomous agency of subaltern resistance" (YOUNG, 2001, 353). Led by Guha, the group's members were united around a discontentment with the two major Indian schools of historiography during the 60's and 70's. In that period, the preoccupation with the imperialist biases of Indian history already occupied a central position among academic tasks. However, the demand for decolonization of the official historical archive was not handled equally. Instead, it was pursued through different paths, as we can see in the opposite positions occupied by the Cambridge historians, on one hand, and the Marxist-nationalist tradition, on the other.

Hence, whereas the former proposed decolonization as a critical approach against local nationalisms, accused of being coopted by imperialist ideology, the Marxist-nationalist stance, in dialogue with neo-Marxists and Dependence arguments, defended nationalism as a regenerative force, capable of restraining the destructive effects of colonialism (CHAKRABARTY, 2003). By the end of the 70's, however, when Guha's generation got in touch with such debate, both perspectives were already experiencing a decline. This in part resulted from what Guha diagnosed as being an elitist approach, which led those traditions to promote a kind of analytical blindness to the people's role in Indian nationalist movements.

It will be clear from this statement of Guha's that Subaltern Studies was part of an attempt to align historical reasoning with larger movements for democracy in India. It looked for an anti-elitist approach to history writing, and in this it had much in common with the 'history from below' approaches pioneered in English historiography by Christopher Hill, E.R Thompson, E.J. Hobsbawm

and others. Both Subaltern Studies and the 'history from below' school were Marxist in inspiration; both owed a certain intellectual debt to the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci in trying to move away from deterministic, Stalinist readings of Marx. The word 'subaltern' itself - and, of course, the well-known concept of 'hegemony' so critical to the theoretical project of subaltern studies - goes back to the writings of Gramsci (CHAKRABARTY, 2003, 194).

Therefore, as quoted, instead of denying it, the *Subaltern Studies Group* resorted to readers of Marx in order to review his framework. Gramsci's writings were particularly central during this process, especially for Guha, who found in such work the crucial idea of the 'subaltern', from which he starts his famous contestation against the European traditional lenses, showing its imprisonment within western-modernity categories. The idea was to problematize the materialistic ontology of class consciousness that read peasant movements as performing pre-political acts on one hand, or assume those as the expression of a false-consciousness state given its non-capitalist feature on the other. Because of that, Guha's goal was to achieve decolonization by disturbing the European categories that kept Indian historiographies restrained into the domain of institutional politics.

This inadequacy of elitist historiography follows directly from the narrow and partial view of politics to which it is committed by virtue of its class outlook. In all writings of this kind the parameters of Indian politics are assumed to be or enunciated as exclusively or primarily those of the institutions introduced by the British for the government of the country and the corresponding sets of laws, policies, attitudes and other elements of the superstructure. Inevitably, therefore, a historiography hamstrung by such a definition can do no more than to equate politics with the aggregation of activities and ideas of those who were directly involved in operating these institutions, that is, the colonial rulers and their *élèves* - the dominant groups in native society - to the extent that their mutual transactions were thought to be all there was to Indian nationalism, the domain of the latter is regarded as coincident with that of politics (GUHA, 2000, 3)

In summary, getting away from the ruling class arena by going deeper into peasant insurgency was the path that Guha found to finally touch what he assumed as being the autonomous domain of subaltern consciousness¹⁴. For him,

¹⁴ According to Chakrabarty (2003), Guha uses the category of consciousness differently, that is, without presupposing it as a generalized or reified object. In Chakrabarty's words (2003, 199): "The aim of the [Guha's] book was to bring out the collective imagination inherent in the practices of peasant rebellion. Guha makes no claim that the 'insurgent consciousness' he discusses is indeed 'conscious', that it existed inside the heads of peasants. He does not equate consciousness with 'the

since marginalized subjectivity was constructed through a perpetual omission within hegemonic narratives, the recognition of such position could only be achieved if it assumed an antagonist stance. In other words, if we want to find the subaltern, we have to look through the vacuum left by their omission in the ruling narratives. For not having accesses to the means of knowledge production, the subaltern could only be seen through the application of a “colonial discourse of counter-insurgency to read, as a mirror image, the discourse of insurgency” (CHATTERJEE, 2000, 12).

The dialectical logic that runs through such mirrored view responds for the particularities assumed by the concept of subalternity within Subaltern Studies. On such ground, the oppressed consciousness gains unity precisely within a power struggle, by the negative (but also constitutive) relation between domination and subordination.

Peasant consciousness, then, is a contradictory unity of two aspects: in one, the peasant is subordinate, where he accepts the immediate reality of power relations that dominate and exploit him; in the other, he denies those conditions of subordination and asserts his autonomy (CHATTERJEE, 2000, 17-18)

Guha's insistence on the autonomy of the consciousness of the insurgent peasant marks one important departure between his and the Gramscian description of the subaltern. While Gramsci does not identify the peasantry as the subaltern class, and even adds to it a necessary condition of dependence in relation to the hegemonic ones, Guha tries to use that same signifier to prove another point.

By explicitly rejecting the characterization of peasant consciousness as ‘pre-political’ and by avoiding evolutionary models of ‘consciousness’, Guha was prepared to suggest that the nature of collective action against exploitation in colonial India was such that it effectively stretched the imaginary boundaries of the category ‘political’ far beyond the territories assigned to it in European political thought (CHAKRABARTY, 2003, 195).

subject's view of himself'. He examines rebel practices to decipher the particular relationships - between elites and subalterns and among subalterns themselves - that are acted out in these practices, and then attempts to derive from these relationships the elementary structure, as it were, of the 'consciousness' inherent in those relationships".

Therefore, for Guha, when the peasant uprisings chose to destroy the ruling class's symbols as part of an elementary strategy¹⁵, it made clear how power works with a different logic in colonial realities. After all, beyond the institutional arena of legal domination, the colonial India experienced spheres of hierarchical relations based on a semiotic force, which operates through ideological and symbolic means. According to Chakrabarty (2003, 196), in Guha's view, "this semiotics could not be separated in the Indian case from what in English we inaccurately refer to as either 'the religious' or 'the supernatural'". The peasant focus on the symbolic destruction of the ruling classes cleared up Guha's view about the need to expand the idea of the political in order to understand subaltern resistance without incurring in an epistemological violence against it.

For him, that new way to see politics should include the consideration of "subaltern autonomy" and "elite domination", not as excluding phenomena, but as compatible possibilities (ARNOLD, 2000). What sustains such connection is the assumption that no power relation presupposes absolute destruction of the dominant and the subordinated parts. Quoting Chatterjee, Arnold (2000) explains that the denial of subaltern autonomy was precisely what characterizes the elitist approach to history. By doing so, the elite narrative tends "to petrify this aspect of the historical process, to reduce it to an immobility, indeed to destroy its history" (CHATTERJEE, 1983, 59 *apud* ARNOLD, 2000, 36).

Hence, in Guha's thought subaltern politics exists in a different domain from that of the ruling class hegemony. In that way, it assures the autonomy of such arena, without rejecting the elite's domination. Besides, when accounting for subaltern subjectivity, Guha also assembles a broad description of it, in which subalternity represents 'the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way' (GUHA, 1982a: vii). Overtime, this idea was slightly used in interchangeable ways with the notion of "people", as opposed to "the elite". Despite its generalized aspect, the purpose of subalternity, as a category, was to catch the meanings of underclass domains, whose autonomous domain limits or

¹⁵ When applying his mirrored reading of the insurgent peasant consciousness, Guha identifies six 'elementary aspects': "negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality" (CHATTERJEE, 2000, 12).

splits the functioning of authority in Indian colonial modernity: a "dominance without hegemony", to use Guha's terms.

Therefore, for Guha, "the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation results in the existence of vast areas in the life and consciousness of the people which were never integrated into their hegemony" (GUHA, 1997, preface xii). Different from Gramsci, whose idea of hegemony involved strategies of cooptation and incorporation of subordinate subjects, the Subaltern Studies group, led by Guha, employed an idea of 'hegemonic power' as being a negative force.

The Subaltern Studies collective, by contrast, and perhaps not so much in direct opposition to the understanding just described, but rather in a relation of supplementarity with it, has by and large grounded its work on the notion that subalternity is precisely what is excluded from any such relations of hegemony. The relation between hegemony and subalternity is negative in that one (analytically) arrives at the category of the subaltern by a process of subtraction: all those groups that, for whatever reason (resistance on the part of the subaltern or ignorance, incompetence, or willfulness on the part of the hegemon), remain outside of the mechanisms of co-optation are, then, subaltern. (MURRAY; MOREIRAS, 2001, 2).

According to Guha, the colonial State in South Asia lived in a historical paradox, where its non-hegemonic aspect made the coercion structures of domination overweigh those of persuasion (GUHA, 1997). Unable to incorporate its civil society, the colonial State creates "a social residuum, necessarily misrepresented", named the subaltern (MURRAY; MOREIRAS, 2001, 2). Through these lenses, subalternity summarizes a particular form of power dynamics, one that marks the limit of hegemony: the parts that "remain outside of the mechanisms of co-optation" (MURRAY; MOREIRAS, 2001, 2). This explains why, for Guha, asking questions about power in colonial South Asia constitutes an exercise necessarily related to the task of asking discursive questions. In other words, by raising the problem "who writes the history of the subjugated people?" Guha's aim was to interrogate the ideology lines that sustain elite hegemony at the same time that it leaves the subaltern behind (GUHA, 1997, xiii). Later, the importance given to this discursive aspect of ideology accounts for other theoretical affiliations of the group, which, with time, will get closer to post-structural methodologies.

Therefore, regarding a diachronic use of the subaltern concept, after Guha's initial reflections, the *Subaltern Studies Group* started to take different

directions from the first influence marked by Gramsci's writings. The negative idea of hegemony and the autonomous aspect associated with subaltern politics exemplifies the initial points of separation between that group and neo-Marxist legacies. As Young explains (2001, 353), "the central concept of the Subaltern Studies historians, that of the marginal 'subaltern', though accredited to Gramsci, was in fact considerably reworked by them". In that sense, as I presented at the beginning of this section, recognizing power idiosyncrasies under colonial system has important implications in the development of social and historical theorizations in such contexts.

On the other hand, those conceptual turns are not only a result of historical-empirical transformations. They should also be contextualized within a broader debate on resistance that has taken place in European humanities. Hence, we could say that it was precisely a dispute between Marxism and post-Marxism influences coming from the West, combined with the colonial experiences that sustained the main theoretical dissents inside the *Subaltern Studies* group.

By 1986, the Subaltern Studies project was confronted with internal debates about its future development: the tradition of historical materialism had come to be seen by many as a significant, and yet limited, resource for a project which now claimed to contest Eurocentric, metropolitan and bureaucratic systems of knowledge. In addition, what had been an integral part of the project - the search for an essential structure of peasant consciousness - was now no longer acknowledged as valid. The repudiation of that search was, in a sense, a 'post-structuralist moment'. Foucault would from here on loom even larger in subaltern critiques of all traditions which appeared to adhere uncritically to the 'Enlightenment project'. The arrival of Foucauldian and post-structuralist critiques of Marxism resulted in an intellectual bifurcation within the project, with some members continuing to write histories from 'below', and others moving towards various post-Marxist stances (CHATURVEDI, 2000, xi).

Gayatri Spivak played an important role in this change of course inside the group. Her insistence in approaching subalternity through issues of gender and ethnicity brought new challenges for the use of traditional European political thought. Finding echo in Derrida's deconstruction methodology, Spivak went deeper into canonical texts, searching for a way to dismantle their epistemological silences. For her, as for Guha, subalternity seems a kind of 'constitutive outside' of hegemony, an argument that she expanded into her hyperbolic assertion: "the subaltern cannot speak". In such horizon, the subaltern expresses an impossible

circularity, since s/he cannot enter into the structures of representation, and if they do, s/he is no longer a subaltern.

Part of Spivak's new theoretical directions result from her take on subjectivity as a matter of positionality, rather than an ontological attribution of rationality. This proposition has to do with her opposition to any universal or transcendental idea of subject, which she contraposes through a relational approach that highlights its phenomenological and embodied aspects. As for most of the post-structured approaches after 1970's, resistance became an ambiguous theme. Consequently, the controversies about how power productively (instead of negatively) shapes the subject brought many challenges to the liberatory possibilities of practices. In the next chapter, I dedicate full attention to such contradictory condition of agency. For now, it is important to realize that the subaltern, through such Marxist and post-Marxist mixed legacies, has become a position embedded in history.

As Spivak argues, the constant changes in social relations of production forces an inevitable attitude of reflexivity towards such category. During the 20th century, the end of communism, the following waves of neoliberalism, and the decolonization processes affected both the political imagination and the revolutionary projects on course. The subaltern debate, as part of it, also received its portion of transformation. In that sense, "the new subaltern", Spivak wrote, "is produced by the logic of a global capital that forms classes only instrumentally" (2000, 330), and because of that, s/he has no space for class consciousness strategies. With that diagnosis, Spivak is saying that traditional analysis has become outdated, forcing a renewal of political interventions, both practically and theoretically. In such context, the question of subaltern consciousness, for example, is now more fragmental and ambiguous, which in part accounts for the recent increased relation between political debates and knowledges coming from philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and culture studies.

On the other hand, we cannot forget, this was not a particular move of postcolonialism. As the previous section helps us to understand, the Foucauldian proposal of a productive idea of power stood as a central reference to a number of theoretical transformations. Up to now, Foucault's writings work as a source of intellectual problematizations, especially upon principles that previously sustained approaches to power and resistance. Among the notions against which Foucault

stands, there are the ideas about “a space outside power, a unified subject, and normative foundations”, which became a central target of contemporary scrutiny (RICKERT, 2007, 140). In its place, the Foucauldian lenses usually propose a relational, discursive, and diffuse approach to power mechanisms. With this, the very Eurocentrism, as a narrative, has become object of analysis.

Even within South Asian academia, other names outside the Subaltern Studies Group could be mentioned as important contributions to the analysis of immanent controversies of power. Ashis Nandy, for instance, presented a great work on the self-contradictory aspect of settlers' resistances, which have to resist "through ideas and strategies drawn from the very culture that is being resisted" (YOUNG, 2001, 341). Besides, in Nandy's theoretical contributions, themes about gender, hybridism, and ideology already occupied a central position. Drawing on Gandhi's approach, Nandy was able to take power as a non-material force, yet replacing the former focus on spirituality for an emphasis in language and psychology (YOUNG, 2001). It exemplifies how creative and transdisciplinary the critical thought, coming from peripheral societies in the second half of the 20th century, had become.

As Chakrabarty explains (1996, 56), considering the European critique of modernity, "it soon became clear, however, as our research progressed, that a critique of this nature could hardly afford to ignore the problem of universalism/Eurocentrism that was inherent to Marxist (or for that matter liberal) thought itself". Therefore, many postcolonial authors have defended the need for a critical engagement with western canonical texts, looking for ways to turn their terms around and to build up new narratives (Chakrabarty, 2007; Spivak, 1999; Quijano, 2000). In other words, to answer the question "whither Marxism?", many authors started a movement of revision of Marxist concepts, yet not assuming a wholly rejection of it. According to Chakrabarty (1996), taking into consideration the central role that imperialism occupies in the third world history, studying Marx's critique of capital became an indispensable exercise for any historical reading that might want to be critical. However, at the same time, criticizing the universalistic and Eurocentric bases of Marxism seems as an equally necessary task.

Under this horizon, the contribution of many critics of western model of subjectivity, such as Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1994), Dussel (1995), Chakrabarty

(2000), and others, started with the influence of poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, deconstructivism, or the extensively mentioned heterodox Marxism of Gramsci. Spivak, for example, used deconstruction strategies to read the German philosophical conception of 'Species-Being'. Her objective was to demonstrate how such concept reveals Marx's theory as part of both totalitarianism and modernization phenomena (SPIVAK, 1999). According to Spivak's argument, Marx's theory of value requests a 'predication' of the subject as an "abstract human who is coded as a disembodied resource in economic relationships" (MORTON, 2010, p.221). Similarly, Chakrabarty identifies in Marx's idea of 'abstract labor' the same strategy to extract difference from history and to construct a common measure of human activity.

The idea of "abstract labor" thus combines the Enlightenment themes of juridical freedom (rights, citizenship) and the concept of the universal and abstract human who bears this freedom. More importantly, it is also a concept central to Marx's explanation of why capital, in fulfilling itself in history, necessarily creates the ground for its own dissolution. Examining the idea of "abstract labor" then enables us to see what is politically and intellectually at stake—both for Marx and for the students of his legacy—in the humanist heritage of the European Enlightenment (CHAKRABARTY, 2007, p.50).

As a derived concept, the 'worker' is also constituted as this abstract and collective subject, within which the dialectic of class-in-itself and class-for-itself plays out (CHAKRABARTY, 2007). In this sense, the making of class consciousness would be enacted by the worker's ability to produce a rational appreciation of their material interests and rights. Such model assumes the bourgeois notion of 'utility' as a universal form of rationality. According to Spivak (1999), the idea of Species-Being, mentioned above, shifts the historical difference to the realm of a normative subject. With this move, Marx homogenizes human rationality, in order to link each individual to a single stage, as requested by his goals for socialism.

Marx's labor history is then subscribed by the assumption that every worker experiences capitalist production in a similar way. Besides, "since there cannot be any 'experience' without a 'subject' defining it as such, the propositions end up conferring on working classes in all historical situations a (potentially) uniform, homogenized, extra historical subjectivity" (CHAKRABARTY, 1989,

223). The assumption that capitalist force works upon some undifferentiated raw material of human desire closed Marxist narratives to any deviation that consciousness questions may present in other cultures. Therefore, the assumption of an abstract human allowed the framing of the question of consciousness within the narratives of 'progress' and 'development' as part of a modern project (CHAKRABARTY, 1989).

In other words, for Chakrabarty, the Marxist assumption of a secular movement of human history (towards socialism) cannot be thinkable without the notion of a unilinear development of popular consciousness, mediated by the bourgeois idea of man, taken as universal. The notion of emancipation, though universal in its claims, translates Marx's difficulty to deal with the possibility of incommensurable temporalities. In this sense, the assumption of a homogeneous time marks the transition of Marxist narrative from "no-history to history" (CHAKRABARTY, 2000, p.92). As suggested, the background of this *telos* would be along the lines of a modern self and its rational (and hence universal) pursuit of freedom, which reflect the bourgeois notion of equality. In these terms, the politics of equal rights underlines the very idea of 'general interests', which enable the process of class organization and its struggles. Thus, the universalism that underlies Marx's historical narrative, linked with the idea of progress, "emerge paradoxically from liberal thought itself" (CHAKRABARTY, 1989, p. 225)

But what about the political development of those people whose heritage does not foresee a liberal/modern background? Or, as Mahmood questioned, when debating the risks of a universal feminism, "how might we recognize instances of women's resistance without 'misattributing to them forms of consciousness or politics that are not part of their experience — something like a feminist consciousness or feminist politics?'" (Abu-lughod, 1990, 47, *apud* MAHMOOD, 2005, 8). Such problems certainly indicate how the existence of pre-bourgeois and non-western cultures poses important challenges to the traditional Marxist reading of 'making consciousness' processes. At the same time, it also presents challenges to post-Marxist traditions that assume the task of investigating the microspheres of power. After all, how does power produce subalternity? Does this power work in the same way in relation to all subjectivities? If the subaltern translates a

position that resists ideological inscription, how does hegemonic power function through it?

These problematizations draw our attention to the challenge assumed by the tricontinental perspectives, which are related to the attempt of retaining an emancipatory politics without reproducing a universalist narrative on history, subject, and agency. In that sense, it seems that the research program raised by *Subaltern Studies Group* reveals the potent but also problematic questions that emerge from the intersection between Marxist and post-Marxist commitments. So, if in one hand those agendas highlight the need to understand how capitalism poses specific constraints to colonial societies, on the other hand, it has also led us to realize how that power also works through a process of representation, interpellation, and recognition. Such process accounts not only for the creation of a collective sense of identity but also for the production of the very limits of such identification practices.

Thus, by stating that the political realm is not organized around coherent self-identical consciousness, the debate on subalternity repositions the question of transitory and contingent political ontology. After all, can the hegemonic power read, heard, or recognized subaltern multiplicities? And how does subaltern difference pose limits to the representational conscious thought? These questions will subscribe the forthcoming theoretical investigations of this dissertation, starting with the next chapter, where I propose a direct engagement with one of the most famous responses given to the former question within postcolonial literature, namely: Gayatri Spivak's diagnosis about the subaltern incapacity to speak.

2.4. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to trace a certain theoretical trajectory from structuralist approaches to post-structuralist contributions on power analysis. Such route was not intended to be an exhausting exercise, but a directed reflection organized in ways to improve our understanding about the theoretical background that contextualized the emergence of tricontinental perspectives — to follow Young's terms. Among those perspectives, I highlighted the Subaltern Studies Group, whose initial research agenda (and later dissidences) became easier to address when inscribed within a set of conceptual developments,

going from Marx to Foucault. In particular, it was my main concern to accentuate the link between that theoretical trajectory and the transformations it implies at the level of analysis. Thus, the move from what Foucault called "repressive hypothesis" on power to theories preoccupied with a more productive conceptualization of it brought renewed variables to the field of social studies.

As we could see, when power is addressed through its micro-dimensions, theoretical investigations can take subject formation as a terrain of political struggles. Without such analytical turn, most subalternalist problematizations around identity and difference, and the derivative debate on representation and recognition, would not find a place of validation. So drawing on such changed perspective, many authors constructed important reviews on their Marxist inheritance. Spivak, for example, did not give up on her Marxist color, although she also insists in problematizing Marx's Eurocentric limitations by supplementing it with a Derridean deconstruction methodology. Thus, from this framework, she was able to affirm that Marx's usage of the word social or society "to project or describe the goal of the public use of reason" seems "to be relying on an unresearched, incoherent, humanist notion" (SPIVAK, 2012, 183). It holds the fact that, for her, any discussion about popular consciousness has to be critically engaged with the ambiguous legacy of European Enlightenment. Otherwise, it could easily remain confined inside the contradictions that arise between the universalistic claims of Marxist categories and the singularities of postcolonial realms.

Therefore, same reading can be made about liberal models of desire that remain present in many critical thoughts, including postcolonial and feminists, that did not complete such reflexivity task successfully. Therefore, going back to the introduction questions, when confronted with the reflection "must one resist?", the answer could be as plural as possible, including negative responses. After all, if we problematize the liberal idea of free will or autonomy, and the concept of resistance it authorizes, as being already a product of hegemonic power, then the response to such question could either be "yes" or "no"—or even something in-between. Because of that, following the rage of subjection modes that exceed European narratives, and assuming that structures of power within societies are plural, there should be no bigger task than the one dedicated "to learn how to learn" from below:

The problem has been that those of us who have sensed that there is something admirable about resistance have tended to look to it for hopeful confirmations of the failure - or partial failure - of systems of oppression. Yet it seems to me that we respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters but by letting their practices teach us about complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power. (Abu-lughod, 1990b, 53 *apud* Mahmood, 2005, 9).

Under a similar horizon, many subalternists, like Spivak, have called attention to our discursive categories that sustain our ability to identify an act of "resistance". The role played by Foucauldian, Nietzschean, Derridian, or Lacanian perspectives in such debate is well-known. Many critics of the repressive thesis of power have come from those traditions, which have opened an important agenda focused on linguistic and performative functions of power in shaping subjectivities. However, what the subaltern notion highlighted differently was the broader net of controversies implicated in the action and in the speech produced within the lines of power. If for those post-structural thinkers the productive aspect of power brings the necessary problematization around the idea of an 'authentic' subjectivity, postcolonial literature adds a non-western perspective to it, focused on difference and its effect upon such system of relations.

Therefore, in the next chapter, I shall try to understand better how this approach to subalternity works, particularly in Spivak's view. My attempt is to interpret and then to problematize her writings on subalternity, specifically the conceptualization about power operations. In order to do so, I mobilize authors coming from some of the traditions presented in this chapter, such as Butler and Althusser, whose reflections I take as support to propose an analytical turn in the reading of the subaltern problematic. From their conceptual scheme, I assume the problem of subject formation as central to understanding power operations on post-colonial realities, which I will try to approach through a renewed debate on recognition. With this move, the next chapter serves to set the problem around which I later sustain the validity of Lacanian theory as a supplemented base for contesting Spivak's thesis about the subaltern agency.

3. Can the subaltern be *mis*recognized?

3.1. Introduction

When I pronounce the word Silence, I destroy it.

(Wisława Szymborska)

As presented in the last chapter, Guha resorts to Gramsci's theory of hegemony in order to find instruments to improve his reading of complex societies, such as colonial India. The aim to analyze the challenges that Indian elites encounter in representing lower social strata led Guha to both reproduce and reformulate Gramscian concepts on political power. With this, a theoretical path was open to the study of a "social residuum", which remains non-coopted and misrepresented by the ruling class ideology. Such 'excluded' elements mark an important social position for Guha, and summarize what he comes to classify as the subaltern positionality. Therefore, underlying such conceptual application lies a particular methodological shift mostly known by its commitment with the investigation of discursive structures of the elite's ideology.

By demounting the logic behind the repeating misrepresentation process that reaches subalternity within the hegemonic apparatus, Guha sought to find a way to have access to the content of such marginalized subjects. For Guha, the negative aspect of hegemonic narratives that works through mirror strategies would allow an indirect investigation of the subaltern voice. In other words, in his view, the absence of subaltern self-representation in the archives of Indian historiography should not lead us to conclude that there is a context of absolute silence. According to him, since misrecognition works as an oblique image, at the limit, it could be un-distorted. Therefore, the claim for decomposing the logic behind hegemonic narratives, as presented by Guha, came hand in hand with an attempt to unlock power strategies of British imperialist and national elite ideology.

Drawing in part from Derridean deconstruction methods, Spivak criticized the politics of reading proposed by Guha. For her, the moment Guha establishes the objective to search for a pattern in hegemonic representation, he necessarily assumes a presupposition grounded on the existence of a subaltern identity

capable to be grasped — even if as negativity. Taking a different direction, Spivak's diagnosis assumes a more hyperbolic tone, which addresses subalternity through the maxim of an impossible (self)representation. From that, Spivak derives the diagnosis about the impossibility of any attempt to recompose traces of an autonomous identity for the subaltern, either through negative or positive strategies. Throughout this chapter, I debate how, for Spivak, what defines the subaltern position is precisely that failure in fulfilling a speech-act, which results from the subaltern disability to metonymize themselves in a collective identity with performative status. Such condition explains what she describes as being a disconnection between subjectivity and agency at the subaltern level. From this reflection came her famous statement: the subaltern cannot speak, which means that they cannot represent themselves.

Following those terms, we could say that, just as silence cannot be pronounced without being destroyed, the subaltern cannot enter the domain of hegemonic language without disappearing as such. "No one can say 'I am a subaltern' in whatever language" (SPIVAK, 2012, 431). However, this is an aporetic situation, in as much that, if the concept of discourse does not exist without the presupposition of silence, neither does colonial power without subalternity. Using Lacanian terms, we could infer that, in Spivak's theory, the subaltern position expresses a kind of exclusion, not as an exteriority, but in the sense that it is under a power that produces non-symbolizable subjects. Therefore, Spivak's statement, "the subaltern cannot speak", generated a number of challenges, especially around the complex paradox of representing and recognizing absence. The verse of Wislawa Szymborska that opens this section seems to translate such incommensurability in a simple but powerful way. After all, silence is irreducible to language, but only language can express it. Yet, once it enters the domain of representation, it is no longer silence.

Within a philosophical debate, we could trace such self-refuting condition to what Heidegger considered to be the inherent limits of linguistic structures, which cannot fully echo the world¹⁶. In Spivak's approach, however, silence is

¹⁶In this sense, this idea leads us into an impossible dimension of language, thereby condemned to always produces some residual lack (HOMEM, 2012). Such idea of an excluded domain that, although impossible, operates as a constitutive element of that arena in which it cannot inhabit has been quite common in theories that address politics as a matter of social intelligibility. Laclau's notion of a "constitutive outside", for example, explains a path that many linguistic philosophers

less a linguistic limitation and more an *act* of silencing, which involves one's power to prevent others from speaking¹⁷. Thus, one way to read this, in Spivak terms, would be to assume that speech is embedded in power relations, so that aphonia can be frequently associated with a condition of denied/alienated agency. On the other hand, my proposal in this chapter is to confront such 'impossible speech' diagnosis as being the only way to read the subaltern's (limited) agency. To do that, I bring some psychoanalytic inspired theories to help me in the reading of this *Sisyphus condition* that traps the subaltern in silencing dispositions. Particularly, I mobilize theorists that deal with power relations through the process of interpellation, which offers me a first door to associate the analysis of subaltern subjectivation with Lacanian notions, such as the symbolic and imaginary domains¹⁸.

Drawing in that background, my ultimate aim in this chapter is to raise a reading of subalternity as primarily being a disruption in the function of interpellation, which then prevents the specular and misrecognized identifications that should form the means for a collective base for action. In order to do so, I interpret the subaltern's disability to fulfill a speech-act (as proposed by Spivak) in the terms of the so-called imaginary domain, in which both recognition and narcissistic fixations take place. Therefore, through Althusser's lenses, I begin to associate the idea of subaltern silence with a disability to have access to recognition functions, which then affects the subaltern's ability to dispute signifying strategies upon signifiers. With this, I argue that subalternity is a

assume when addressing 'silence' as a political issue. Following a similar horizon, as I present in the last section, Butler also suggests that silence is a residual absence, which expresses an inherent paradox of discourse.

¹⁷ Furthermore, we should not abstract the fact that, even as a political phenomenon, silence remains a plural concept, showing no predetermined affiliation with any particular structure of power and resistance. In other words, "silence can play an infinite variety of roles in social, political, and linguistic networks. If it can be destructive, defensive, and evocative of selves and social relations, then it can also contribute to the constitution of these identities" (FERGUSON, 2002, 10). In other words, as Brown explains (1998, 316), silence can "both shelter power and [to] serve as a barrier against power". Such prospect of possibilities responds to the debate started in the last chapter, which I end by stating the non-obvious character of resistances acts. As debated before, when power is treated from its productive dimension, it necessarily problematizes the notion of subjectivity and its compliance aspects. Because of that, an important debate rises from the political nature of language that also highlights the political operation within consciousness and unconsciousness domains.

¹⁸ Those are Lacanian terms, in general used to address, respectively, the domain of language and the domain of ego/identitarian constructions. Although the argument in the chapter requires an initial mobilization of those Lacanian concepts, they will be better detailed in the next chapter (see chapter four).

position that, despite its participation in interpellation scenes of subjectivation, cannot enjoy the phantasmatic (and ideological) identitarian mechanisms of recognition, upon which it would be authorized to engage political moves for symbolic re-signification.

The vantage point of this re-reading in terms of recognition is to create a terrain for a debate upon the strategies of resistance, which I do mostly through a dialogue with Butler's theory of subjection. As I see it, by addressing the subaltern through a perspective on interpellation and showing how the subaltern body experiences those scenes differently, we can understand why *misrecognition* does not appear as a source for contestation in Spivak's theory as it does for Butler. Only by opening the subaltern condition to the process of identity formation, can we comprehend the impossible aspect that circles the subaltern paradox proposed by Spivak.

Hence, in order to walk towards that reflection, I first analyze Spivak's theory on the position of subalternity. Then, in the second section, I turn my efforts towards the investigation of how colonial power can be seen operating as a scene of interpellation. At this point, I embrace a dialogue with Althusser's theory that helps me clarify how social relations are constructed upon strategies of symbolic representation and narcissistic recognition. As Beverly explains, "Spivak's notorious claim that the subaltern cannot speak as such is meant to underline the fact that if the subaltern could speak in a way that really mattered to us, that we would feel compelled to listen to, they would not be subaltern" (1999, 66). So, throughout this chapter, the notion of 'speaking accordingly' (i.e., in a way that is "recognizable to us") is put to dialogue with Althusser's theory of ideology and consciousness formation, creating the initial terrain for a study that brings together the conceptual lines of politics and psychoanalysis.

On the one hand, it is important to clarify that the mobilization of Lacanian concepts remains limited in this chapter, being indirectly triggered by the works of Althusser and Butler. However, by the end, when the limits of those reflections to the reading of subaltern become clearer, Lacan's theory will indicate a path for other theorizations. For now, I bring theories that address the question of misrecognition to the center of subject scenes in order to open the debate on subaltern formation. In summary, in the next pages, I am primarily engaged with the following questions: How is the subaltern subjectivity produced through

language? What is the role played by the hegemonic ideology on such production? What is the status of recognition in hegemonic silencing? And, finally, is there any space for resistance along those terms?

Under this horizon, with the exception of the first topic dedicated to Spivak's writings, the following sections assume this commitment to revising the place of interpellation lenses within Postcolonialism in order to apprehend certain limits and possible supplementation between both. In this sense, along the next pages, to understand the subaltern subject becomes a task associated with ideas like 'symbolic', 'ideology', and '(mis)recognition'. According to Carr (2001, 21), "insofar as the subaltern stands in a particular relation to the question of 'consciousness', she marks a kind of unplanned overlapping of Marxism and psychoanalysis within a postcolonial critical frame" (CARR, 2001, 21). Thus, it is this "unplanned overlapping" that I want to start to investigate here.

3.2. Gayatri Spivak and the Subaltern Silence

The subaltern cannot speak
(Gayatri Spivak)

From the discussion initiated in the last chapter, we start to understand how Spivak addresses the subaltern by breaking away from the materialistic tone of Marxist theory, which she achieves by mainly focusing on the consciousness and the subjectification modalities of ideology. Hence, through a very complex investigation of the relation between concepts of power, subjectivity, and agency, she proposes an idea of subalternity as a position that cannot be heard. The purpose of this section is to understand how she handled such theoretical argument, and moreover, how she presented the subaltern silence as a specific kind of silence.

To begin with, and to justify my focus on Spivak's work, it is important to point out the unquestionable impact of her ideas on the investigation of silences produced by realities that resist symbolization¹⁹. No doubt, Spivak was one of the most prominent intellectuals to open the academic conversations for such agenda from a non-western, or at least, a non-Eurocentric perspective. My choice for

¹⁹ The notion of "symbolization" is used here in association with the notion of "language", following the Lacanian debate on the domain of the symbolic.

having her analysis as my major reference came in part from this political role she plays, considering that her high intellectual quality papers and polemic statements are in part responsible for the global scope of *Subaltern Studies* agenda.

Therefore, since 1983, when she first presented the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak's writing has offered a fundamental contribution on the s/Subject²⁰ agency problematic - both within the *Subaltern Studies* Group and the Postcolonial circuits, as it was known in North American universities. The repercussion was such that, almost thirty-five years later, her essay remains raising questions, re-readings, and misreadings from various perspectives.

Few interventions have retained with such tenacity the radicality or the relevance that Spivak's essay continues to possess today. It has been cited, invoked, imitated, summarized, analyzed, and critiqued. It has been revered, reviled, misread, and misappropriated. And it has, of course, been revisited by Spivak herself, in the expansive "History" chapter of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. (MORRIS, 2010, 2)

Coming from the field of comparative literature, and influenced by the language-centered post-structuralist lenses, Spivak problematizes important concepts about power and resistance as matters of a politics of reading. The very use of the *sati* story on the last part of that essay does not constitute a mere case study, or an example, but rather “it was offered as a text - a very moving one - to be read” (MORRIS, 2010, 6). The case unfolds around the story of a young woman from Calcutta, who tried to turn her own body into a resisting text, hanging herself as a political act motivated by the dynamics of a nationalist armed struggle. As Spivak declares, Bhubaneswari Bhaduri should be understood as “a figure who intended to be retrieved, who wrote with her body. It is as if she attempted to 'speak' across death, by rendering her body graphematic” (SPIVAK, 2010, 22).

In that sense, aware that her suicide could be (and was) interpreted as a case of “illicit pregnancy”, or of “illegitimate passion”, Bhaduri added an important line to her text: the menstruation.

The displacing gesture - waiting for menstruation - is at first a reversal of the interdict against a menstruating widow's right to immolate herself; the unclean widow must wait, publicly, until the cleansing

²⁰In her famous essay “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak is engaged with two senses of the word subject: “first, as philosophical/ethical Subject (with a capital *S*) and, second, as subject of politics (with a small *s*), as in a subject of political authority, ‘the king's subjects’” (BIRLA, 2010, 90).

bath of the fourth day, when she is no longer menstruating, in order to claim her dubious privilege. In this reading, Bhuvanewari Bhaduri's suicide is an unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of sati-suicide as much as the hegemonic account of the blazing, fighting, familial Durga (SPIVAK, 2010, 63).

However, despite her efforts, for years and generations ahead Bhuvanewari Bhaduri's suicide remained silenced in its political motivations, even inside her own family. As a female in a position of subalternity, her act of intervention was not heard or read by the signs of the hegemonic discourse. In this sense, Bhuvanewari's body, as a text, tells us the story of a quasi-agency that is condemned to persistently resist to misreading, but which remains interdicted in all channels that could allow her to be heard —“It was not read or heard; it remained in the space of the differend”, says Spivak (2010, 55). Such a bodily text established the ground for Spivak's “inadvisable remark”, as she called it, which states: the subaltern cannot speak.

As explained by Kapoor (2004, 639), “‘speaking’, for her [Spivak], is to be understood as a speech-act, wherein ‘speaking and hearing complete the speech act’”. Therefore, when describing the case of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri, whose suicide was interpreted as *sati* resulting from illicit love (despite the intentional signs communicating political motivations), Spivak reinforces her argument about the impossible fulfillment of a subaltern speech-act. In other words, even when the subaltern does speak or resist, s/he cannot be heard. Then, throughout the reading of Bhuvanewari's death, Spivak marks the position about the role of ideology in obstructing the paths for oppressed representation, and, then, for his/her own agency. The subaltern description starts to emerge from that analogy: at the same way that Bhuvanewari's death was caught within the traditional signs (that denied her the right to the “impossible interpretation”), the subaltern, as a concept, implicates precisely that condition of having its subject and object position stolen by the violent imperialist ideology. Such ideological apparatus claims for itself the right to tell the subaltern stories, that is, of representing them.

In a previous part of the essay, when explaining the movement of Sati's interpretations (from ‘a cultural heroism’, according to Hinduism, to ‘a victimhood condition’, through the reading of Britain law), Spivak demonstrates the failure of women's representation within both chains. As she argues, it is the ideological construction of an “unfixed place of woman as a signifier in the

inscription of the social individual” that allows the imprisonment of woman between tradition and modernization, or yet, between the “normalization of capital and the regressive 'envy' of the colonized male” (SPIVAK, 2010, 52). This is what subalternity is about: an aporetic position of displacement. More precisely, Spivak’s argument establishes that, under the imperialist and patriarchal ideology, the subaltern is located within the “opposition between subject (law) and object-of-knowledge (repression)”, marking the place “of disappearance with something other than silence and nonexistence, a violent aporia between subject and object status” (SPIVAK, 2010, 61).

In this sense, for Spivak, the hegemonic ideology fabricates woman repression by offering a displaced place for the female subject. Therefore, the domain of subject formation is where ideological power operates, prescribing a strategy of othering as the main mechanism for constraining agency and consolidating domination.

The essay addresses the formation of the Other of Europe, which involves the making of a European Self, as well as that of the colonial subject as Other. This is the field in which the "Native Informant" is made - an instrument of colonial authority who speaks for "the native" in service of efficient governing. Here, the analysis draws attention to the nearly infinite ways in which what has been cast as Other can become a "Self", by appropriating otherness as the basis of an identity and by postulating a unitary subject with agency in the place the other. The exemplary instance here is that of anticolonial nationalism, where an investment in all that is 'native' and 'authentic' serves to reproduce colonial logics of othering even as the emergent nation-state claims liberation²¹ (BIRLA, 2010, 88)

According to Birla (2010, 88), for us to understand Spivak’s argument, it is important to notice that her critical reading of alterity is based on the insistence "on the discontinuity between subjectivity and agency". When debating the widow immolation discourse, for example, Spivak demonstrates how the female subaltern representation inhabits a series of ideological dissimulations and repressions through which she emerges both as a free-willing subject that desires

²¹ In order to understand how the power of the dominant discourse is exercised through the politics of representation, which runs through both western and postcolonial discourses, Spivak resumes a figure from the ethnographic studies, called: native informant. This category is defined "as a name for the mark of expulsion from the name of man - a name that carries the inauguration effects of being human" (SPIVAK, 1999, p. 5). In this sense, the move of the native informant expresses a double silencing: first, it enters the western narrative as a loss of identity, and then, re-enters as an object of knowledge, unable to represent itself.

death, and as a victim of the colonial patriarchy. Spivak (2010) puts together such ambivalent dynamic in the famous sentences: "The women wanted to die" and, "White men are saving brown women from brown men".

These sentences translate the complex relation between subject and object positions within imperialism, in which each pole legitimizes the other. In both sides, the instrumentalization of female voice to either the foreign colonizer or the colonial elite becomes clear²²: "the subjectivity of the woman here is not only read as the violent and unstable effect of an agency that is not her own, but she is revealed to us as an instrument of that agency. Indeed, her very instrumentality can be traced to the dissimulations entailed by the idea of her 'choice'". (BIRLA, 2010, 89). Again, we can see how the question of agency (and its discontinuity from subjectivity) is in the core of Spivak's preoccupations about the subaltern, which ultimately sums up a kind of subject that is not an agent for itself: "that is, as one who can speak, but only by being ventriloquized" (BIRLA, 2010, 94).

The instrumentalization of the subaltern voice for the hegemonic agency is related with the proliferation of proxies that claim to speak for them. Here enters the double sense of representation introduced by Spivak through her reading of Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Through these lenses, one of the meanings of representation is related with the act of "speaking for, as in politics", where it works as a proxy, as a substitution that uses persuasion as its main strategy (SPIVAK, 2010). She calls this representation *Vertretung*, which is distinguished from another possible meaning, the *Darstellung*. In this latter sense, representation is taken as staging, or a portrait, as it appears in art or philosophy, i.e., as an act of re-presenting through tropology (SPIVAK, 2010).

Such conceptual distinction provided support for Spivak's diagnosis of the centrality of a theory of ideology as an instrument to get into the micrological sphere of power strategies — i.e., as a source to understand how power is mediated at the level of the s/Subject. Her interrogation of Foucauldian and Deleuzian conversation is built precisely upon this problematization: in her view, by not considering this double meaning of representation, those authors do not engage rigorously with a theory of ideology, thereby they cannot "note how the

²² Expanding the argumentation, the construction of the monolithic "third-world-woman" could also be read as a signifier to substantiate liberating or protecting practices under today's "gender and development" ideology (SPIVAK, 2010)

staging of the world in representation — its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*, dissimulates the choice of and need for 'heroes', paternal proxies, agents of power — *Vertretung*” (SPIVAK, 2010, 33).

Different from an orthodox Marxist take on ideology, Spivak's reading of it seems to confront the binary division between an 'objective reality' and a 'false consciousness' model. For her, there is no neutral point, or, in other words, there is no position outside ideology. This is precisely what makes the task of representation an inescapable and political problem; after all, if there is no normative goal of transparency, or of a previous non-alienated identity, then the idea of agency is necessarily mediated by the problems of tropology and persuasion, both paths that should be, then, politicized. Under this horizon, Spivak calls attention to the epistemological strategies of the imperialist discourse²³, whose construction of a conditioned (and finite) image of thought has masqueraded its geopolitical determinations, mostly because of the desire to conserve “the subject of the West, or the West as Subject”. (SPIVAK, 2010, 22).

In summary, it is important to be aware that, for Spivak, the subaltern position of voicelessness is related with the fact that his/her agency is necessarily disguised by the hegemonic discourse and its strategies of representations (either when 'speaking for' or staging the subaltern). Therefore, the claim of “giving a voice” to the subaltern²⁴ configures another impossible path, not only because representation is always incomplete, but because the subaltern, as mentioned above, “describes a relation between subject and object status (under imperialism and then globalization) that is not one of silence —to be overcome by representational heroism — but aporia” (MORRIS, 2010, 13). From this

²³ The imperialistic axiomatic, as Spivak (1999) calls it, expresses this double bind that, simultaneously, introduces and expels the other from the position of s/Subject.

²⁴ What happens there is that, although attentive to the politics of subject-formation, and analytically directed to the micropolitics of subjects-effects, the Foucauldian theory of power does not escape the presupposition of the philosophical Subject, to which, besides, he offered a political agency (BIRLA, 2010, 90) In this sense, both Foucault and Deleuze resist to “speaking for” the subaltern, but, at the same time, do not avoid the contradicted choice for re-present the oppressed as a Self (a Subject with agency) that can be grasped through the transparency of “real experiences” (“theory is practice”). For Spivak, such movement, instead of differentiating from, brings those authors closer to the positivist essentialist position (BIRLA, 2010). According to Spivak, the idea of transparency “reintroduces the constitutive subject on at least two levels: the Subject of desire and power as an irreducible methodological presupposition; and the self-proximate, if not self-identical, subject of the oppressed”. (Spivak, 2010, 34)

reflection, emerges Spivak's call for an ethics of responsibility that implicates the urgency for rethinking the way we represent (*darstellen*) ourselves²⁵.

In that sense, the main ethical problem of hegemonic representational performances lies in its claim for transparency, on which many leftist intellectuals have grounded their aim to represent subalterns' "own interests". It is worth noting that the claim for speaking in the name of subaltern interests, and the idea of letting the subaltern speak for him/herself (as if their interests were transparent to themselves) share the same presupposition: a sovereign/self-knowing subject. The problematic aspect of both treatments is that they "essentialize the oppressed as non-ideologically constructed subjects" (ALCOFF, 1991, 22). Against that, Spivak proposes a radical critique of the modern Subject, one that goes deeper into the imperialist aspect of European axiomatic.

Hence, when addressing the ideological base of western thought, Spivak draws our attention to the idea of "being", or the philosophical concept of Subject, that emerges as foundational for modern systems. According to this lenses, western philosophical matrix provides "a shelter for the 'sovereignty of consciousness' against the intrusion of heterogeneity" (YOUNG, 1990, 116), enabling the imperialist position of being European. That helm of identity subsequently poses itself as the "human norm" on whose sovereignty relies the right to offer descriptions and/or prescriptions about the non-European world, as well as its disappearance in the conception of otherness (SPIVAK, 1999). In epistemological terms, the construction of such image of thought was taken as being an attribute of a universal subject, endowed with reason. In other words, the modern strategy of knowledge production was embedded within a particular process of subjectivity produced by Enlightenment culture.

²⁵ For instance, the ideological construction of social reality highlights, for Spivak, the role of the intellectual, and humanities in general, in the proposition of counter-hegemonic ideological narratives, assuming the political function of language in framing resistance and searching for ways of unmasking blind spots. Therefore, in Spivak's critique, the presentation of new possibilities of narratives implies the mobilization of a deconstructivist strategy, in Derridean terms - which is invoked as both an epistemological and an ethical-political instrument. Thus, in her own words, being "a feminist literary critic pulling deconstruction into the service of reading" (Spivak, 2010, 21) has been moving her towards entering the protocol of western main texts and then turning them around in order to build up new possibilities. In this sense, the objective would not be to accuse or even to excuse any author's arguments, but rather to be "attentive, and situationally productive through dismantling" (SPIVAK, 1999, p.81). Spivak's critique of Foucault's and Deleuze's theories fits that proposal. Therefore, tracking their assumptions in the domain of interest and desire, Spivak intends to dismantle their covered contradiction.

As Bautista S. helps us to understand, this subject predication was marked by an ego that develops “experience into his consciousness as an absolute and universal experience”, and because of that it “constitutes the world, reality, and the gods, its image and likeness” (2014, 85, *my translation*). Consequently, as Spivak states, the modern thinking assumes the act of silencing as a normative key, through which it abstracts all that exhausts its identity standards. Consequently, “when the investigating subject, naively or knowingly, disavows its complicity or pretends it has no ‘geo-political determinations’, it does the opposite of concealing itself: it privileges itself.” (KAPOOR, 2004, 631). The realization about such narcissist²⁶ aspect of modern politics of reading is important as far as it accounts for the way Spivak ties up the problematization around subaltern representation and the networks of power, desire, and subjectivity. After all, because of the complicity between subject production and discursive environment, our “personal and institutional desires and interests are unavoidably written into our representations” (KAPOOR, 2004, 641).

Hence, according to Spivak's argument, only by opening such triad (power-desire-subjectivity) to conceptual analysis, one is finally capable of articulating a theory of interests that has brought heterogeneity into one's philosophical base. Otherwise, when describing political agencies/desires, one could end up reproducing a universal narrative about the subject, commonly implicated in phrases such as “subaltern own interests and agendas”. These statements usually authorize a modern take on 'free will', being normatively linked to a specific notion of autonomy. As Mahmood explains, most of recent scholarship committed with disempowered subjectivities remains informed by liberal notions of freedom, either in its negative or positive perspectives.

Negative freedom refers to the absence of external obstacles to self-guided choice and action, whether imposed by the state, corporations, or private individuals. Positive freedom, on the other hand, is understood as the capacity to realize an autonomous will, one generally fashioned in accord with the dictates of “universal reason” or “self-interest”, and hence unencumbered by the weight of custom, transcendental will, and tradition. In short, positive freedom may be best described as the capacity for self-mastery and self-government,

²⁶ In Latin America, authors, as Dussel, Mignolo, and others, have also discussed the violent impact of such modern epistemology, which is responsible for authorizing subject borders outside, where “there is only space for non-being, nothingness, barbarism, nonsense” (DUSSEL, 1996, p. 16 *my translation*).

and negative freedom as the absence of restraints of various kinds on one's ability to act as one wants (MAHMOOD, 2005, 10-11).

In common, such notions of freedom share a particular emphasis on the concept of individual autonomy, from which derived the notion of an internal (and authentic) will. Such domain of one's own desires emerges in opposition to the arena of external forces, as "custom, tradition, or social coercion" (MAHMOOD, 2005, 11). For Mahmood (2005), the trick move of this conceptual framework appears when we realize that 'autonomy' works more as a procedural principle than an ontological aspect of the subject. In that sense, such modern inheritance absorbs any kind of actions or desires, as long as it is formulated through one's own will: "Freedom, in this formulation, consists in the ability to autonomously 'choose' one's desires no matter how illiberal they may be." (MAHMOOD, 2005, 12).

Previously, we already discussed the problems with this notion of an authentic interest of the subject, so again, it is important for Spivak that critical thinkers assume a vigilant attitude in relation to their own complicities. For her, when the meaning and the sense of agency is taken for granted, and consequently, when the notion of autonomy and self-authorizing subject remains untouched, it opens an avenue for representational modes that, at best, anthropologizes difference. In that scenario, the marginalized groups can only enter knowledge as a source of otherness for first world representations. Because of that, Spivak is curious about how the arrangement of our desires (not individualistic, but collective) has affected (and has been affected by) the ways through which political structures are designed. What is more, how such modes of design reveal the imperialist inheritance within critical theories, as well.

Therefore, the possibilities of political changes are related with a movement of rearrangement that should begin with an epistemological interrogation of the conceptual ground of our own critical reason. In the end, between speaking for or listening to the subaltern, "Spivak prefers a 'speaking to', in which the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed, but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a 'countersentence' that can then suggest a new historical narrative" (ALCOOF, 1991, 22). According to Kapoor (2004, 640), Spivak believes in the method of deconstruction as the only way to deal with our

inescapable situation “inside discourse, culture, institutions, geopolitics”. Something like a “negotiation from within”, so that, once aware of our embeddedness within dominant systems of knowledge and representation, a process of un-learning it is required from us. “This is what Spivak calls a ‘transformation of consciousness — a changing mindset’” (KAPOOR, 2004, 641). From this unlearning process come the instruments for the next step: learning to learn from below, i.e., learning with or alongside the subaltern. In short, “it is this itinerary of de-coding which, for Spivak, can yield to an openness to the Other” (KAPOOR, 2004, 642), finally enabling a creative positionality to the subaltern, one that, at the same time, should disrupt both object and subject boundaries.

3.3. Subject Scene, Consciousness Formation, and Subalternity

Spivak's diagnosis about the subaltern has mobilized different reactions in the academic environment, going from recognitions of its theoretical consistency to accusations of a normative muting of the subaltern. As Kapoor asserted (2004, 639), Spivak's choice of addressing the subaltern through a *via negative* — “showing how the discursive space from which the subaltern can be heard is disabling” — is responsible for the theoretical criticism and political controversy directed towards her work. Hence, despite the efforts to avoid the charges of taking away subaltern voice (which were mostly related with misreadings of her argument), the fact remains that her controversial statement has led almost all of us to experience some kind of discomfort or anxiety — be it either a political or a theoretical affection. No wonder, as I argue in the next chapter, the anxiety could be considered as one possible expression of some sort of non-speakable signs that subalternity mobilizes to create communication through silence. However, before we get into the horizon of this proposal, let us linger a little longer in Spivak's ideas.

As presented in the topic above, Spivak presumes an intimate relationship between subject formation and political domain, from where she infers the limited agency offered by the hegemonic structures of representation to the subaltern. My attempt here is to take a closer look at such concept of barred agency. To do that, it is important to go back to the subaltern paradox, which explains how the subaltern's voice is ventriloquized by the agency of others, through both proxies

and staging strategies. According to Spivak, given the aporetic position of the subaltern, who slips between two senses of representation, a kind of contradictory disappearance emerges, disabling the subjectivity to join a political agency or blocking their voice to complete a philosophical-historical condition of speech-act. To understand it better, let us pay attention to how Gramscian and post-structuralist influences work on Spivak's thought.

Considering the previous topic, we can state that, whereas the Gramscian base explains the dynamics of a hegemonic power that controls discourse and institutions in order to constrain agency, the post-structural perspective, in turn, scours the discursive mechanisms of subject formation interpreting the politics of othering. In a way, Spivak seems to be aware of the heuristic limitations of a solipsist concept of agency, which leads her to postulate its necessary link with subjectivation theories — which she achieves by combining the post-structural language centered perspective with ideology investigations. Therefore, although Spivak's dialogue with Marxism underlines a reading of political agency that is closer to the notion of coercion and deception, her Derridean inheritance aggregates to it an analysis of the nexus power/knowledge that has caught the colonized Subject (in a philosophical sense) into "the space of the imperialists' self-consolidating other" (Spivak 1996, 219). In that sense, for her, colonial power operates through productive and repressive mechanisms. Such condition brings ambivalence to the notion of agency, which appears as both an effect and a cause of power.

This double-bind feature, that traps the subject within the terms of power, operates a central impact on Spivak approach to subject-formation. In her particular account of it, Spivak privileges a positionality perspective through which she assumes the term 'subject position' as the main terrain for power studies. With that notion, Spivak aims to structure a theory that goes against the reading of subjectivation as a stable or essentialist process. Therefore, for her, rather than a path for individual identities, the process of subject production appears as a space in relation to power, which, particularly in the case of subalternity, configures a position of identity-in-difference, both inside and outside hegemony.

Subalternity is a position without identity. It is somewhat like the strict understanding of class. Class is not a cultural origin, although

there is working class culture. It is a sense of economic collectivity, of social relations of formation as the basis of action. Gender is not lived as sexual difference. It is a sense of collective social negotiation of sexual differences as the basis of action. Race assumes racism. Subalternity is where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action. (SPIVAK, 2012, 431).

Drawing from this idea of an empty positionality, Spivak's theorization both dialogues and goes beyond a philosophy of consciousness. This is possible because, despite her Marxist commitment with *conscious formation* as a central process of subjectivation, Spivak rejects the *false consciousness model*, which is often related with authenticity claims on such theme. As I said, generally, when social existence starts to be seen in terms of "linguistic practices", political analysis has to recognize the double effect of intelligibility: while it creates the subject, it also reproduces the conditions for their subordination to power. In this sense, consciousness formation can no longer be addressed as a reflexivity resistant to an alienating power due to a prior sense of self. Instead, becoming a subject is coetaneous, and not previous, to the consciousness construction. Hence, through that positionality perspective, Spivak discards the ontological presupposition of an individual mind process, and replaces it by an idea of the Subject as a "site" established by language. Once in a position, the individual can, or cannot, perform him/herself as social intelligibility.

Following this view, Spivak addresses the subaltern as a space (or a site) emptied of performative identities. In other words, such positions experience a lack of institutional structures capable of authorizing the social negotiation of alterity. Without that ability, the subaltern cannot negotiate their difference as a base for action. In Spivak's terms, by being a position without identity, the subaltern embraces a disability to put aside differences in order to initiate a self-synecdochized process, thus blocking any terrain for the construction of collective consciousness. In the limit, this is what explains the subaltern's impossible agency.

Agency presumes collectivity, which is where a group acts by synecdoche: the part that seems to agree is taken to stand for the whole. I put aside the surplus of my subjectivity and synecdochize myself, count myself as the part by which I am metonymically connected to the particular predicament, so that I claim collectively, engage in action validated by the very collective (SPIVAK, 2012, 436-437).

Therefore, for Spivak, if the subaltern cannot join the binding mechanisms responsible for the production of a collective sense of self, then, there is no way for s/he to have access to political agency within that system. From that inference, it became clear that, in her opinion, subjectivation involves a kind of scene in which the subject has to be engaged with a *staging* process. It is in the course of such public *Darstellung*, through which the *self-abstracting* move is allowed, that consciousness as a social ground for action is produced. To form consciousness requires the other's participation as source of (self)misrecognition. Thus, at this point, we can finally start to grasp a possible dialogue between Spivak's reflection and Althusser's notion of interpellation.

In Althusser's theory, "the efficacy of ideology consists in part in the formation of *conscience*, where the notion 'conscience' is understood to place restrictions on what is speakable or, more generally, representable." (BUTLER, 1997, 114). So, instead of being a "turning back upon itself performed by a readymade subject", the act of forming consciousness for Althusser, similar to Spivak, could be read like "a kind of turning back - a reflexivity - which constitutes the condition of possibility for the subject to form." (BUTLER, 1997, 114). Following this, ideology operates in order to set limits to the public sphere of representation, and, by consequence, to set limits upon this move of reflexivity. Hence, ideology is taken as a structure of discourse; that is, as a selection of signifiers through which the subject operates misrecognitions functions. From that terrain comes the ability of the ruling class to establish who is authorized or not to initiate a collective move of recognition.

Applied to the subaltern, this perspective shows us an ideological operation that bars some individuals from entering the public sphere of representation in a way that it remains fundamentally disabled to initiate a performative recognition. Because of that, as mentioned, they cannot access the terrain where class-consciousness should take place, which explains the subaltern paradox in terms of political agency: being always condemned to be ventriloquized by others. As debated in the last topic, Spivak gets to this point through Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* statement: "They [small peasant proprietors] cannot represent themselves; they must be represented". In such passage, in which Marx elaborates about class-consciousness formation, two ways of being a class

are at play: "Marx comes to the conclusion that small peasant proprietors in France are a class, to use contemporary language, as a constative, but not a performative." (SPIVAK, 2012, 432).

This gap between constative and performative manifestations of class identity is the key to understand Spivak's conceptual developments about the subaltern's agency. It was through such Marxian statement that Spivak came to the idea of differentiating subalternity from collective action skills (i.e., they cannot speak for themselves). So, whereas the subaltern may be described (constatively) as a group, it cannot perform (speak) as such, given the lack of infrastructural institutions through which its collective interests could be recognized, or, in other words, through which their "class-consciousness" could be shaped as social intelligibility.

Agency was the name I gave to institutionally validated action, assuming collectivity, distinguished from the formation of the subject, which exceeds the outlines of individual intention. The idea of subalternity became imbricated with the idea of non-recognition of agency (SPIVAK, 2012, 432).

Similar to Gramsci, who assumes political agency as a collective substance, Spivak agrees with the lack of political meaning within solipsistic spheres. However, different from Gramscian theory, Spivak does not presuppose any idea of an independent will (or consciousness) that exists prior to ideological constraints. As mentioned, the subaltern subjectivity is a position that does not implicate an individual self-identitarian moment, as it may appear in essentialist approaches. For Spivak, the very idea of subalternity has no content, either as universalism or as identitarianism (SPIVAK, 2012)²⁷. Therefore, as a subject-effect, the subaltern is produced through elite texts that work ideologically to define what is speakable or not, and then conforming spots of radical difference.

²⁷ To question the universal-particular dyad, Spivak brought Deleuze's idea of Singularity. Such concept, "in its simplest form", does not tell us about the particular, since "it is an unrepeatable difference that is, on the other hand, repeated - not as an example of a universal but as an instance of a collection of repetitions." (SPIVAK, 2012, 430). Thus, the Singular does not indicated an individual, or an agent, with an empirical existence, although it does have empirical inclinations. Consequently, when achieved through singularity, the multiplicity is not synonymous of multitude, but the result of a repetition of difference: "If the repetition of singularity that gives multiplicity is the repetition of difference, agency calls for the putting aside of difference." (SPIVAK, 2012, 436). Thus, to the subaltern, it is impossible to enter in the public sphere by claiming to be part of a whole, as requires the condition for citizenship. Otherwise, in an idealist democracy, groups should be able to come closer or depart themselves from the metonym situation when necessary, without making it as an essential identitarian position.

In that sense, as I see it, consciousness formation is related with the production of a call whose response depends on the subject's ability to recognize itself in (and be recognized by) the names socially pronounced. Therefore, we can approach colonial power as a linguistic domain that limits the terms of subject scene. With this, it finally poses constraints to the means of institutional validation of some positions²⁸. In this horizon, I argue that *recognition* should be taken as a key practice to pass from constative to performative contexts. Because of that, the lack of public infrastructure to collectively base subaltern action sustains the tendency of the marginalized people in taking “difference itself as its synecdochic element”, which generally results in culturalism approaches (SPIVAK, 2012, 437). However, “the solution”, Spivak suggests, “is not to celebrate or deny difference, but to find out what inequality brings about its use and who can deny it on occasion” (SPIVAK, 2012, 438).

That is probably why Spivak argues for the necessity to build infrastructure bases so that disenfranchised groups can synecdochize themselves and form a collectivity with recognizable interests. It seems a new way to approach materialism, where the establishment of structures for social mobility is linked with the need for allowing the subaltern resistance to be heard. Hence, it leads us to investigate ways in which the linguistic domain works along with other social structures in order to produce different types of subjectivities. Such connection, I argue, is mainly orchestrated by the operation of recognition processes. Hence, similar to the literature that approaches the formation of the subject through a political dialogue with the field of psychoanalysis, the theme of recognition here seems to work as a bridge that links both dimensions of power: domination and subjection.

Therefore, re-reading the subaltern problematic through the contribution of theories of interpellation allows us to clarify the double operation of discourse that works as a social structure capable of engendering domination through institutional politics of resemblance (identity and difference), and as a productive force that lay the microspheres where subject desires and narcissistic dispositions are constructed. Regarding this, the investigation about the subaltern's disability for self-abstraction gains a renewed analysis when read with and against the

²⁸In the era of globalization, “reproductive heteronormativity” exemplifies one of the central institutions that provides or limits agency (SPIVAK, 2012).

Althusserian notion of interpellation. In general, I believe that resorting to Althusser would help us realize how the formation of marginalized subjectivities is related with the process of recognition perpetrated within ideological schemes.

Thus, analyzing the production of subalternity through Althusser's theory enables our investigation to see how the links between language, power, and subjectivity work. In that sense, it allow us to analyze the silencing practices that supports Spivak's idea of power, but going deep into the investigation of what remains poorly exploited in her work: i.e., the presupposition that the subaltern occupies a position of difference and that, from such positionality, where the formation of a sense of collective identities is disabled, no performative behavior can emerge. Therefore, my main aim by the end of this chapter is to create a conceptual terrain for confronting such presupposition — not so much in its diagnosis, but mostly in its derivative prescriptions.

With this in mind, my choice for the works of both Althusser and Butler is justified by the instruments they provide to approaching the subaltern position not as silence but as a non-recognized speech. Hence, although Spivak's writings do not make clear their connections with the literature on interpellation, she seems to be aware of the potential dialogues between them. In that sense, if according to Spivak, ideology uses institutional validation to transform "individuals" into "subjects" (through consciousness formation), and if the subalternity is an aporetic manifestation produced during this process, we can assume that the movement of recognition works differently in each group. Therefore, based on her writings, we are led to conclude that there must be a domain of non-symbolized individuals, a kind of symbolic exclusion, since power, especially colonial power, does not work homogeneously.

For the subaltern, trapped in the aporetic position between object and subject, subjectivation becomes an impossible, or at least, an ambiguous horizon. As I see it, it is precisely in this inference about multiples effects of interpellator power that relies the central contribution of subalternity theories to the literature on interpellation, especially compared with the political debates carried out by names such as Althusser, Butler, or Žižek. In the next section, I fiddle with the supplementation between them, paying attention to how the notion of subalternity disrupts Althusser's political ontology and vice-versa. Thus, following Carr's argument, I assume the idea that, to understand the association between process of

subject formation and social domination, we cannot abstract from starting by approaching power along with the question of difference.

3.4. Interpellation and the question of Difference

The debate around the functions of power in subject construction has been pluralized since the 1970s, when post-structuralist lineages advanced complex contributions. Within them, ideas about an autonomous, authentic, or self-transparent subject were under attack. Drawing on Foucault's, Nietzsche's, and Derrida's conceptions of power, most of those post-structuralist theorists initiated a reading on subjectivation "as a matter of performative constitution or of interpellation." (MILLS, 2003, 258). Among them, Althusser stands out as an important contribution, exposing an interesting dialogue with political theory and psychoanalysis. According to Butler, Althusser's theory of interpellation represents one of the most important contributions to the "contemporary debate on subject formation, offering a way to account for a subject who comes into being as a consequence of language, yet always within its terms." (BUTLER, 1997, 106).

As mentioned in the last section, Althusser reads subjectivation through theatrical lenses, searching for a way to describe how ideology operates political institutions to conform subjects' identities. According to him, in order for this to happen, this scene of interpellation requires an action of "hailing", so it is precisely this concept that later approximates Althusser's theory to the domains of the symbolic and the imaginary in Lacanian terms. To illustrate this idea, the author creates the famous scene where a policeman calls out: 'Hey, you there!'. When listening to that call, the hailed individual will turn around: "By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else)" (ALTHUSSER, 1971, 174).

If we look closer, there are two possible registers of recognition working in such illustrative scene: "it turns predominantly on self-misrecognition as in the Lacanian formulation of the mirror stage, but it also and most crucially requires that the 'individual' be recognized by, in Althusser's preeminent example, the

overdetermined figure of the police officer” (CARR, 2001, 22). Hence, in Carr’s view (2001), despite the clear debt of Althusser’s theory in relation to Lacan’s account on self-recognition, the hailing moment driven by the cop works also as a discursive authority, going beyond the moment of narcissistic identification. According to him, the necessity of an *outside* call that offers the terrain for the subject’s rising demonstrates that this process is not restricted to self-representation.

Interpellation is here figured as an interruption or transformation of the subject’s self-involvement and is not, as in Lacan’s mirror stage, one where the child approximates a visual image to which he or she feels inadequate. Interpellation requires a call, a hailing, for its operation. Thus the Althusserian instance is much more aligned with the Lacanian symbolic, since the operation of “hailing” functions to move the individual away from his or her imaginary or narcissistic self-identification, and into the function of the subject. (CARR, 2001, 23).

In that sense, Althusser’s theory of interpellation seems to mobilize, most of all, a linguistic (symbolic) scene to which he assigns “the status of the imaginary in terms of ‘recognition’” (CARR, 2001, 25). For a better understanding of this argument, let us spend a brief moment with some Lacanian ideas. Under this conceptual background, the mentioned notion of the imaginary represents one of the three instances where subject experiences take place, along with the symbolic and the real arenas. Particularly for Lacan, the imaginary is related with the *mirror stage* that accounts for the formation of the function of *I*, which basically works through a process of identification:

We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago* (LACAN, 2001, 1-2)

Until the age of sixth months, the cognitive structure of a baby has no tools for self-reference or any self-perception of the unity of his/her body. According to Lacan, it is only after that age, until their eighteenth months of life, that children start to differentiate individuality from alterity. However, given the rudimentary nature of their brains during this period, the formation of “I” functions depend basically on two moves: the recognition of its own mirror image

or the identification with an outside image, both working as an ideal type for mimetic actions (SAFATLE, 2017). The *imago*, as we can see, has become the device that introduces children into a socio-symbolic network, where s/he can then develop fundamental operations of socialization and individualization.

Considering this, the mirror stage is usually described as a narcissistic moment whose dynamics respond mainly to an *egocentric* disposition. However, as explained, the process of self-identification, from which the notion of "I" is produced, is also dependent on a formative function of the other. After all, the world begins to be apprehended through an image that is not solipsistically created. Then, the egoic tendency to see the world as a projection of the I is problematized by the fact that the "I is an other", to use Lacan's words. Because of that, the subject for Lacan is always decentred, fragmented, and alienated; after all, from the beginning, its desires and social perspectives are guided by a phantasmatic image that comes from the outside: the specular image of him/herself or of the mimicked other.

Regarding these notions, Carr argues that Althusser's theory of interpellation does involve a narcissist moment of recognition projected upon the figure of the police officer, but, most of all, it projects a linguistic engagement with that figure of authority - the big Other. According to Butler's reading of Althusser's essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, "the subordination of the subject takes place through language", and since recognition operates through hailing, the interpellation process has become, more than anything, a "discursive production of the social subject" (BUTLER, 1997, 5).

However, the mirror stage, as proposed by Lacan, is fundamentally prior to the acquisition of linguistic skills, being thus structurally (and chronologically) different from the symbolic phase. The lack of distinction between these two moments is at the base of the Althusserian detachment from Lacan's theorization (CARR, 2001, 23). According to Carr's reading (2001, 23), the way Althusser's scene of interpellation mobilizes Lacanian mirror stage ends up creating "a certain liquidation of the specificity of the mirror stage and interpellation when they are both so easily said to reduce to misrecognition, precisely because the misrecognition in them is not entirely the same".

With this, Carr is arguing that, while the channels of misrecognition in the mirror stage are opened by an assimilation of a visual scene of its own mirrored

gestalt, at the symbolic level, differently, it happens through linguistic constraints. Thus, if Althusser's interpellation is so reliant upon the notion of a 'Call', then it is because its notion of imaginary misrecognition is condensed in the symbolic mobilizations of the subject into the field of the Other, whether this Other is a cop, God, or a father, which authorizes "the individual to speak its 'own' name" (CARR, 2001, 23).

The individual's turn toward the cop, a turn productive of the subject as such, thus relies on the imaginary misrecognition at the heart of the mirror stage at the same time that it recodes that self-identification in a socially ratified way through the cop's assignation of "Hey, you there!". Interpellation, then, exploits the individual's self-identification for symbolic and ideological use. (CARR, 2001, 23).

By the end, Althusser's approach promotes some sort of chronological inversion between the imaginary and symbolic stages, by which the former becomes the effect of the later. Such reversion is catalyzed by the association of misrecognition functions with the mechanisms of ideology. According to Carr (2001), it is the idea of misrecognition that allows Althusser to bind the Lacanian notion of imaginary identification (the narcissistic appearance of the subject) with a symbolic approach to ideology. In this sense, we could say that during the interpellation scene, ideological power operates through language (symbolic) in order to generate imaginary effects, i.e., to produce identification. Therefore, by condensing the imaginary into the symbolic, Althusser gives way to the processes of repression that surrounds the creation of the self and which accounts for a move into the unconscious.

Because of that, in Althusser's debate, the subject produced by interpellation is always-already ideologically alienated. More precisely, the ideology, operating through (or as) the symbolic, seems to define a regulatory ideal that can be metaphoric illustrated by the "Call". In hearing such call, one has the "freedom" to choose as long as one chooses correctly, or, to put in better words for this study, one has the "freedom" to turning back as long as one *speaks or hears properly*.

Althusser links the emergence of a consciousness - and a conscience ("la conscience civique et professionnelle") - with the problem of speaking properly (*bien parler*). "Speaking properly" appears to be an instance of the ideological work of acquiring skills, a process central to the formation of the subject. [...] The skills to be learned are, above

all, *the skills of speech*. The first mention of "conscience", which will turn out to be central to the success or efficacy of interpellation, is linked to the acquisition of mastery, to learning how to "speak properly". The reproduction of the subject takes place through the reproduction of linguistic skills, constituting, as it were, the rules and attitudes observed "by the every agent in the division of labour." In this sense, the rules of power speech are also the rules by which *respect* is proffered or withheld (BUTLER, 1997, 115-116).

Therefore, dialoguing with Spivak's terms, Althusser's idea of "to speak properly" could be understood as an act of speaking according to the rules discursively established by hegemonic power. In this sense, the concept of interpellation helps us to understand how the ideological production of consciousness has as its main effect the creation of a fantasy: a phantasmatic sense of a coherent identity. This happens because interpellation operates as a kind of pedagogical scene mobilized by an authority voice²⁹, where the ongoing subject, under the "desire to survive" (or to exist) as intelligibility, assumes a mandatory submission. Such subordination stems from the subject realization that the very condition of possibility for being interpellated (and then for gaining a sense of identity) depends precisely on a set of *skills of speech* required during the hailing. Thus, in order to exist as identitarian self, the individual has to learn how to reproduce the operating linguistic rules of the Call. Without such subordination, no self-misrecognition (the typically mirror stage's effect) can emerge.

To follow Lacanian terms, whereas the ego is the effect of the imaginary order, the subject is the effect of the symbolic order (DEAN, 1990). Therefore, Althusser's theory addresses interpellation as a linguistic practice that enacts the subjects and their ego as it names them. Moreover, it is important to realize that Althusser's theory of ideology does not account for a domain where it might work against subjectivation. According to him, "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing" (Althusser, 1971,

²⁹According to Butler (1997, 6): The model of power in Althusser's account attributes performative power to the authoritative voice, the voice of sanction, and hence to a notion of language figured as speech. [...] Finally, Althusser's view, useful as it is, remains implicitly constrained by a notion of centralized state apparatus, one whose word is its deed, modeled on divine authority. The notion of discourse emerges in Foucault in part to counter the sovereign model of interpellative speech in theories such as Althusser's, but also to take account of the *efficacy* of discourse apart from its instantiation as the spoken word.

174). Therefore, as mentioned, interpellation does not presuppose a subject that is not fully interpellated, or that is, perhaps, denied.

Probably as an effect of the mentioned liquidation of the mirror stage in Althusserian theorization, the operation of ideology and the interpellation process of individuals as subjects became “one and the same thing” (Althusser, 1971). This explains his conclusion about what seems to be a universal scene of political subjecthood: “ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*” (Althusser, 1971, 175-176).

However, such totalizing aspect of interpellation is problematized by the subaltern position. In a way, Althusser's theory misses the point where the hailing scene became a heterogeneous arena, with multiple discourses, each of them having uneven effects on bodies. So, on one hand, Althusser's debate on interpellation is useful for us since it brings instruments for detaching the formation of consciousness from the process of self-representation, highlighting its inherent link with a symbolic “authority”, on the other it reveals the role played by ideology as the guarantor of a sense of recognition. At the same time, in return, the question of the subaltern also brings challenges to the universality feature that is present in such subjectivation theory. At a lower degree, the difficulty to assume a multiplicity of interpellation scenes also catches Spivak³⁰, since her work distances itself from Guha's and other subalternists when it come to the point of recognizing the existence of other discourses, sub-hegemonic or even anti-hegemonic ones.

In short, my aim by bringing interpellation into the debate was to clarify how the subaltern position is not a problem restricted to a disable ability of self-representation, but most of all, a question of an oblique recognition imposed by ideological systems of hailing. Once this is clear, we can now turn back to Althusser's proposition in order to also dislocate some of its own limits — as

³⁰ It is important to highlight how Spivak herself seems to ignore these multiple levels of narrative formation, in order to propose her hyperbolic view upon hegemonic ideology. In her reading of India, she seems to approach only two actors (the Hindu nationalists and the British imperialists), whose discourse is put in opposition to the subaltern lack of ideology. There is no consideration about other possible social groups in between, and the effects of their discourse on the process of interpellation.

those related with its totalizing ambitions. As I argue, in the subaltern case, we have to take interpellation as a process intertwined by a number of discourses. Hence, against Althusser's theory, I draw attention to the moments when some bodies are affected differently by the variety of discursive mainsprings.

In part, such reflection invites us to engage a more careful appreciation between interpellation and postcolonial debates, considering the challenge of difference brought by the subaltern as a subject-effect. According to Carr (2001), when compared with psychoanalytic accounts of a possible context of desubjectivation, the subaltern does not occupy any of the two main alternatives, which are: a pre-subject moment of the individual or a pre-development phase of the child. Because of that, such position of oppression is not predicted within the terms of Althusser under Lacan's influence.

The question of symbolic exclusion calls to task the Lacanian formulation of the symbolic, which, though it does have "psychosis" as the name for that individual who persists outside symbolic regulation, is not particularly concerned with how the symbolic hails individuals as subjects of difference or with how it exacts a domain of exclusion inhabited by individuals understood as non-subjects (but not therefore psychotic). (CARR, 2001, 25).

By forcing a close investigation of the different protocols of the symbolic, the notion of the subaltern challenges the political management of it, enabling a theoretical incursion of psychoanalysis into a kind of socio-symbolic arena.

Where Lacanian psychoanalysis defines the inability to speak as the condition of the (pre-linguistic) infants or the psychotic, the eruption of the subaltern onto the scene of theories of symbolic subject-production carves out a space of linguistic exclusion that is not pre-symbolic or outside the symbolic. Indeed, the subaltern is not just unable to speak; she is effectively muted in the symbolic and persists as such in its operational silencing. (CARR, 2001, 26).

In that sense, the postcolonial commitment with a fragmented, phenomenological, and embodied notion of the Subject requires a dialogue with psychoanalytic literatures that assumes the theme of *difference*. Here, my proposition is to debate such difference as being a peculiar effect from the mirror-stage of interpellation. However, since Althusser focuses on the symbolic function, his theory does not explore the potentialities of recognition in narcissistic formulations. With this, he misses the point where some subject positions, like that of the subaltern, do not manifest a mere interruption of the

speech-act, at the level of the symbolic. Retaking the importance of the imaginary phase for interpellation, I highlight the imaginary barrier that limits the subaltern's access to misrecognition as a central element for us to understand the subaltern disability to dispute signifiers.

Under this horizon, my proposition is to read subalternity as a position that, despite its participation in the interpellation scene of subjectivation, cannot join the artificial identitarian mechanisms upon which it could engage political moves for signifier re-understandings. Such move can only happen if we open interpellation perspectives to a theorization about different bodies and subject effects. So, departing from Althusser's idea of interpellation, we must approach the hailing moment as a continuous practice through which linguistic structure authorizes and, at the same time, subordinates the subject consciousness in relation to power. In addition, then, we must ask: how does the subaltern experience such scene? Following the hypothetical example of Althusser, I propose a reconfiguration of it. In such new scene, the police officer discovers that, in the course of the hailing practice, he not only produces a Call but, on pronouncing it, he also creates a range of borders or lines whose function is to keep apart the traumatic, heterogeneous, and non-absolute aspects of the subjects.

As Guha said, within the hegemonic narratives, the subaltern never occupies the subject position, that is, they cannot have access to the elements required for an identitarian mobilization of the self. By consequence, s/he cannot speak in his/her own name, because, ultimately, the 'policeman' cannot name them, except as a place of difference. In fact, in each call, the police officer needs to re-create a space of abjection in order to justify the adherence to the law of identity-creating signifiers. However, symbolic strategies are not static; quite the opposite, they are a permanent and continuous range of naming practices that affect people's bodies unevenly. Or, as Dean explains, interpellation does not happen "in a uniform way because there is no single symbolic order that we all inhabit. We move through different, interwoven discourse networks that affect people's bodies unevenly" (DEAN, 1990, 197). Consequently, in the course of interpellation, some individuals will experience the 'turning back' movement as a

process of 'expulsion'³¹. In other words, some individuals experience interpellation as a de-symbolization scene.

Butler's reflection on subjectivation takes important steps towards the consideration of those bodies that experience interpellation as precariousness. According to her reading of Hegel, any process of subject formation relies on a fundamental moment of vulnerability. Since the moment when "two self-consciousnesses come to recognize one another is, accordingly, in the 'life and death struggle', the moment in which they each see the shared power they have to annihilate the Other and, thereby, to destroy the condition of their own self-reflection" (BUTLER, 2000, 287). Recognition, in such case, ensures the contention of destruction, although there are always bodies that experience that vulnerability as precariousness, considering the flux of power relations. Therefore, for Butler, the expected misrecognition that creates a mismatch between the names and the matter it should name, come to be mobilized as sources for domination, but also as terrain for contestation.

3.5. Misrecognized bodies, resistant bodies: the routes of recognition

The idea of ambivalence is at the core of Butler's reading of power, which suggests that subject existence comes hand in hand with its own subordination — the problem of *assujettissement*, to use Foucauldian terms. However, Butler (1997) expands that logic and proposes a specific "psychoanalytic valence" of it, which she named "passionate attachment". For her, no subject can emerge without a fundamental (and passionate) dependence on the conditions of its "own" subordination. Returning to Hegel, Butler highlights how consciousness or self-formation, whatever it is, will necessarily involve a context of relationality, through which there is no possibility of a self that is free from the Other. Because of that, "the relationship to the Other will be, invariably, ambivalent. The price of self-knowledge will be self-loss, and the Other poses the possibility of both securing and undermining self-knowledge" (BUTLER, 2000, 286).

This loss marks the fact that, for Butler, there is no such thing as an autonomous and coherent subject. Every notion of self is already a position

³¹ At the next chapter, I will associate this idea of expulsion with the Lacanian notion of "foreclosure".

beyond itself, an ontological condition of “ek-stasis” that describes this “fundamental relation to the Other in which it finds itself ambiguously installed outside itself” (BUTLER, 2000, 288). Following this idea, the subject undergoes a contingent process of interpellation through which it can perform identities with the Other, as well as negotiate the terms of misrecognition. That is why, in Butler's perspective, Althusser's mistake was to not pay enough attention to the potential of disobedience that relies on the failure of interpellating laws. In her view, the potential for political subversion comes from both the ongoing feature of the self, which is never done, and the very ambivalent nature of the misrecognition arena, which responds for the social existence of the contingency and for the site of discursive articulations (BUTLER, 2011, 191).

Identification is constantly figured as a desired event or accomplishment, but one which finally is never achieved; identification is the phantasmatic staging of the event. In this sense, identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous, and cross-corporeal cohabitation; they unsettle the “I” they are the sedimentation of the “we” in the constitution of any “I,” the structuring presence of alterity in the very formulation of the “I.” Identifications are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. (Butler, 2011, 68).

In part, those reflections serve well our attempt to understand the dynamic and heterogeneous impact of interpellation upon bodies. However, to follow Spivak's reflections, in the case of the subaltern the mechanisms of *assujettissement* seem to be much closer to the production of an aporetic disappearance than a strict misrecognized position. Such idea of disappearance, as mentioned in the previous topic, does not imply an absolute void. That is, there is no transcendental exclusion from interpellation. The colonial discourse does symbolize difference, but it does so only obliquely. In that sense, like all targets of misrecognition processes, the subaltern is partially recognized, being signified as an effect of the Other. However, unlike Butler's reading on failure signifiers, the subaltern does not seem to summarize only a fluid place of inadequate recognition, that is then open to dispute, but it also involves, as Spivak asserts, an aporetic displacement of the non-recognized difference. Because of this, the subaltern in Spivak's texts gets lost within the limits of law and repression,

between subject and object status. Such move of "displacement" does not result in non-existence, although it apparently blocks any type of self-identitarian moment (the mirror stage effect) within the hegemonic discourse.

It would be as if the expected effects of mutual recognition could not take place when relationality involves the subaltern as one of the parts to be recognized. The impossible recognition leads to the implosion of the mechanisms of self-consciousness and discourse rearticulation, as prescribed by Butler. I will offer more detail on such reading in the next chapter, when I propose the Lacanian notion of foreclosure to understand such displacement position. For now, in dialogue with Butler, I want to draw attention to the relevance of the misrecognition process for the formation of subjectivity positions. On the other hand, I also take a step away from that author in order to analyze subalternity as a position that does not mobilize a diagnosis restricted to a *failure* of recognition during the process of identification. It seems that, most of all, subalternity highlights the very limits that circle the identificatorian effect of the hegemonic language, exposing the symbolic reliance on the existence of such abject beings - that should be taken not just as *failure*, but as *impossibility*. Hence, my argumentation relies on the idea that, between those words, where only a slight difference seems to inhabit, there is an important terrain for debate.

3.5.1. Between the symbolic and the imaginary: what about subaltern contestation?

As demonstrated before, unlike Althusser, Butler opened her theory for a more profound focus on a recognition process, as well as for a more attentive consideration of the heterogeneous effects of interpellation. Similar to Spivak, that author generally read those deviants effects as part of a condition of abjection.

This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which—and by virtue of which—the domain of the subject will

circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. (BUTLER, 2011, xiii)

Spivak's debate on synecdoche suggests a similar functioning of unify-signifier, which operates as an identity articulator through the blockage of some difference. It is from the process of resemblance, through which difference is set aside, that the whole course of recognition is triggered. However, according to Dean (1990), beyond the possibility of misrecognition, there are other impacts language can have on bodies. For instance, as the subaltern debate suggests, interpellation also produces a position of 'exclusion' (or ex-istance), in which no significant can fulfill the signifier, even as a failure. That is, a space of empty significance, which prevents its occupants from mobilizing citation performances regarding the signifier. Such empty register goes beyond the imaginary and the symbolic, and could be associated with what Lacan had approached as *the Real*. And here I justify why, from now on, the Lacanian psychoanalysis has become so important in developing this debate: it helps me to draw attention to the fact that language affects the body in, at least, three dimensions — Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. Thus, besides the imaginary effect, related with the spaces of misrecognition, interpellation also produces a function of the *jouissance*, or what Lacan would call the *plus-de-jouir*.

Therefore, whereas Althusser opens the reading of subjectivity to the debate on interpellation, through recognition, Butler, in turn, allows a more profound take on such theme due to her attentive look on the Lacanian register of the imaginary. Additionally, Butler analysis of misrecognition addresses the question of difference as a point operating on the production of position of subjects who had their vulnerability turned into precariousness. However, such account of different seems to remain restricted within the symbolic and imaginary operations, thus not being able to consider those elements characterized by impossibilities. As I am to propose on the next pages, and mostly in the next chapter, it is only with Lacan's later debate on the Real, which is poorly exploited in both Althusser and Butler's work, that we can produce proper addressing of subaltern position.

According to Lacan, the register of the Real is related with the dimension of desire, which involves something of language but is not itself linguistic. In other words, “broadly speaking, when language hits the body its impact produces

not merely the subject of the signifier but also the subject of desire” (DEAN, 1990, 197). Following this, I draw attention to how a theorization of subaltern bodies must involve an attention to desires, which are repeatedly misrecognized as need by capitalism/colonial systems (DEAN, 1990). On the other hand, we observe in most theories of subjectivation an absence of a space for unspeakable desires, which blocks many sources of theorizations interested in conceiving power and resistance as a function not attached to signs and signifiers (DEAN, 1990). That was the case of many rhetoric approaches focused on a model of language restrict to speech. But is it the case of Butler's theory? Could such closure of political grammar in linguistic registers explain the difficulty for them to read subaltern contestatory dimension?

For Dean, in part, yes. According to his reading, the main problem with Butler's approach on sexuality lies in how she ends up "evacuating desire from the theoretical picture" (1990, 191). In other words, by addressing the symbolic as a support of the imaginary, the theorization cannot separate the subject from the ego, reducing one to another. And when the symbolic appears as an instrument of edification of an imaginary self-image, as is the case of Althusser, subjectivity gets trapped in the “violent policing of inside /outside borders by which the ego maintains itself” (DEAN, 1990, 192). So, in such models, the formation of ego is related with a Derridean notion of a "constitutive outside". However, in Dean's psychoanalytic critique, "the subject is not formed through the production of a constitutive outside; neither is this exterior equivalent to the category of the unconscious, as Butler seems to think" (1990, 192).

In this sense, the constitutive outside, to which Butler delegates the functions of an abject zone, turns out to be a concept detached from an idea of the abject *object* — the *objet a*. In Dean's view, that notion represents the foundation for Lacan's approach on subjectivity. Without a concept of the 'objet a' (that Lacan defines as "cause of desire"), it is impossible to theorize about a body that speaks almost inaudibly —especially when it assumes a semblance of a speaking-being, but whose symptoms testify a lack of the discourse of the Other. Considering this, in the next chapter, I develop my reading of the subaltern 'silence' as being an effect of a body that, despite its linguistic existence, cannot find a signifier to articulate his/hers desires, except in a nonsensical way. In the example of Bhuvanewari's death, Spivak demonstrates the discursive

dissimulations around the idea of "her choice". The proxies, which claim to speak in her name, prove how Bhuvaneswari manifested a subjectivity that comes to being as an unstable effect of a desire that is not her own, at the same time that such desire was revealed as a constitutive instrument for both the colonialist liberal normalization and the traditional norms of the colonized male. The "unfixed place of woman as a signifier" allowed her ambivalent mobilization in language, while it authorizes the silencing of her symptoms, that is, the displacement of her place as a body that desires.

As Spivak explained, the consolidation of such silencing politics comes through the strategy of othering. In other words, the subaltern experiences a disability to put aside difference in order to act as a unified signifier. It is a site of difference, as some sort of radical alterity, where no self-misrecognition can take place. Because of that, we could say that the subaltern leaves the process of interpellation without a name of his/her own. The oblique recognition carried out by the 'elite register' of the subject, or what we might call the "elite symbolic", does not enact the unifying function that would enable an identity-creating signifier for subalternity. And although all acts of unification turn out to be an always-failure investment, it is upon such "phantasmatic component" that relies the possibility for discursive re-articulations.

In that sense, considering the linguistic domain, the subaltern seems to represent a position unable to mobilize performances towards a dispute of the 'volatile logic of iterability', as Butler suggests. With this reflection, I am not arguing for the need of constructing conditions that allow a coherent identity for the subaltern. As mentioned before, the failure at identification is a constitutive part of interpellation. However, when the articulation of a coherent identity becomes a symbolic law itself, then the position of the abjection is not only a source of failure, as Butler seems to suggest, but it is also an ontological dimension that should be repeatedly produced in its instancing. The impossible identification of the subaltern, as a function of an ego-body, manifests both the limits and possibilities of the symbolic and imaginary domains.

Therefore, returning to the interpellation scene, and advancing towards the hailing moment, we could say that the police officer creates a border of speech through the treatment of the abject, which, I argue, should be read in supplementation to Butler's diagnosis of the imaginary failure. As the domain of

an unspeakable desire, the Real marks an 'exclusion' inside the very symbolic, that is, a position without linguistic skills, and because of that, which works as a space of fear and anguish. However, when analyzed through its imaginary effects, the *staging* of such scene became empty, since the subaltern is constatively hailed but not performatively able to describe how difference remains unspoken.

Within the lines of the imaginary, subjectivity has to find a way to mobilize, even if in a disrupted form, the symbolic signs and signifiers. Probably, because of that, the interpellation scene in Spivak's theory requires the figures of *proxies*, who know how to *speak properly*, and then are called to mediate (to speak *in the name of*) the other whose unrecognized difference reveals the limits that works upon the very Call. So, if on one hand, the impossible condition of the subaltern to complete the function of an "artificial rallying awareness" makes it a source for contestation of the mechanisms that sustain "the outlines of the very class of which a collective consciousness has been situationally developed" (SPIVAK, 1996 [1985], 208), on the other, the subaltern has no access to the means of hegemonic knowledge production. As result, s/he cannot confront, by him/herself, the silencing practices of hegemonic power.

From this circular paradox came Spivak's imprisonment in the argument about the subaltern's mediated agency, and their normative demand for organic intellectuals. As Gramsci asserted: "the intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government" (SPN, 1971, 12). Because of that, Gramsci, and later Spivak, asserts education as the primordial element in civil society, as its function is, above all, "the teaching and practice of the limit of all common sense, that limit being 'language as such'" (LEVINSON, 2001, 73). Then, within these terms, to forge a new language is taken as an important form of resistance, yet this does not imply a defense of new forms of *speaking for* or *about* the subaltern. After all, in terms of consciousness, "the organic intellectual does not 'overcome' his particular class", although, and this is important, the organic intellectual does "demonstrates that his particular status or sector is an abstraction." (LEVINSON, 2001, 71-72).

In dialogue with this, we could say that Spivak takes the organic intellectual as the one who, being able to synecdochize her/himself in a vigilant way, can thus learn through the *singularity* of the subaltern — 'learning to learn from below'. In other words, given the impossibility to perform as something

other than difference, the subaltern is persistently condemned to be ventriloquized by the agency of those who have access to the mechanisms of interpellation. Then, in a positive scenario, the intellectuals would assume a more ethical position in this task. However, is this the only way to approach subaltern paths for agency? Is it really trapped in the paradox of an impossible action?

As I am trying to argue with the ontological dimension of the Real, maybe if we open our theorization to such dimension of subjectivity, then the answer to that question could be "no". According to Žižek, Butler shares with Lacan an old leftist problematique (one that, as I see, could also be applied to Spivak), which is: "how is it possible not only to resist effectively, but also to undermine and/or displace the existing socio symbolic network — the Lacanian "big Other"— which predetermines the only space within which the subject can exist?" (1998, 3). As I have tried to demonstrate, Butler's response to that problem has been circling around the idea of (mis)recognition as part of an allegorical scene of interpellation that is inevitably open to political dispute. Hence, in common, both Spivak's and Butler's conceptualization do not take much distance from the *meaning* arena as the political space *par excellence*.

Of course, we must recognize that, in "The psychic life of power", Butler proposes a particular understanding of subjectivation, quite different from Spivak's, and which does not express a quasi-identity position detached from agency. For Butler, the subject constitutes an ongoing process intimately connected with agency: "Subjection consists precisely of this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency" (1997, 2). So, for her, the exercise of agency is intrinsically related with the negotiation of cultural intelligibility that is produced through subjectivities. The very existence (or origin) of the subject comes along with the terms that create and limit its agency — that is, both subject existence and its agency are dependents in terms of power.

The subject's production takes place not only through the regulation of the subject's speech, but through the regulation of the social domain of speakable discourse. The question is not what it is I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all . . . To move outside of the domain of speakability is to risk one's status as a subject. To embody the norms that govern speakability in one's speech is to consummate one's status as a subject of speech (BUTLER, 1997, 133).

In that sense, agency includes complicity³², but can also become a form of resistance when it implies the subject's deviation from the fixed modes of normalization, "what Judith Butler terms "desubjugation" in her reading of Foucault" (PARKER, 2012, 2). According to Rickert (2007, 143), in Butler's theory, the passage "from compliance of the body to mobilized action underscores the shift in the meaning of performance", which goes from an obedient to a citational practice. It is this idea of citationality that secures not only the means for the process of normalization of the body, but also the means for resistance possibilities.

[...] a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject's incoherence, its incomplete character. This repetition or, better, iterability thus becomes the non-place of subversion, the possibility of a re-embodiment of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity. (BUTLER, 1997, 99)

Therefore, the unfixed nature of the signifiers authorizes the notion of subversion within the scene of interpellation and creates the terrain for shifts in performances. Because of that, we could say that, for Butler, "resistance is not a matter of proper theorization but of adequate recognition." (RICKERT, 2007, 145). From that, came the possibility for the loss that founds the subject to be transformed by means of the resignification of the symbolic order (RICKERT, 2007, 156). Hence, here, agency is about appropriation, which involves putting power to work against its own terms. Such move became possible, despite the double-bind of subjection, because power works "in two incommensurable temporal modalities: first, as what is for the subject always prior, outside of itself, and operative from the start; second, as the willed effect of the subject" (BUTLER, 1997, 14). In this second modality, subjection appears as an effect of power, but also as the precondition for agency, and thus, "subjection is the account by which a subject becomes the guarantor of its resistance and opposition" (BUTLER, 1997, 14).

In short, agency emerges as an *unintended* effect of power, and because of that, the subject can exceed the terms from which it is enabled. Regarding this point, Butler's accounts on subversion seem to meet Spivak's suggestion about

³² It is important to point out that, in Spivak later works, when debating the figure of the native informant, she demonstrates an important engagement with the debate about compliance.

epistemological revisions, being both linked with the negotiation of the intelligible domain. In other words, Spivak's argument on the need for transforming "conditions of impossibility into possibility" finds echo on Butler's proposal of a reiterated negotiation of signifiers, in which resistance comes as a process of destabilization of symbolic law.

As we can see, both authors assume that language operates mainly on a plane of linguistic immanence. That is why, when pointing to Althusser's "mistake", Butler draws attention to his lack of theorization on "the range of disobedience that such an interpellating law might produce" (BUTLER, 2011, 82). Because of that, her work responds to that author with the need for analyzing how "misrecognition persists between the law and the subject it compels" becoming a source of resistance (BUTLER, 2011, 82). In that sense, as Spivak explains, all "failures or partial successes in discursive-field displacement" express an ideological dispute that proposes an artificial (and situated) strategy of awareness whose ultimate propose is to destroy the law that authorizes the lines of the collective consciousness that have been situationally developed (Spivak, 1996 [1985], 208).

On the other hand, as I propose, the idea of citationality, central to Butler's proposition of a resistant displacement, does not seem to be so easily applied to the reading of subalternity. By saying that "the 'subaltern' cannot appear without the thought of the 'elite'", Spivak denies any possibility of a full recovering of their will, voice and consciousness, which never assumes a positive presence. With this, she restrains the space of citationality as a direct source of transformative and artificial ideological performance. As Morton explains, the subaltern "threatens its [hegemony's] coherence by remaining heterogeneous to hegemonic structures of representation" (2007, 104). So, if the subaltern manifests the impossible entry in the symbolic, as Spivak argues, how can s/he assume resistance as a performance upon a signifier?

As mentioned before, in Spivak's circular argument, this can only happen through a mediated practice - the subaltern must be represented, perhaps in a more ethical way. Therefore, dialoguing with Butler's theory, we could say that " 'bodies that matter' are bodies that have access to corporeal meaning, that can make matter speak and signify in such a way as to resist the normalizing effects of hegemonic, heterosexual determinations" (Rickert, 2007, 156-157). In contrast,

there are bodies that are “constitutively out of joint, dissonant, striving, and struggling to be heard” (Rickert, 2007, 157). Hence, similar to what Dean calls “muttering body”, the theorization about the subaltern voice requires an ontological amplification that should allow us to approach a communication that is part of language, but does not manifest itself through linguistic skills. As I mention, such arena can thus be related with the domain of desire.

Bodies that mutter are bodies whose desire, enmeshed in the symbolic order, are struggling to be heard. The symptom signifies that that desire has not been heard, has not found its signifier. This lack of a signifier is a serious matter, for bodies that mutter are in pain; their muttering is an index of that pain. [...] By muttering I mean a form of signification that condenses and bears with it jouissance in a way that ordinary language cannot, since jouissance and language conventionally are conceived as antithetical (DEAN, 1990, 203).

Finally, because of that, my theoretical proposition goes in the direction of a reading of the Lacanian concept of the Real. As I will develop in the next chapter, such a notion helps me to call attention to another aspect of the interpellation moment, which is not highlighted either by Althusser or by Butler, and which is just diagnosed but not exploited by Spivak, namely: the register of barred (or unrecognized) desires.

3.6. Conclusion

When Spivak concluded about the impossible speech of the subaltern (i.e. when she announced the inherent disability of subalternity to represent itself), her theory ends up suggesting that, in such a case, the process of subjectivation comes detached from agency skills. Therefore, if “the subaltern cannot speak”, it means that the subaltern is persistently condemned to be ventriloquized by other people’s representations. Following Spivak’s categories, the subaltern is taken as a site without identity, and because of that, when under ideology regulation, those in such position are prevented from initiating a process of collective consciousness formation that offers a base for action. In a broader horizon, the main objective of this chapter was precisely to construct the means for a further confrontation of such statement.

Thus, my objective was generally to use Butler’s and Althusser’s reading of interpellation to throw a different light on Spivak’s diagnosis about the

subaltern. With Althusser's approach, I could re-discuss what Spivak has problematized as subaltern silence, then approaching it not as a particular case of impossible self-representation, which seems to be an inherent condition of subjectivation, but mostly as a singular condition involving the recognition processes. Through these lenses, the debate on hegemonic power assumes a discursive operation with identification mechanisms, which seeks to produce a bodily ego "in compliance with a symbolic position" (Butler, 2011, 69). Based on that, the subaltern silence embraces a disability to respond to the hailing moment, which comes along with a lack of accesses to identity-unifier signifiers.

With Butler, we went a step further on the interpellation scene, since, for her, the process of ego production produces both the Law (that makes the call) and the instruments of resistance to it (Butler, 2011). However, despite Butler's capacity to bring the theme of agency into the subjectivation debate, which she does through the question of *misrecognition*, such potential resistance remains limited when applied to the question of subalternity. By focusing on bodies that can have accesses to corporeal meaning, Butler's theorization opens the path for us to think on social transformation, but only for those that can mobilize the arena of hegemonic law. In that sense, we understand how Spivak's paradox was trapped in the idea of an impossible agency. After all, if the subaltern cannot have access to the meaning arena, then, Spivak infers, it is incapable of having a 'name' that offers a base for collective dispute over resignification. In Spivak's view, the absence of a name prevents the subaltern to pass from constative to performative status.

However, in an effort to find ways to problematize such hyperbolic argument by Spivak, I started to propose an alternative reading of such notion of performative behavior. Particularly, considering that all those theorizations, from Althusser, Butler, and Spivak, orbit mainly around the domains of the symbolic and the imaginary, my central proposal is to embrace the subaltern as a position that seems to stress both. In that sense, I ask: What does it change, in terms of a politics of reading, to assume that subalternity represents a position that engages with the symbolic through mechanisms of the Real instead of the imaginary? In the next chapter, my idea is to mobilize the concept of the Real as a means to read performative possibilities without the need of mobilizing the terrain of discursive

rearticulations. For this, I stress Butler's rethoricalist approach in order to show how language, during interpellation, produces effects other than misrecognition.

Finally, the main argument to be set up with this chapter is the following: by missing the point of the Real, those authors restricted resistance possibilities to an imaginary operation associated with symbolic mechanisms. The political actor is either seen as an ego, with identity issues, or as a linguistic subjectivity embedded in ideological narratives. Instead, I invite us to read the Lacanian concept of the Real as a way to supplement Butler's theory of subjectivation, assuming the inherent link between resistance and subordination, yet adding to it a domain for theorizing bodies prevented from misrecognition mechanisms. In short, with the support of the theories debated in this chapter, I propose to see Spivak's concept of the subaltern as a position that participates of symbolic interpellation but without the ability to assume its imaginary effects. In that sense, it is only through the concept of the Real that we could approach the subaltern dynamics. Thus, in the next chapter, I will focus on such direction, trying to explore its potentialities and possible limitations.

4. The Subaltern and the Real: between rhetoric and desire

*Once the subject himself comes into being, he owes
it to a certain nonbeing upon which he raises up his being
(Lacan, Seminar II).*

4.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I attempted to understand the formation of subalternity as part of a scene of interpellation, which produces a set of subject positions from the encounters between symbolic and imaginary operations. This scene of interpellation, as I approached it, became the terrain where different bodies can be produced depending on the knot established between social ideology and discursive operations. Therefore, whereas Butler's theory introduces us to a misrecognized body, who finds in the very linguistic failure the means to contestation, Spivak's theory, on the other hand, challenges us with a subaltern that seems to assume a barred body, whose position, I argue, is more radically prevented from the castration process of symbolic law. Thus, with a focus on such challenge, I bring the debate into Lacanian ground. As I see it, such conceptual terrain can offer an alternative space "out" of the identitarian and linguistic spheres, which has come to be known as the Real.

In that sense, from now on, the investigation about the production of subaltern positions advances towards a complex understanding related with the formation of the subject through the articulation between language, semblance, and abjection. Throughout this fourth chapter, my objective is to go deeper into the study of that knot, regarding a more direct engagement with Lacan's theory of subjectivation. As I mentioned in the third chapter, the Lacanian psychoanalytic vocabulary does not account for a political debate about colonial discourse. His theory is mainly concerned with clinical structures, such as neurosis, psychosis, and perversion, which emerge from different relations between the subject and the Other qua language or law (FINK, 1995). Therefore, despite the domain of clinical symptoms, Lacan did not account for subject positions as they appear in power relations in the postcolonial world. On the contrary, his theory generally assumes a universal vocation, against which, in part, arises this chapter. Hence,

my focus here lies in the construction of a binding move from Lacanian clinical concepts to subaltern analysis, pointing both limits and possibilities along that axis.

Of course, mobilizations of psychoanalytic literature for political or cultural debates are not an unusual bet. Beyond the already mentioned works of Althusser and Butler, other names, such as Žižek, Kapoor, and Bhabha have also claimed important positions in the interchanging efforts between those fields. For all of them, Lacanian lenses seem to provide useful tools to elucidate discursive structure itself. After all, there is a plethora of discourses organizing social reality, and each of them has its own logic. In a sense, as presented in the first chapter, the Subaltern Studies Group emerges precisely as a project dedicated to the investigation of a particular kind of discourse: the Indian historiography under colonial power. Thus, whereas Guha decided to analyze dominant representations as a way to touch the subaltern, Spivak in turn elucidated certain features of modern/colonial discourse in order to deny any possibility of a full recovery of subaltern presence.

Regarding this, what I am proposing in this chapter, with the help of Lacanian psychoanalysis, is to re-read that same modern/colonial discourse that has been studied by a series of authors around the globe, but imputing it to a different mainspring. Hence, underlying my problematization of Spivak's diagnosis, there is some sort of methodological dislocation. Instead of a Foucauldian lens or a Derridean deconstruction, I propose to understand the operation of subaltern position in the hegemonic discourse through the features of a peculiar type of power structure that Lacan calls *foreclosure*. From this background, I start to read the colonial discourse as a system of operations mostly relied on attempts to follow a master's logic. Such discursive mainspring is associated with a strategy based on a naming function, which demonstrates power by the fixation of identities through the operation of a master signifier³³.

In short, with the mobilization of Lacan, this chapter is an attempt to respond to a set of problematizations raised so far. On one hand, Spivak produces an accurate diagnosis about the subaltern impossibility but, while doing so, she

³³ Given its complexity, this argument will only be completed in the next chapter, where I add a debate on the contemporary status of such colonial power through a dialogue with the Lacanian "fifth" discourse: the discourse of the capitalist.

seems to pay too much attention to the problematic of self-representation, missing the view the plurality of operations working through interpellation. Butler, in turn, brings an important focus to misrecognition, which offers an incredible apparatus to read the overwritten body. On the other hand, her theory remains less commitment to those bodies extensively barred from linguistic dimension. As argued by Dean (2000), in order to incorporate such mode of subjectivation, Butler would have to review the balance between "the subject of the signifier" and "the subject of desire" as important scenes for political analyses. According to him, the low degree of attention offered to the former would account for the difficulties in using Butler's theory to read the subaltern resistance.

As I present in this chapter, Bhabha's conceptualization has opened a rich space for the understanding of that link between discursive and libidinal economies mentioned by Dean (2000). From such articulation, Bhabha was able to approach the subaltern experience of domination inside the colonial discourse along with its operation in a libidinal economy intimately associated with the process of recognition (the desire to be seen). Nevertheless, considering Freud's theory of negation, upon which the Lacanian approach is based, the fundamental hole of language can assume at least three forms: repression, denial, and rejection. Bhabha explored well the effects of the *denial* on the formation of subalternity, while my proposition stands for the relevance of the last condition of repudiation, also known as foreclosure.

The notion of foreclosure, as I mentioned, helps us to realize how a failure in the tying function of language has important impacts on the binding between law and desire, signifier and signified, body and thought. By consequence, such concept offers a base to read social formations whose symbolic and imaginary operations cannot provide a signifier of cohesion (paternal metaphor) to connect those pairs. Moreover, by including the notion of foreclosure, I can take a different direction from Althusser, who ends up operating an "evacuation of the unconscious and desire from the subjective effects of ideological interpellation" (CARR, 2001, 22). With this, I hope, by the end of this chapter, to provide a critical relation between unconscious and discourse, unlocking the potential of resistance attached to it.

Therefore, throughout this chapter, I intend to investigate whether there is a possible correlation between the register of the Real and the subaltern position.

With this, I aim to discover if such dialogue could, or could not, expresses a means to follow Spivak's diagnosis, but turning the terms of resistance around. In other words, by revolving the ontological features of the Real, I question if there would be a dimension of performative manifestation that, although related to language, is not itself linguistic. In operational terms, my starting point follows an explanation about the three registers of human experiences posed by Lacan: the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. Rather than an accurate description of each domain, my attempt with the first section is to understand how those three axes articulate their functions in order to form a subject.

The general objective with that first move is to show how the operations work in the production of the Lacanian Subject, which is *par excellence* a split subject, fragmented between the egoic image (*moi*) and the unconscious desire (*Je*). Hence, from within the process of subjectivation, I focus on at least three moments: the alienating function of the imaginary, highlighting the metaphorical operation that installs the Name-of-the-Father (or the "Father as name"); the subsequent installation of the law of symbolization; and finally, the return of the Real that stresses the limits of language and establishes an economy of desire as object.

From that base follows the second section where my investigation circles specifically around the register of the Real. More precisely, I focus on the ways the repressed signified returns to the symbolic arena through the inscriptions of *fantasy* and *objet a*. According to Lacan, these latter concepts translate the expected condition of subjects that have "successfully negotiated Symbolic castration" (EYERS, 2012, 16). However, by the end of the topic, we must ask: what about the individuals whose alienated moment ends up producing a condition of foreclosure, as an impossible re-inscription through the symbolic? The third section tries to analyze such condition. For this, I turn my attention to the Lacanian reading about Freud's 'typologies of negation', which clarifies different forms of discursive alienation and symbolic reinscriptions.

Finally, after understanding how a specific kind of negation of difference establishes precarious positionalities, I propose to read the subaltern silence as a question of rejected signified, instead of silenced subjectivities. At this point, I must add Lacan's distinction between "saying" (*dire*) and "said" (*dit*), which has become a very useful instrument for this analysis. According to Lacan, the former

concept involves the very practice of enunciation, which, as I argue, the subaltern does have. What is lacking in subalternity, I also argue, is the ability to manage such *dire* in a way to make its *dit* accessible (or recognizable) to the other. Therefore, in the case of the subaltern, it seems that there is a barrier (or some kind of strangeness) between those two domains that does not follow a linear association.

This disconnection enables our lenses to investigate how the subaltern rejection can return through the Real as a breach in discourse. Therefore, my ultimate argument circles around the idea that, whereas s/he is unable to operate through the established (and authorized) laws of the symbolic, the subaltern can still embrace its dimension of *dit* through the Real, then creating communication across this register. However, as Real, such manifestation assumes specific features: in the economy of discourse, it operates linguistic tropes such as paradox and irony, while in the economy of pleasure, it involves symptoms of anguish.

4.2. The Lacanian Subject and the Borromean knot

The aim of this section is to advance an idea that, although already stated in the previous chapter, was not explained in detail. It is the notion that bodies are overwritten by signifiers, or, to use Fink's expression, that "the body is overwritten/overridden by language" (1995, 12). This idea underlines most Lacanian analyses on subjectivation, thus pointing to an imperative correlation between the emergence of the subject and the instauration of the symbolic law, under which the body is socialized. The 'letter kills the body', says Lacan, and with it he establishes the primacy of the signifier over the signified. In Fink's words (1995, 12), "the 'living being' (*le vivant*) — our animal nature — dies, language coming to life in its place and living us. The body is rewritten, in a manner of speaking, physiology giving way to the signifier, and our bodily pleasures all come to imply/involve a relationship with the Other".

As I am going to present on the following pages, it is in the domain of language that the signifier generates a split between conscious and unconscious³⁴,

³⁴ "It is important to note that the unconscious is conceived intersubjectively here. Lacan is deliberately de-psychologizing the concept, in the sense of wresting it from any notion of a separate, individual mind; rather, because the unconscious is integral to language, it is part and parcel of a shared (albeit unstable) horizon of meaning. It is therefore broadly sociocultural, and

as a required condition for subjectivation. In Lacan's theory, as further debated, the signifier assumes the locus of power, from where derives a series of articulations responsible for producing the subject. Consequently, any attempt to study bodies that have limited access to mechanisms of recognition, as is my purpose here, has to go through a debate on the functions of symbolization. That is why in this section I seek to attend such conceptual background turning my attention to Lacanian writings on the relationship forecast between the three registers of human experiences: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. What do these registers mean? And how do they articulate a recognition process? In summary, how is identity produced through them?

As I see it, although clearly implicated in the imaginary stage, as presented in the last chapter, the Lacanian notion of recognition does not end within that domain. Recognition is, above all, a *course* that necessarily involves a movement across the three mentioned registers. The bond between symbolic, imaginary, and real is well known, being metaphorically described by Lacan as a "Borromean knot of three inextricably tied rings" (EYERS, 2012, 17). With this metaphor, Lacan intends to assert that one domain cannot be understood without the other, having no chronological order, or ontological primacy between them. In spite of that, it is not rare to find, in the readings of Lacan's Seminars, a certain logical presupposition guiding the register's operations. For instance, considering a pre-oedipal period, the imaginary responds for the first narcissistic formation of the ego (ideal-ego), which "arises as a crystallization or sedimentation of ideal images" (FINK, 1995, 37). In this phase, the infant, that is not yet in control of his/her linguistic skills, must learn how to initiate his/her identifications through a specular image, which is going to be signified later in language. Again, such temporality is a theoretical abstraction, so much so that, for what it is known, "the symbolic is already presupposed in the functioning of the mirror stage" (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 19).

hence, trans-individual. It becomes a vital part of our subjectivity without residing 'inside' us. In fact, for Lacan, the unconscious is decidedly outside. Regarding this connection, he writes, 'the unconscious is the discourse of the Other', underlining how language always precedes us, so that we form our subjecthood and desires through the Other". [Hence, since] "psychoanalysis is primarily a cultural and linguistic practice, it can be used to analyse development's texts – be these written or institutional, academic or policy oriented – to reveal their gaps and blind spots"(KAPOOR, 2014, 1123).

Anyway, despite the temporal imbrication within the knot, what is important to grasp about the imaginary specular image is that it cannot achieve a full replication (or recognition) of the individual. Indeed, the mirror-stage is where the ego is formed, but it never emerges as a coherent "sense of self". As Lacan points out, the narcissistic fixation always operates a misrecognition. The 'making sense' of him/herself depends, afterwards, on an active and repetitive projection that happens within the symbolic³⁵. That is why, reading Lacan, Žižek (2007, 80) explores two possible senses for the concept of ego: the ideal-ego that "stands for the idealized self-image of the subject (the way I would like to be, I would like others to see me)", and the ego-ideal that manifests "the agency whose gaze I try to impress with my ego image, the big Other who watches over me and propels me to give my best, the ideal I try to follow and actualize". Each of them, the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal, involves operations in a different (yet articulated) domain, respectively being the imaginary and the symbolic.

In Eyers's view, it is precisely the antagonism between those two moments, to which the ego "issues from and directs towards", that generates a third term that "we might provisionally associate with the register of the Real" (EYERS, 2012, 30). By antagonism, Eyers means a residual signified that keeps slipping out of reach despite the efforts of both domains (the imaginary and the symbolic) to catch it. As will be debated later, the Real constitutes an excess from that process of identification around which "the symbolic order is condemned to circle, without ever being able to hit it" (FINK, 1995, 28). For now, it is only necessary to understand how Eyers's statement calls our attention to the fact that every encounter with the Other (either through the *gestalt* of the mirror-stage, or through language at the symbolic) offers the contours for subjectivity formation, at the same time it prescribes a negative destination (the Real) as its cost. In other words, during the formation of subjectivity, there is always a leftover based on symbolic alienation, which will be called *the Real*. Before dedicating attention to this concept, let us concentrate on those two first registers: the symbolic and the imaginary.

³⁵ As Yannis Stavrakakis (1999, 18-19) explains, "if the imaginary representation of ourselves, the mirror image, is incapable of providing us with a stable identity, the only option left for acquiring one seems to be the field of linguistic representation, the symbolic register. In fact, the symbolic is already presupposed in the functioning of the mirror stage - which highlights the fact that, for Lacan, the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic is a theoretical abstraction".

4.2.1 Symbolic castration and the split subject

As we have been debating here, the process of formation of self-images, and of self-consciousness, is associated with mechanisms of recognition. In Hegel, such path involves a fundamental moment of alterity, by which the idea of "I" is only achieved through its reflection in an Other. When debating this Hegelian notion of recognition, Butler explains:

To be itself, it must pass through self-loss, but when it passes through, it will never be "returned" to what it was. To be reflected in or as another has a double significance for consciousness, however, since consciousness will, through the reflection, regain itself in some way. But it will, by virtue of the external status of the reflection, regain itself as external to itself and hence continue to lose itself. Thus, the relationship to the Other will be, invariably, ambivalent (2000, 286).

Self-loss, as a necessarily stage for self-consciousness, puts recognition in a close relationship with another important process: 'destruction'. Such destructive path states that psychic relations with Others always involves a kind of negative disposal. That is why, following Butler's analysis, the Hegelian notion of self is always "outside itself, not self-identical, differentiated from the start". Thus, the point here is that ego is simultaneously made possible by the contact with the Other and also barred by it, since alterity prevents any chances of a return to itself or of any process of becoming "a self it never was." (2000, 286). In part, we could say that in Hegel's theory there is no autonomic link between the idea of self and the prerogative of self-identity. On the contrary, the self seems to enjoy an unreachable destination — "to be Other than oneself" — and its desires is always cast in forth to an *alter* ontology.

Similarly, for Lacan, that disposition is at the base of the castration moment that marks the subject's entrance in the terrains of imaginary and symbolic registers. Therefore, the Lacanian subject is always a split subject, whose narcissistic stage produces an "I" that is fundamentally an "Other". Through the contact with the alterity, the infant become a desiring subject, and a desirable object as well, both coming from a mimetic relation to the Other, as ideal image and as disciplinary gaze. Then, the fulfillment of such ego production requires not only its emergence as a specular image, but it also has "to be ratified

by the symbolic Other" (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999). It means that it is the symbolic Other qua language that brings ego into a condition of subjectivation through a contingent process of splitting.

Basically, it happens by a linguistic operation that transfers images and signified of the imaginary stage to a chain of signifiers, a move that fixates meaning and provides a sense of stability to the misrecognized subject. To understand such conceptual proposal, we have to understand Lacan's debate with the Saussurean linguistic approach. As it is known, although clearly in debt with that scholarship, Lacan subverted Saussure's theory about the relation between the signifier and the signified (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999). In that sense, "instead of the unity between the signifier and the signified, Lacan stresses their division; if unity prioritizes the signified, division gives priority to the signifier over the production of the signified, a production which only now becomes fully elucidated" (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 24).

Based on that statement, the signifier assumes a different function in the Lacanian scheme, being no longer related with the representation of the signified. In fact, Lacan equates the signifier with the French notion of "*représentants de la représentation*, representatives of (the) representation" (FINK, 1995, 8). The main point is that Lacan's theory interrupts the presupposed unity, or at least the expected isomorphism between signifier and signified. For him, the former does not represent the latter, but instead it signifies that existence, establishing the field of meanings. Inverting Saussurean linguistics, Lacan defines the symbolic as the order of the signifier, instead of the signified, thus displacing the unity of the sign (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999). This is possible insofar as Lacan takes the signified as a space of absence, and the signifiers as assuming an irreducible feature (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999). From the disassociation between that pair comes another important Lacanian inversion, now about temporality: for him, meaning is an *a posteriori* creation, that is, meaning is only constituted after the fact.

Therefore, the source of meaning, according to Lacan, is associated with a "naming signifier" that enters the scene of interpellation to replace the void left by the first signifier that was repressed during the process of castration. The acquiescence to this signifier passes through a "paternal metaphor", called "the name-of-the-father", whose functions is to interrupt the narcissistic dualism (between the subject and the (m)Other) and to institute the symbolic Law — the

law of symbolization. Such idea results from a linguistic adaptation that Lacan makes of the Oedipus myth, in which the real Father is replaced by the "Father as name"³⁶. As a representation of the Other's desire, the name-of-the-father enters the imaginary stage binding the knot of the registers, since it ensures the consistency status of the symbolic function and gives the castrated subject a path to realize itself as a subject of desire. That is, the father as a *naming function* seals the split of the subject, inaugurating the rift between conscious and unconscious.

Freud's famous analysis about the unconscious operation, unveiled in "The Interpretation of Dreams", associates this domain of the unconscious with processes of condensation and displacement. In parallel, Lacan uses metaphor and metonymy as linguistic tropes that simulate, for the rhetoric debate, those Freudian terms, respectively. In this sense, the mechanism of metaphor triggers the confrontation of the subject with the Other, thus initiating the movement through which the castrated subject is *replaced* and then *condensated* into the signifying chain. The subject vanishes between the chain, reappearing later as "retroactive effect of one signifier upon another" (FINK, 1995, 69).

Surprisingly enough, for Lacan, the signified disappears because it is no longer associated with the concept, as in Saussure, but is conceived as belonging to the order of the real; that's why the bar dividing signifier and signified, instead of constituting an intimate link between them, instead of creating the unity of the sign, is understood as a barrier resisting signification, as a limit marking the intersection of the symbolic with the real (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 26).

Therefore, during symbolization, the subject is decentralized and its repressed part, barred from signification, returns as unconscious. In this sense, we say that the Lacanian Subject is a barred subject. Consequently, symbolization always involves two important mechanisms: the *negation*, through which the signified is alienated and vanished within signification by a metaphor operation into the signifier; and the *return*, from which the split subject is re-inscribed in the

³⁶ Among contemporary authors, especially those dedicated to gender studies, as Judith Butler and Jessica Benjamin, emerges a strong critique to the centrality of the phallus notion of psychoanalytic debates on subjectivation. In Butler's words, "I understand that progressive Lacanians are quick to distinguish between the phallus and the penis, and to claim that the "paternal" is a metaphor only; but they do not explain how the very distinction that is said to make "phallus" and "paternal" safe for use continues to rely on and reinstitute the correspondences, penis/phallus and paternal/paternal, that the distinctions are said to overcome" (2000, 275-276).

symbolic as unconscious. This notion of alienation and decentralization, presupposed by castration, usually raises debate on the features of this subject: after all, if the subject is split, does it mean that there was a first self, autonomous and coherent, that then became engaged in a splitting process? Here, I think our analysis would benefit from Butler's explanation, in which the split should be understood more as a contingent performance than a foundational moment.

If we assume that the self exists and then it splits, we assume that the ontological status of the self is self-sufficient before it undergoes its splitting (an Aristophanic myth, we might say, resurrected within the metapsychology of ego psychology). [...] Yes, it is possible and necessary to say that the subject splits, but it does not follow from that formulation that the subject was a single whole or autonomous. For if the subject is both split and splitting, it is necessary to know what kind of split was inaugurative, what kind is undergone as a contingent psychic event, and, moreover, how those different levels of splitting relate to one another, if at all. (BUTLER, 2000, 288-289).

This reflection draws attention to the risks of the Lacanian lenses of falling into a self-sufficient notion of subjectivity. Hence, returning to Hegel's relationality, Butler reminds us that "the self is always already positioned outside itself", from which follows that the production of the unconscious is never a static turn, but a contingent and also concomitant stage with the very emergence of the subject itself (2000, 288). As part of a grid of discourses, the bodies are continually interpellated by signifiers that trigger the recognition process from where the splitting, as repression, is performed. Within this process, the functioning of the Real finally appears as a third register, which is related with the leftovers produced by such splitting moments. The Real, as mentioned, is precisely the "insubstantial loss that arises the moment we enter language" (KAPOOR, 2014, 1132), and which, therefore, "has not yet been symbolized, remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolization" (FINK, 1995, 25).

Ultimately, the function of the symbolic, for Lacan, is precisely the creation of a fantasy able to cover up that loss, i.e., to masquerade that inherent effect of the split. The symbolic, then, produces at the level of discourse a phantasmatic sense of self, whose alienation is not directed towards an ideological omission of a primordial and autonomous inner image, as the debates on false-consciousness would suggest. What we see is exactly the opposite, that is, the symbolic mobilizing a stable idea of self in order to cover up the very

inevitability of the decentered positions resulting from identifications. Symbolic identifications, in short, are a response to the unreachable and traumatic Real. And such response is possible due to the function of a signifier of cohesion, usually associated with the "Name-of-the-Father", as already mentioned above. Finally, the Lacanian notion of castration, that relies on a claim of a paternal figure as a metaphor, meets a similar function to that of the real father, that is, to start sealing the knot between the three registers of the psyche's experience.

4.2.2. The Real and the subject as breach

The register of the Real is intimately related with the process of inherent loss that marks recognition relationships. From that, we can infer that, if the self has to lose something to exist under the symbolic law, it does not mean that what is lost absolutely vanishes from subjectivation. It is, indeed, rejected from the signifying chain, where "the signifier takes the subject's place" through condensation (and alienating) processes (FINK, 1995, 41). On the other hand, according to Lacan, those reject elements are launched into the Real, where they assume a condition of *ex-sistence*.

Lacan reserves a separate term for it, borrowed from Heidegger: it "ex-sists." It exists outside of or apart from our reality. Obviously, insofar as we name and talk about the real and weave it into a theoretical discourse on language and the "time before the word," we draw it into language and thereby give a kind of existence to that which, in its very concept, has only ex-sistence (FINK, 1995, 25).

However, as already presented in the previous topic, that loss does not indicate the presence of an essential truth of the subject that, although rejected, should be target of recovering efforts. There is no recovering of the Real's elements, since they can never be symbolized. It is a fact, though, that Lacan mobilizes the concept of truth when debating the place of castration and the barred character of the subject. However, this should not be understood as an aprioristic system of certainty, as some of Derrida's problematizations about Lacan's ideas may imply. When broadly analyzed, we can observe in Lacan's production, especially the later ones, some passages where that idea is contested. In Science and Truth, for example, Lacan posits the forms through which the original repression turns false the very attempt of metalinguistic investments in

psychoanalysis. This means that it is impossible to speak the truth about the truth - i.e., "the lack of truth about the truth" (LACAN, 1989, 16).

Following that horizon, if we assume that the split condition erases any chances of a remembered origin or a stable presence, then we have to admit that when Lacan poses that 'truth speaks', it does not necessarily imply that it speaks the truth. In fact, for him, language is organized by a 'semi-said' kind of enunciation. Since the symbolic can never fully attain signification, it always dissimulates meaning, from which, to put it succinctly, derives the impossible character of the Real. In that sense, the truth should be read as having a fictional structure, which works as a cause rather than an answer. As cause, the truth of a subject is an element of contingency that "seems not to obey laws, remaining inexplicable from the standpoint of scientific knowledge"; a disruption disposition that, although unthinkable, is constantly target of explanatory aspirations, which however seems to be meant to fail (FINK, 1995, 140).

We are obviously affected by processes of which we have no science at all about. There are things which we do not know that we know, but there are also things we do not know that we do not know. Things that do not belong to any discourse, but that affect us nonetheless. In Lacan this is the work of truth, which has not yet been accomplished, in any form of knowledge, which is the basic form of discourse. (DUNKER, 2019, 99).

Therefore, under this kind of negative existence, the loss is capable of affecting, or *causing*, the circuits dynamics at the symbolic. With this in mind, we can finally ask: if the Real, as arena of signifier impossibility, cannot exist, but only *ex-sist*, how does it work as a source of signification? Or, putting it differently, if the register of the Real surrounds the signified that cannot be recognized, how does it work as an indispensable stage for subjectivation? According to Stavrakakis (1999), for sure, the Real in itself cannot fulfill any role of signification, or of representation, but its existence as absence can.

This lack constitutes something absolutely crucial for signification. This absence has to be compensated if signification is to acquire any coherence. It is the absence of the signified in its real dimension which causes the emergence of the transference of the signified. What emerges is the signified in its imaginary dimension. There is, however, one more dimension to this signifying play. This transference of the signified, the emergence of the imaginary signified can only be the result of the play between signifiers. This is how the

third dimension, the dimension of the symbolic, determines signification. (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 27).

For a better understanding, it is worth mentioning that, during its functioning, the signifying chain works by choosing a symbol over another. In other words, every decision about which signifier should get in the chain is ultimately a decision about which should be left out. Because of that, the signifying chain always produces a residue, and "we can thus say that the chain works around it, that is, that the chain forms by circumventing it, tracing thereby its contour. Lacan calls these excluded numbers or symbols the *caput mortuum* of the process" (FINK, 1995, 27). In a sense, the *caput mortuum* represents that thing that is killed by the chain, but which returns as a constitutive limit for it.

Therefore, briefly, we can say that the signifier's move is actually trapped within the demand to neutralize some symbols in certain positions, "being condemned to ceaselessly write something else or say something which keeps avoiding this point, as though this point were the truth of everything the chain produces as it beats around the bush" (FINK, 1995, 27). With this, we can start to grasp more deeply the Borromean knot mentioned before, in order to understand how each register depends upon the operations of the other. For example, it demonstrates that, while the imaginary sense of ego can only emerge if ratified by the symbolic, language itself depends on the operation of a limit that, despite the fact that it cannot exist inside discourse, it ultimately causes the movement of signification³⁷.

By the end of this course, the signifier, instead of representing the signified, actually operates an illusionary attempt to attain a content that is forever lost — or, as Žižek (2005, 33) proposes, "the subject always loses anew that which it never possessed, while it continues to succumb to the necessary illusion

³⁷ As Dunker explains, the function of causality coming from the structure of the real can prove its existence "even if they do not take place in the signifying articulation." (2019, 99). This condition of 'absence of being' brought by the concept of the real confronts the Aristotelian metaphysics, challenging the presuppositions about "the positivity of being, of 'being qua being'." (DUNKER, 2019, 106). Such critique of metaphysics, however, should not imply the absence of an ontology in Lacan. On the contrary, what Lacan presents is a negative ontology that breaks with the association between being and meaning, which has been responsible for false opposition between an "inside" and an "outside" of language. In that sense, Lacan confronts the idealistic presupposition that prevents us from debating ontology "outside" the realm of world and speech. Therefore, as Dunker asserts, "to say that we only have "access" to something in language does not imply that what exists, exists in language", that is why, "the notion of real as impossible does not aim to deontologize psychoanalysis, but to establish its ontology as a critique of the metaphysics of identity" (DUNKER, 2019, 100).

that 'it would otherwise possess it'". As pointed before, it is through the analysis of such knot that we realize how the Lacanian Subject gets lost between the signifying chain, revealing a certain cancellation or mortification of the subject by the signifier. In Lacan's words, "the coming into operation of the symbolic function in its most radical, absolute usage ends up abolishing the action of the individual so completely that by the same token it eliminates his tragic relation to the world" (LACAN, 1991, 168, *apud* ŽIŽEK, 2005, 40). Again, here it is the fragmented aspect of Lacanian Subject, which, after alienation and separation, is finally described as "a signifier in its relation to another signifier"³⁸ (LACAN, 1989, 23).

Lacan states that a signifier takes the subject's place, standing in for the subject who has now vanished. This subject has no other being than as a breach in discourse. The subject of the unconscious manifests itself in daily life as a fleeting irruption of something foreign or extraneous. Temporally speaking, the subject appears only as a pulsation, an occasional impulse or interruption that immediately dies away or is extinguished, "expressing itself," as it does, by means of the signifier (FINK, 1995, 41).

In a more precise view, Fink advocates that the psychoanalytic subject can assume two possible senses: "the subject as precipitate and the subject as breach" (1995, 69). The first case translates the subject as it appears in the chain of signifiers, being the sedimentation of meaning along the sequence of one signifier after another. In the second case, as described in the quotation above, the subject appears as "breach in the real as it establishes a link between two signifiers" (FINK, 1995, 69). In other words, there is a subject of castration, alienated by its entrance into the symbolic, and a second facet of it, related to a 'subject of the unconscious' that emerges by separation and later subjugation under the Other qua desire.

Therefore, aside from the split that corresponds to alienation during a process of submission to language, the Lacanian subject participates of a "second operation", called separation, which "involves the alienated subject's confrontation with the Other not as language this time, but as desire" (FINK, 1995, 50). The Lacanian subject, as we can see, finds itself in clear opposition to the

³⁸ Lacan calls attention to the fact that "the subject is to be as rigorously distinguished from the biological individual as from any psychological evolution subsumable under the subject of understanding". (LACAN, 1989, 23)

philosophical assumption of a sovereign self. The unconscious facet of subjectivation, as pointed by Fink, arrives at political theory circuits disrupting all Cartesian equalization between ego and subjectivity:

Such a one-dimensional self [Descartes's subject] believes that it is the author of its own ideas and thus has no qualms about affirming "I think." This Cartesian subject is characterized by what Lacan calls "false being" (Seminar XV), and this false being manifests itself every time an analysand says: "I'm the kind of person who's independent and free-thinking" (FINK, 1956, 43)

In summary, the famous definition of Lacan of a fragmented subject results from the boundary that circles, and constitutes, the very knot between the registers. Incapable of attaining the whole human signification, language necessarily creates some leftovers that cannot be symbolized, but which keep returning and stressing those limits. Because of that, the body that comes to being through language is no longer in direct contact with its drives that, in part, have to be re-inscribed into the unconscious. From the moment it is symbolized, the body becomes a foreign body, split after the identification with the word and norms. "The body is subdued; 'the letter kills' the body" (FINK, 1995, 12).

Regarding that statement, it is worth mentioning that, until 1956, Lacan's idea of the letter "is not distinguished from the signifier, words, or language" (FINK, 1995, 24), all of which being coetaneous terms used to confirm this death-drive of the signifier. Thus, the symbolized body is always a foreign body, because it is "never completely aware of itself" (RUNIONS, 2001, 61), being forever condemned to inhabit a transitory and temporary set of meanings³⁹. This conclusion leads us to another important inference: that the subject does not occupy a space of prior consciousness, but instead, it appears as a precarious place of absence that is overwritten by a kind of signifier's structure.

By reversing the common philosophical (Cartesian) emphasis on the subject representing itself via the medium of language, and by foregrounding the signifier as that which actively represents (by which we should read 'stands in for') the subject, Lacan implies that the space of the psyche, indeed of the being of the subject as psychoanalysis conceives it, is derivative of the exogamous structures of signification, not the intentionality of a prior consciousness. (EYERS, 2012, 74).

³⁹ According to Evers (2012, 52) the materiality of the signifier, that guarantees meaning, is not "a symptom of the metaphysics of presence but, rather, a symptom of the absence of the possibility of such a presence".

Such "exogamous structures of signification", which operate the submersion and separation of the subject under/from the signifier, draw our attention to how Lacan theorizes power. That structure has a double logic force, and because of that, it works through aporetic strategies: that is, by demanding linguistic mediation as a condition for the raising of the subject, such "structure signification" sets the very contours that both authorize and threaten its own borders. As well put by Stavrakakis (1999, 28), "the subject is petrified and alienated exactly in the place where it seeks the birth of itself". Such requirement of subordination to the laws of language marks what Stavrakakis (1999, 20) identifies "as a trace of the ineliminable act of power at the root of the formation of subjectivity".

Similar to Butler's approach, Stavrakakis calls our attention to the ways that the symbolic order implicates a kind of passionate attachment, to use Butler's terminology, which finally authorizes the subject as an effect of language. However, in Stavrakakis' reading of Lacan (1999, 20) "it is the signifier that is revealed as the locus of this power forming the subject [...] it is the Name-of-the-Father, the symbolic and not the real father, who is the agent of this power, the agent of symbolic Law". This is not a universal power, though, that highlights the need for an understanding focused on the multiple articulations that the "naming father" can present in face of the other registers. Moreover, it is equally important to realize that it is possible to think about other organizing signifiers that can dislocate and dissimulate the paternal metaphor, producing then different positionalities in relation to the Other. With this in mind, we must question what happens when the subject does not encounter a name in the symbolic. Or, in other words, what happens when the name-of-the-father is no longer anything but semblance?

Each discourse, as Lacan explains, has its own mainspring. The alienating functioning of the paternal signifier, for instance, is generally related to the discourse of the Master, that is one of the four discursive logics that Lacan presents. So, despite the fact that every subject experiences life through all the three registers, which, as Lacan asserts, are tied as a knot, my argumentation assumes that, depending on the relation to the Other, that knot can be sewn up differently. That happens because subjects move through a grid of discourses, in a

way that each network articulates and directs different possibilities of re-writing, considering the spaces for dislocation, condensation, and separation that their signifying chains admit. That is why, to understand the formation of the subaltern position, we have to be engaged with an understanding of how those three registers come to be intertwined in such contexts.

Regarding this, I now turn my attention to the colonial power and its tendency to operate through the master's discourse functioning. Drawing on this object, I argue that, in the case of the subaltern, the knot articulation goes through the notion of foreclosure, which blocks the fixation function of the naming father and explains a paradoxical movement of signification in relation to the subaltern. In order to sustain my argumentation, the next section is dedicated to an engagement with the Lacanian theory of forclusion. Such conceptualization has been generally related with the study of psychosis; however, it is not my attempt to make a clinical mobilization of it, let alone to suggest that the subaltern conforms a kind of psychotic subjectivity. That would be too narrow a use for the process of forclusion, which, as I see, can actually function as a conceptual tool to comprehend a specific articulation between the three registers, working as a base to open the Lacanian approach to address different processes of identification.

4.3. The Subaltern Subject and the course of recognition

From a Lacanian perspective, every language involves an alterity that flows through discourse. Because of that, every attempt to capture a sense of self is crossed by other people's desire and fantasy - "the I is an Other", Lacan asserts. In the case of colonialism, the level of imposition of the rules seems more profound, considering the radical presence of imperialist forces. In this sense, if approached by the global capitalism debate, specifically "in the wake of European imperial domination", the political reading of Lacan's symbolic order can also gain a geopolitical specification: "[Implicit in Žižek's argument is that] European symbolic order is the *de facto* global symbolic order, so that the postcolonial subject in the global North as much as the South has no choice but to work with it" (KAPOOR, 2018, 7). Therefore, in general terms, I take 'Language' and 'Other' as coterminous terms, both related with the political phenomenon of colonial rule, or hegemonic/elite discourse.

The idea is to understand how the circuit of recognition, in Lacanian terms, assumes a particular development in the case of disenfranchised people under coloniality. As I advocate, the mainspring of colonial discourse seems to fail the task of reinscribing the repressed signified into the symbolic, causing an important part of subaltern difference to remain as foreclosure, being thus enabled to make a return through language. My argument claims that, in some contexts, the colonial discourse is incapable of promoting castration on the subaltern signifiers, i.e., it cannot recognize the subaltern difference throughout symbolic mechanisms, and as a result, that discourse ends up blocking the chances of strategies of meaning dislocation, as well as the incorporation of subaltern desires into fantasy. From this perspective, we can explain both Spivak's reading of the subaltern position as some sort of aporetic disappearance, as well as Guha's prescription of a failure of ideological misrecognition, that poses the subaltern as a point that remains obliquely approached by the hegemonic discourse.

Following the debate on interpellation, I propose to read the colonial discourse as a logic that cannot provide an organizing signifier (the paternal metaphor) around which the meanings of subalternity could enjoy their transfer to a signifier-in-relation⁴⁰. Hence, the subaltern subject has left interpellation without the ability to bind and orient meaning, as expected from an individual who "successfully negotiate[s] Symbolic castration" (EYERS, 2012, 16). Not being killed by language (that is, not being castrated) also implies not being able to compose *reality*, as that dimension which, diverging from the Real, involves all that "is named by language and can thus be thought and talked about" (FINK, 1956, 25). Therefore, based on hegemonic discourses, the subaltern embodies a position within which one can only exist as that second face of the Lacanian subject described by Fink, which operates as a breach.

In part, my argumentation depends on the Lacanian contestation of a Cartesian subject, and the resulting dissociation between subjectivity and

⁴⁰ Eyer (2012, 38) develops a typology to condense the plurality of terms that Lacan deploys to debate language, namely 'signifier-in-relation' and 'signifier-in-isolation'. According to him, "these concepts are intended to condense Lacan's multifarious terms relating to language into their most pertinent, opposing characteristics: the signifier-in-relation designates the signifier as it exists negatively, defined purely by relation to other signifiers and producing meaning as the result of its perpetual displacement along the axes of metaphor and metonymy, while the signifier-in-isolation designates the signifier as Real, isolated in its material element away from the networks of relations that render it conducive to meaning" (EYERS, 2012, 38).

consciousness. Through this scheme, I claim, we can find ways to understand the experiences of those bodies that enter social realms in a precarious way, and whose lack of consistent meaning is manipulated by the hegemonic proxies. Resuming the discussion of the previous chapter, I justify this engagement with Lacan's theory, particularly with the concept of the Real, considering its ability to provide instruments for an investigation of interpellation that does not abstain from dealing with those subjects that cannot be misrecognized along the terms of linguistic domains. Thus, in the present section, I further this argument by exploring its relation to important conceptual contributions of Lacan: the *objet a*, *fantasy*, and *foreclosure*, all operations related to the register of the Real.

As discussed in the previous section, according to Eysers, the tension coming from imaginary misrecognitions forms a basis for what Lacan, in his later works, called the *Real*. In his words, "the vicissitudes of primary narcissism, that is to say, persist even for those subjects who successfully negotiate Symbolic castration, and the antagonism proper to the Imaginary persists within Lacan's wider metapsychology as the Real" (EYERS, 2012, 16). Therefore, as we can see, in his reading of Lacan, Eysers (2012) perceives a conceptual genealogy between the specular and misrecognized identifications of the self and the later theorization about the Real. Assuming Eysers' argument, I establish a relation between failed subaltern recognition and its limited symbolization that constrains the phantasmatic objectification and forces an ex-sistence as Real.

The domain of the Real, as previously described, constitutes that amount of signified "before" the word, i.e., before the discursive socialization that trains behavior and produces compliance between the subject and the Other. It is important to note, however, that as opposed to what it may suggest, the Real does not imply a linear temporality, so "the real need not be understood as merely before the letter, in the sense of disappearing altogether once a child has assimilated language" (FINK, 1995, 25). Between the symbolic and the Real relies, above all, a reciprocal affection. So, if the former bars the latter, overwriting it, the other way around is also true: the Real does not stop stressing the limits of the symbolic, despite the linguistic formation of the child. According to Fink's hypothesis, the Real assumes two possible levels for Lacan:

- (1) a real before the letter, that is, a presymbolic real, which, in the final analysis, is but our own hypothesis (R1), and (2) a real after the

letter which is characterized by impasses and impossibilities due to the relations among the elements of the symbolic order itself (R2), that is, which is generated by the symbolic. (FINK, 1995, 27).

Under this horizon, my reading of the subaltern position is based upon that second level of the Real, as described above. This *second-order* Real accounts for the limits within the very chain, around which the symbolic is forced to circle, yet never able to pin down such impossibilities. It appears as contradictions and aporias that interrupt the automatic functioning of the signifying chain, yet working as its *cause*⁴¹. As also mentioned in the previous topic, Lacan associates the idea of cause with the operations of the Real, which involves the act of interruption. More precisely, we could say that the Real, as cause, acts by breaking the false sense of self-sustained by linguistic performances. Hence, unlike the imaginary and the symbolic, which are usually related with attempts of identity construction, the Real is the domain where the subject experiences itself as lack, and then, where it comes to be a split and decentralized phenomenon.

According to Žižek, Lacan turns to Hegel to find elements for his conceptualization about the Real, which is, *par excellence*, a kind of negative ontological condition inherent to the symbolic order, and hence to the construction of political reality, as well. However, as I see it, this concept does not entail a "constitutive outside", neither is it a position of identity-in-difference; the Real, for Lacan, configures an ontological condition of dis-identification. This means that the impossible sense of recognition paves the path for a necessary return of this content through non-linguistic forms. Among the regular manifestations of such return, the *objet a* assumes a central position in Lacan's theory. Described as the *cause of desire*, the *objet a* is related to that leftover of the signifying chain, although it now involves a relation with the Other as desire.

According to Lacan, while the signifying chain subjugates the subject, sliding it under the signifier, it also produces an object. This happens because the process of alienation comes along with a second operation, the separation, which,

⁴¹ This idea of *cause* comprises a central reference in Lacan's theorization. Different from most positivist science, focused on the search for *causality* as potential (structural) laws, Lacan's investigation announces an interest in precisely the opposite: that is, on what interrupts the automatic functioning of reality. Therefore, as Fink explains (1995), the Lacanian definition of *cause* prescribes that thing that seems to resist order, or, in a sense, that which resists explanation from a rationale standpoint.

as the former, involves a subject negotiation with the Other, yet no longer as language, but as desire (FINK, 1995, 50). Thus, the vanished subject, lost between the chains through *condensation*, experiences a process of separation, which involves a *dislocation* of meaning through a metonymy of desire into the signifier. To put it simply, ‘objet a’ manifests an external appearance of the desires of the subject that had been repressed and launched in the unconscious. In other words, it manifests a mode of representation of the repressed signifier based on a logic of objectification.

For Lacan, the self-recognition that was at the heart of the Hegelian dialectic is actually based on a fundamental misrecognition or *méconnaissance*. That is, one only becomes ‘self-conscious’ through misperceiving the other’s desire, rather than recognizing oneself in it. In other words, one’s desire is never desire for oneself – or never a desire to be mirrored in the desire of the other – but rather, it is a desire for something else, something beyond this. That is why desire is always confronted with an abyss – an ultimate emptiness – which can be overcome only in death. However, rather than being confronted with the impossibility of one’s desire, one objectivizes it – that is, one invents an external impediment to it that functions as an excuse for it not being realized (NEWMAN, 2004, 7).

The objectivation of the impossible desire into an externalized place explains the process that Lacan described as a metonymic logic. ‘Objet a’ replaces the abyss caused by the process of subject formation, that is, it appears as a part that represents the unreachable whole, and whose function is precisely to disguise the hiatus, the “internal deadlock of desire itself” (NEWMAN, 2004, 7). In this sense, ‘objet a’ is a remainder of the subject’s own impossible jouissance. That is why, according to Lacan (1970, 189), “it is necessary to find the subject as a lost object. More precisely this lost object is the support of the subject and in many cases is a more abject thing than you may care to consider”. Such lost object, later called ‘objet a’, is one of the effects of interpellation, although not debated either by Althusser or Butler. However, such effect is quite important, since it is responsible for allowing the splitting of the subject at the economy of pleasure, which then opens subjectivation to non-linguistic moments of language.

Although objet a is not prediscursive in the sense that it does not precede language, it also is not a discursive effect in quite the way that rhetoricalism understands the subject and his or her sexuality as discursive effects. Objet a links the body to language and therefore is crucial for conceptualizing rhetoric, which has a demonstrable effect on bodies. (DEAN, 2000, 197)

As a bridge between language and unconscious, 'objet a' does not involve operations in the arena of meaning, although it is fundamentally implicated in Language. 'Objet a' is the effect of the confrontation with the Other qua desire and, because of that, it triggers a final series of recognition mechanisms.

If I have said that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other (with a capital O), it is in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is bound up with the desire for recognition. In other words this other is the Other that even my lie invokes as a guarantor of the truth in which it subsists (LACAN, 2005, 130)

In this sense, the emergence of 'objet a' seals the course of recognition within a Lacanian perspective. This happens because, once confronted with the limits of the symbolic, that cannot symbolize its wholeness, the interpellated subject is finally capable to recognize that the lack that inhabits itself also inhabits the Other. From this ascertainment emerges a process of identification between the split subject and the Other's lack, which opens the path for a subjectification of the Other's desire into a phantasmatic object.

[...] if the Other is not fractured, if it is a complete array, the only possible relationship of the subject to the structure is that of total alienation, of a subjection without remainder; but the lack in the Other means that there is a remainder, a non-integratable residuum in the Other, object a, and the subject is able to avoid total alienation only insofar as it posits itself as the correlative of this remainder (ŽIZEK, 2005, 13)

This kind of teleological horizon was read for some analysts as a Hegelian inheritance within Lacan's reflections. Following Hegel's idea of relationality, according to which "self-recognition is based on recognition by the other", then what initiates as a paradoxical ambiguity in social relation could dialectically gain a potential reversal if "both the master and slave recognize themselves in each other" (NEWMAN, 2004, 7). However, as explained by Žižek (2005), the postulation of a barred Other does not entail so easily the category of a dialectical "synthesis".

On one hand, the barred Other seems to reveal "precisely the constitutive impossibility of an Absolute Knowledge, of the achievement of symbolic realization, because there is a void, a lack of the signifier [*un manque du signifiant*] that accompanies the movement of symbolization" (Žižek, 2005, 14).

On the other hand, Žižek invites us to leave the perspective that "usually understands Absolute Knowledge as the fantasy of a full discourse, without fault or discord, the fantasy of an Identity inclusive of all divisions", replacing it by a notion of Absolute Knowledge as "the exact opposite of this" (ZIZEK, 2005, 33). According to him, filling the lack is not the function of a possible dialectical recovering, which should be much more related with the transference of such lack to the Other.

Through this lens, the very idea of reconciliation is reverted, so much so that it starts to imply a "de-alienation" condition, which does not consist of the realization about a finished identity, but of the awareness about that inherent aspect of the lost. To realize that the object has not been lost, since it is just a replacer of a lost that was there "from the beginning" then the synthesis would not involve an overcoming of the emptiness but one that does not follow a linear association resignification of the thesis that emerges from its own failure (ZIZEK, 2005, 33). For Žižek, the Hegelian logic does not tell us about the need for overcoming the impasse, but how this impasse turns out to be the solution itself. In summary, it is only by changing such perspective on the meaning of the ultimate end of dialects that Žižek manages a possible path to assume a Hegelian reading of Lacan (ZIZEK, 2005).

What is made clear with this requirement of renewed interpretation presented by Žižek is the fact that the Lacanian system could never assume the suppression of the barred condition as its horizon. In this perspective, the course of recognition does not target the filling of the lack with a presence, either of the object or of the subject itself. The deadlock is not to be overcome, but to be resignified as its own solution. Thus, the function of the Real's residue, which works as a trigger for the process of separation between the subject and the (m)Other's desire (*le objet petit a*), triggers the persistent attempt to repair the lost unity. Such attempt leads to the creation of a fantasy that stands in for the lack. Fantasy plays with the 'desire of the lost' to create 'objet a', which stands in for the experiences that cannot inhabit images or discourses. Then, "through fantasy, this little piece of the Real is elevated to the position of pure signifier or *point de capiton*, standing in for the whole lack (RUNIONS, 2001, 79).

'pure signifier', a master signifier with no signified, the signifier of a lack in the Other, the signifier whose signified does not exist because it is a 'symbol only of an absence'. In this sense, the *point de capiton*

represents the lack, giving meaning and unity to floating signifiers". (RUNIONS, 2001, 64).

For that reason, the approach to fantasy is taken as a key to understand the implication among the three registers, especially when it comes to terms with identification. In that sense, as Žižek asserts (2007, 47), "fantasy provides an answer to the enigma of the Other's desire". Following this, we could also infer that 'objet a' is the response given by the psyche's formation when the Other interpellates the subject, asking: "What do you want from me?". The tricky point behind this question is that, in the last instance, it ends up opening the path for the recognition of the subject's own desire. According to Žižek (2007, 43), "for this reason, Lacan's *Che vuoi?* does not simply ask: 'What do you want?' but rather: 'What's bugging you? What is it in you that makes you so unbearable not only for us, but also for yourself, that you yourself obviously do not control?'".

Therefore, basically, once confronted with its own fragmented nature, the subject embraces ideology as a way to get in contact with misrecognized images trained to cover the deadlock of political life.

More specifically, it is through the production of fantasy objects that master signifiers are elevated so that they are able to 'pin down' the subject. Thus for Žižek, ideology is the fantasy-construction which masks this troubling 'hard kernel of the Real' and which structures social reality around it. We can only gain access to this traumatic element through ideology - ideology is, in a sense, a support for the Real, but hides its functioning as such. It is the involved process of fantasy and desire in ideological identification that facilitates ideological (mis)recognition (RUNIONS, 2001, 67).

On the other hand, every time the trace of the Real finds breaches within such ideology it mobilizes in the subject a recovery of experience that accompanies an urgency to recognize the core of its own lacking desires. Finally, such process involves what Lacan calls *la traversée du fantasme*, which configures the confrontation of the 'pure desire' that inhabits the Real, and which is associated with death drives. The association of this concept with the political experience of resistance by the subaltern is the ultimate goal of this analysis, considering that "the traversing of fantasy involves the subject's assumption of a new position with respect to the Other as language and the Other as desire" (FINK, 1995, 62).

For Lacan, when the subject gets to that point (*la traversée*) the circuit of recognition seems to achieve its apex. Thus, as we can imagine, during this course of recognition, demarcated by various stages, there are many potential points for mishaps. For example, what if the castrated signifier could not return to the symbolic by means of fantasy? In other words, what would happen if the lost signified keeps ex-sisting as foreclosure? The immediate implication of such questions is the assumption of a scheme where the signifier is in a state of isolation, prevented from constructing relations with other signifiers, and thus unable to designate a binding meaning by its repetitive operations of metaphor and metonymy. In that state, due to the inability to fixate a sense of consistency, the discourse is structured by floating signifiers, and the desire, repudiated towards the Real, cannot negotiate its place between identification/distinction in order to authorize its later entrance in the ultimate moment of recognition as reciprocity.

To put it succinctly, the subject within that position cannot fulfill the course of (mis)recognition, being in a condition of radical difference in relation to the Other. In such context, the idea of difference assumes the aspect of incommensurability, and involves a failure of all identity prospects. This is a specific form to approach the idea of difference in Lacan's work, somewhat distancing from its application on the debate at the level of imaginary performances of resemblance. When in the imaginary domain, recognition is correlated with processes of identification/distinction, where identity is a function of dyadic logics (Either/or). On the other hand, when surrounded by the Real, difference engenders a condition of non-identical, an ontological space of impossible recognition (Neither/nor). I follow such investigation in the next topic, where I engage my argument with Bhabha's theory.

With the study of this incommensurable ex-sistence, my interest is to finally re-read subaltern silence. When debating enunciation, Lacan proposes a distinction between "saying" (*dire*) and "said" (*dit*). The first one, *dire*, is an act located in the domain of fantasy, involving the very practice of enunciation; the second term, in turn, is related to the statement and comes from the arena of the impossible Real. As a logical implication, we can assume that there is a type of 'silence' that emerges from the domain of "said" without requiring an absence of

voice. It is a silence that does not stop speaking (in terms of "saying"), but whose signification is constantly inscribed as an impasse of symbolization.

With truth thus defined in terms of "saying" (*dire*) and "said" (*dit*) it comes as no surprise to find Lacan characterize the impossibility of the real as a matter of "*l'inter-dit*". The real is that which is "prohibited" (*interdit*), but also that which "is said between the words, between the lines" (S 20, 108.). (LEE, 1991, 172).

This kind of spoken silence is possible since those silencing mechanisms operate based on recognition, thus affecting more the structures of meaning (signified) than of enunciation (signifier). In this sense, we have a discourse that establishes its signifying chain (a signifier after another) but never ceases to have its attempts of consolidating meaning disrupted by paradox and inconsistency. Therefore, we could propose that, in the sphere of "saying", colonial discourses keep speaking *for* or *through* the subaltern, but in the domain of "said" it remains only engaging unformalized communication. This distinction between saying and said can be correlated with other Lacanian duos, such as "speaking-body" and "subject-symptom". These pairs help us to realize how the Lacanian Subject is split between two different economies, the 'economy of discourse and domination' and the 'economy of desire and pleasure'.

Each of those economies have different impacts upon subjectivity, producing both, the subject as ego (the castrated subject) and the subject as object (the subject of desire). This idea is in dialogue with Dean's argument from chapter three, according to which Lacan's approach to subjectivation opens our analysis to see how interpellation can produce speaking-beings, at the level of discourse, with silenced bodies, at the level of desire. Hence, to advance such explanation, in the next topic I explore the correlation between the colonial power and the Lacanian debate on social discourse. With this focus, my basic aim is to investigate in detail the interpretative connections between the position of the subaltern and the Lacanian theory of foreclosure.

4.4. Colonial discourse, foreclosure, and paradox

Lacan formalizes his concept of foreclosure in the fifth Seminar, when he approaches the clinical structure of psychosis. According to him, from the different relations to the Other derives a set of psyche formations, wherein

neurosis and psychosis occupy distinct places. So, if "neurosis is predicated on the repression of a signifier or chain of signifiers, psychosis represents a more radical rejection or, to use the term Lacan uses throughout his Seminar, foreclosure" (EYERS, 2012, 39). This element which is rejected in psychosis is a kind of "third term", named as the paternal signifier, or the name-of-the-father, whose function is to break up "the dyad of Imaginary identification", so that "the psychotic has no such chance of Symbolic mediation" (EYERS, 2012, 39). Hence, the failure of that term, as we will see, expresses a more profound barrier for entering the symbolic.

Prior to all symbolisation – this priority is not temporal but logical – there is, as the psychoses demonstrate, a stage at which it is possible for a portion of symbolisation not to take place. This initial stage precedes the entire neurotic dialectic, which is due to the fact that neurosis is articulated speech, in so far as the repressed and the return of the repressed are one and the same thing. It can thus happen that something primordial regarding the subject's being does not enter into symbolisation and is not repressed, but rejected⁴² (LACAN, 1993, 81)

Hence, due to the context of the fifth Seminar, it became common to mobilize the notion of foreclosure together with investigations on psychosis. However, Lacan himself had used such idea to describe phenomena that extrapolate such clinical vocabulaire. For example, in his text "Science and Truth", Lacan prescribes the foreclosure of the truth in science, from which he debates its inscription in the unconscious. Similarly, my attempt is to mobilize the concept of foreclosure disconnected from its use in clinical structural analysis. In this sense, I am more focused on the logical implication of Lacan's argument: if the paternal signifier institutes the law of symbolization, the law that installs the castrated subject, then, when rejected, changes the position of the subject in relation to the Other. Specifically, without the paternal law, "only the dyadic logic of the Imaginary can prevail" and then the metonymy of desire in the signifier is limited (EYERS, 2012, 42).

Here, my aim is to read the subaltern as a manifestation of such altered position catalyzed by a specific type of negation, the foreclosure, and then to link it with particular consequences on the modes of representations. Before we get

⁴² According to Fink, the idea of 'rejection' was the first term Lacan adopted to replace Freud's notion of "*Verwerfung*". With time, Lacan opted for the translation as "forclusion"/ "foreclosure".

there, it is worth remembering that the relation of the subject to the Other is surrounded by the symbolic and the type of discourse it engenders. In "The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis", Lacan reflects upon the *university discourse* and the form by which rational knowledge seems to replace the historical authority of the master's will. Throughout this topic, I follow Thakur's (2012) reading about the correlation between the global hegemonic discourse, successor of the colonial period, and the university discourse, as the contemporary mechanism working in the service of the master's signifier.

What Lacan terms the Master's discourse, that is, discourse as it served the rule of supreme kings, can be read as the discourse of old colonialism. By contrast, the subsequent form of discourse, university discourse, characterizes the shift in European history and *realpolitik* towards science, reason, and democracy. It is a movement from the tyranny of absolutist regimes to that of science and knowledge, and is indicative of the shift in political economy from feudalism to capitalism. In the 'regime' of this discourse, the position of the supreme authority is occupied by knowledge as a neutral force and as founded on rational, objective authority, which, in turn, defines it both historically as well as conceptually (THAKUR, 2012, 251-252).

Through these lenses, the colonial discourse is taken as a set of discursive scenes that assume a 'knowledge-value' and produce the subaltern as a position that, yet presented as entirely knowable, is not fully visible — except as a shadow. As mentioned before, the construction of such positionalities, or the operation of identification and symbolic organization depends on mechanisms of negation — the discourse always leaves something behind. For Lacan, such 'fault' in language can assume three modulations: repression (*Verdrängung*), disavowal/denial (*Verleugnung*), or rejection/repudiation (*Verwerfung*)⁴³. Each of these moves establishes specific confrontations with the Other that, in turn, foresee specific forms of reinscription of the oppressed/denied/reject signifier into the symbolic. Thus, regarding such impact on the signifier return, those modulations help us to understand the different modes of representation that emerge from interpellation.

We can have a better understanding of such debate by relating it with Bhabha's writings. In his reflections on the Question of Other, Bhabha analyzes the colonial discourse through the second modulation, that is, as *a denial* of difference. Under this perspective, Bhabha reads the return of the oppressed

⁴³ The expressions *Verdrängung*, *Verleugnung*, and *Verwerfung* were first proposed by Freud, who related them with the primary psyche structures, respectively known as neurosis, perversion, and psychosis. These terminologies designate three different forms of negation.

subject (into language) as stereotype, which he correlates with fetishist modes of representation. Such theoretical inference follows Lacan's statement about *Verleugnung* that describes a subject whose refusal to accept the primary sexual difference results in the creation of fetishism. Therefore, it is the type of negation, manifested as refusal, that explains the emergence of fetishist logic of representation. Such model is characterized by an illusionary function that seeks to masquerade (through fetish) the refused difference as a path to restore the lost sense of wholeness. Similarly, Bhabha places the colonial subject (as both colonizer and colonized) at that point of imaginary identification, linking their denied "recognition of difference" with the demand for a stereotypic fixation of meaning.

In psychoanalysis, fetishism is a product of the castrated moment and then it is in direct relation with the imaginary stage. It involves, like fantasy, a repetitive attempt to masquerade the split of the subject in order to reinscribe the illusionary sense of origin, or of presence, that has been lost during the process of alienation/separation. Drawing on this perspective, Bhabha proposes that colonial stereotype operates that same sense of wholeness, which responds to the subject desire for achieving an ideal-ego. However, since the threat of the lack never really goes away, the stereotype assumes a phantasmatic feature, playing its function through fantasy. Hence, the metaphorization of the lack attaches the subject to a fantasy of narcissistic fixation that consolidates the specular images between the signifiers. That is how, in colonial discourses, the identity of the colonized becomes an uncontested sign of negative difference wherein the signifiers of skin/culture/gender cannot circulate beyond the deprecating typologies. As Bhabha clarifies: "For the stereotype impedes the circulation and articulation of the signifier of 'race' as anything other than its fixity as racism" (1994, 75).

In Bhabha's interpretation, the colonial subject is inscribed both in an economy of discourse and power, and in an economy of desire and pleasure. In the first, the colonial being is overwritten through fetishistic modes of representation, in as much that the colonial power can block any "form of negation which gives access to the recognition of difference" (BHABHA, 1994, 75). In the second economy, that of pleasure, the body is marked by a specular appeal for being seen. The desire for identification with an ideal-ego ("that is

white and whole") places the pleasure register along with narcissistic recognition, so the very "being seen" becomes the object of desire. According to Bhabha (1994, 76), this "'consent' in objectification" reveals the "ambivalence on which the stereotype turns and illustrates that crucial bind of pleasure and power that Foucault asserts". Thus, from such bind, the construction of colonial discourse became "a complex articulation of the tropes of fetishism — metaphor and metonymy — and the forms of narcissistic and aggressive identification available to the Imaginary" (BHABHA, 1994, 77).

The colonial subject, following these terms, translates a body whose positionalities are embedded in strategies of projection, introjection, displacement, negation, and so on. It is an overwritten body, a foreign body. However, as I have been mentioning since the last chapter, if we take interpellation as a plural and heterogeneous phenomenon, then, depending on the systems under which the subject is socialized, the subaltern body can also experience moments where colonial power does not involve a denial of difference, but a rejection of it. The main effect of such analytical turn is to open our investigation to moments where the Real does not return through fetishism, but as symptom. To understand that, Bhabha's reflection on one of the three possible manifestations of "negation" leads us to conclude about other dimensions of subaltern manifestation. Therefore, taking another direction, my investigation on the subaltern does not call attention to bodies under the operation of narcissistic fixation, but rather, it looks for those who, prevented from accessing an organizing signifier, cannot negotiate a place in the symbolic, even if through stereotype.

In that sense, Bhabha represents a theoretical step that I claim to be essential to the analysis of the subaltern formation. Such step involves the consideration of the two dimensions within which, according to Lacan, the subject is produced: the economy of discourse and the economy of pleasure⁴⁴. What I claim here is that there are times, especially in the case of the subaltern, where those economies are articulated through the mechanisms of foreclosure. In the last chapter, I bring an empirical example of such situation in order to demonstrate

⁴⁴ In Lacan's theory, the first economy, imbricated in the imaginary and symbolic operations, produces the speaking being whose existence relies on linguistic apparatus. The second, related with the real, engenders the speaking body.

how the attempt to grasp some sort of subaltern "voice" has to assume this broader perspective that includes the return as symptom.

This alteration of typology of negation affects the role that "difference" plays in the definition of modes of representation within colonial discourse. According to Freud, the *Verleugnung* engenders both a recognition and a refusal of difference. In that sense, the castrated subject, aware of its lack, enters a state of denial, desiring to forget the knowledge of the split generated by the contact with sexual difference. Consequently, the subject starts to look for a substitute to the originary recognition, finding in fetish a solution to its desire to restore an illusionary condition of *not-knowing*. In Bhabha's approach, since the first acceptance of difference is followed by a retreat, then such position always appears in a state of ambivalence in relation to the colonial discourse. That explains why the *identification with difference*⁴⁵ has to assume a phantasmatic feature, and why, for Bhabha, the political challenge of contestation is placed in the dislocation of the signifiers of race/sex/etc beyond the narcissistic fixation.

The *Verwerfung*, on the other hand, is defined by Freud as a typology of negation that ends up imprisoning the subject between two poles of response in relation to difference: acceptance and refusal. Thus, in this case, the difference is simultaneously affirmed and denied. As a result, we can infer that there are moments when colonial difference, instead of being masqueraded by stereotype, seems to be put in suspension. From this point, such difference cannot reach any kind of recognition or fixation; as a matter of fact, it is situated in a (non)space of dis-identification, whose elements are repeatedly not inscribed in the symbolic. Thus, when situated as Real, the colonial difference does not fight for imaginary performances of resemblance, since it embraces aspects of incommensurability. Indeed, the foreclosure, as a kind of theory of recognition, points out to a path of failure of identification, rather than a failure of differentiation, as seems to be the case of Bhabha's scheme.

With this, the locus of subaltern resistance is amplified, not being restricted to struggles for recognition in terms of symbolic or imaginary operations. Because of that, instead of looking for strategies of imaginary fixation,

⁴⁵ Bhabha seems to take the register of the real as a coetaneous term for cultural difference, which supports his further substitution of the Lacanians notion of *identification with lack* for the proposal of an *identification with difference* (RUNIONS, 2001).

closely related with the *denial* of difference, I am more interested in situations where the colonial discourse operates negation as *foreclosure* and leads us to modes of representation boosted by other tropes, which, in the sphere of discourse, are no longer related with fetish. In its place, we can search for situations of momentaneous paradoxes and ironies, as to some degree, the case of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri in Spivak analysis seems to exemplify. As I see it, along the axes of such linguistic tropes, we can find the operation of subaltern disappearance, as well as its alternative strategies of returning in/to the colonial discourse.

Again, in order to make this move, it is important to point out that, similar to Bhabha and his interpretation of Fanon, my reading also places the "recognition of the lack" at the center of colonial strategies of power and desire. However, while Bhabha reads the colonial subject as a position to which such recognition is denied (*Verleugnung*), resulting in its return as fetish, I propose to see the subaltern as a positionality characterized by a *repudiation* (*Verwerfung*) of that condition, which forces its return as Real. Therefore, on one hand, when written in the economy of discourse and domination, the elements under *Verwerfung* are trapped between the dyadic positions of the narcissistic moment, then being unable to fixate meanings, even if through fetish. Consequently, the colonial discourse plays with subaltern representation at both places simultaneously.

Let us remember of Spivak's debate on the case of Bhuvanewari's death, which involved a series of discursive dissimulations through which the female subaltern emerges both as a free-willing subject and as a victim: "The women wanted to die"; "White men are saving brown women from brown men". Through this lenses, we can read Spivak's diagnosis of the colonial discourse as an articulation of strategies that suspends the subaltern position "between subject (law) and object-of-knowledge (repression)" (2010, 61). Here, law and repression translate the inscription of the subject in two simultaneous (and sometimes conflictual) registers: the economy of power and discourse, and the economy of pleasure. As mentioned, through the operations of these two spheres the split subject is produced. Hence, in the economy of discourse associated with imaginary and symbolic, the subject is produced as a speaking being, while in the economy of pleasure it assumes a formation as a speaking body.

Those two dimensions produce two types of *jouissance*: one of the speech, linked with sublimation, and one of the body, linked with symptom. Therefore, even if barred in the sphere of identification, the subaltern remains ex-sisting as a speaking body that can affect through the mobilization of affections. Drawing on these assumptions, I argue that, in situations of foreclosure, the subaltern is inscribed as paradox in the discursive economy, and as pure desire at the level of pleasure. If we think about the experience of the hyper-exploited people of Latin America, as I am going to analyze in the last chapter, it seems that, within the domain of discourse, every time s/he is interpellated, the voice that responds is not of its own, but the voice of the Other, which emerges like an echo repeating whatever meaning launched on the subaltern position of emptiness. On the other hand, in the economy of pleasure and desire, the forclusive signifier is able to mobilize desire, although it cannot surpass the limits of its pure state: that is, the *desire to die* confined in melancholy or anguish.

Therefore, with that statement, I assume a position contrary to the prescription of an abolition of desire within situations of psychotic foreclosure. My argument keeps up with the interpretation that does not relate the condition of foreclosure with the absence of mechanisms of pleasure, but rather, it poses the idea that such condition embraces "the presence of a desire that is not symbolized by the Name-of-the-Father, that is to say: a desire that is not tied to the law of the father" (BATTISTA, 2017, 127). In terms of affection, the failure of the organizing signifier produces anguish as a signal that the idea of a coherence and stable language has been disrupted. In that sense, not only the symbolic can erase, bar, or resist to the Real, but the reverse can happen, as well: "something anomalous always shows up in language, something unaccountable, unexplainable: an aporia. These aporias point to the presence within or influence on the symbolic of the real. I refer to them as kinks in the symbolic order" (FINK, 1956, 30) Therefore, the Real constitutes a kind of disruptive force opposing the identitarian formation assured by the symbolic and imaginary (SAFATLE, 2017).

Here, the Real must not be understood as a horizon of concrete experiences accessible to immediate consciousness. The Real is not linked to a problem of objective description of the State of things. It refers to field of subjective experiences that cannot be adequately symbolized or colonized by fantastic imagery. This explains why the Real is always described in a negative way, as if it were a matter of

showing that some things can only be offered to the subject in the form of negations (SAFATLE, 2017, 76-77, my translation).

Through these lenses, the confrontation of such experiences, which implies dissolution of fantasy, starts a process that hesitates between enjoyment and terror, or as Lacan called it, the experience of *jouissance*. As I develop better in the sixth chapter, when analyzing the case of poor women of color in Latin America, the manifestation of the subaltern as Real implies engagement events that can turn our identity certainties all the way around, driving itself by some type of death desire (SAFATLE, 2017, 77). So here, against Butler's critique⁴⁶ of Lacan, I take Žižek's statement about the relation between the unconscious and the Real as the place where "the radical rearticulation of the predominant symbolic order is altogether possible" (1998, 5).

This is what his [Lacan's] notion of point de capitán - the "quilting point" or the master-signifier is about. When a new point de capitán emerges, the socio-symbolic field is not only displaced, its very structuring principle changes. Here, one is thus tempted to turn around the opposition between Lacan and Foucault as elaborated by Butler. It is Foucault who insists on the immanence of resistance to power, while Lacan leaves open the possibility of a radical rearticulation of the entire symbolic field by means of an act proper, a passage through "symbolic death." In short, it is Lacan who allows us to conceptualize the distinction between imaginary resistance-false transgression which reasserts the symbolic status quo and even serves as a positive condition of its functioning- and the effective symbolic rearticulation via the intervention of the real of an act (ZIZEK, 1998, 5)

This act of radical change configures what Žižek's reading of Lacan calls the ethical act: "an authentic act occurs only when a subject risks a gesture which is no longer "covered up" by the big Other. For that reason, Lacan pursues all possible versions of this entering in the domain "between the two deaths"" (ZIZEK, 1998, 7). Here it is possible to identify Žižek's Hegelian reading of Lacan again, where we can see his attempt to restore in Lacan a dialectical direction, assuming the double negativity (an insurmountable paralytic gap) that inhabits the Real. To some degrees, this proposal follows Žižek's general view of the death drive,

⁴⁶ Butler identifies the Lacanian unconscious with the imaginary and then she places it as the domain of Lacanian resistance: "For the Lacanian, then, the imaginary signifies the impossibility of the discursive - that is, symbolic-constitution of identity" (BUTLER, 1997, 96-97). Such resistance, therefore, is condemned to a perpetual defeat, since it depends on the symbolic order, being unable to rearticulate its terms: "psychic resistance presumes the continuation of the law in its anterior, symbolic form and, in that sense, contributes to its status quo. In such a view, resistance appears doomed to perpetual defeat" (BUTLER, 1997, 98).

assuming that it becomes a path through which the subaltern can promote the suspension of the big Other, and of the symbolic regime of production of phantasmatic identities. On the other hand, I do not prescribe such suspension as having a dialectical nature. In the last chapter of this thesis, I claim that the death drive coming from the subaltern operates more as a process of dislocation of recognition desires, than as a dialectical overcoming of it (SAFATLE, 2017).

Thus, to summarize, it is the ex-sistence of subaltern difference that allows the activation of a "second death": "symbolic death, the annihilation of the signifying network, of the text in which the subject is inscribed, through which reality is historicized" (ŽIŽEK, 2005, 44). With this notion, I am not trying to sustain an emancipatory project focused on the retrieving of symbolic antagonisms as a path to rebuild more creative forms to "mastering the Master's language" (KAPOOR, 2018, 7). Rather, considering that the elite symbolic works precisely through ideological concealment of the negated parts (the unspeakable signified), then my claim is more attached to an idea of resistance related with an appeal for a dis-identification logic that dislocates the course of recognition.

As I was debating, while Bhabha reads colonial subjectivation in terms of metaphoric and metonymic strategies ("the tropes of fetishism", as he called), my proposal calls attention to the moments of breaches in discourse. Since *Verwerfung* posits a repudiation of the primordial signifier, upon which the signification of a second order repression should be consolidated, then the return through metaphoric/narcissistic is also blocked. To put in other words, the return of difference as Real means that we have to investigate a facet of colonial power that works through another relation with language and desire, a relation that is primarily related with tropes of paradox and irony, and with affections of anguish. However, it is worth noting that the subaltern return as nonsensical signifier does not imply a condition of hallucination, as it is the case of clinical diagnosis. My reading of such context sees the paradoxical signifier as occupying the place that the organizer signifier (that authorizes meaning) cannot reach. As mentioned, from the three modulations of negation, the foreclosure (*Verwerfung*) is the only one that involves process of dis-identification, instead of identificatory logics. Because of that, it can only ex-sist as paradoxical breach in the discourse.

Now, looking for a further step in this debate, related with the possible paths of resistance, we have to take a pause to resume some important statements.

First, remember that the symbolic order operates with linguistic skills, grounded in the realm of meaning⁴⁷, whereas the unconscious is surrounded by the Real, that resists any form of linguistic articulation. As Runions (2001, 54) explains, Language "exist(s) outside of the subject" but "meaning does not". Therefore, if the symbolic subject can only exist within meaning, Language, on the other hand, must also harbor non-meaningful moments that go beyond the subjectivation process attached with the domain of social intelligibility. In this sense, there is a part of Language that persists in returning as untranslatable and incommensurable moments that cannot be organized by hegemonic rhetorical rules, but which remains resisting as slips, symptoms, irrationalities, and gaps against the phantasmatic reality.

Furthermore, the consolidation of this reflection depends on the previous explanation about the two senses of the Lacanian Subject: the alienated subject, produced as precipitation of meanings along the axes of symbolic signification, and the unconscious subject that manifests itself as a breach interrupting the automatic link between two signifiers (FINK, 1995). It is important to grasp how that idea presents two moments of subjectivation, or two moments of confrontation in relation to the Other, both as language and as desire. Consequently, it also presupposes two spaces where rearticulations can take place. The first is related with a retroactive production of meaning. In this sphere, with the inversion of classical rhetorical thinking according to which the signified should assume a priority over the signifier, Lacan assumes meaning as an always-precarious presence. The demand for permanent repetition, as a condition for stabilizing meaning, opens a normative horizon based on potential rearticulation. Social experiences, in such terms, predicate a space for political dispute lying in these dislocations of meaning, as well as it carries a possible space for changes on the subject's positions.

The activation of such interruptions, within discourse, requires a subject that has fulfilled its symbolic and imaginary alienation, as well as the separation through which the signifying chain retroactively offers meaning to the subject. This operation is responsible for opening the phantasmatic mobilization of ideological (mis)recognition. In this sense, as presented in chapter three, we could

⁴⁷ The symbolic provides a sense of *reality*, which implies "a world that can be designated and discussed with the words provided by a social group's (or subgroup's) language" (FINK, 1956, 25).

say that, like Butler's theory, the misrecognized body (that negotiates new meanings through discursive rearticulation) is a body that has been passed on by those signifiers' circuits - emerging as both subject and object. Something similar happens in Bhabha's reflection, although for him, the process of objectivation turns out to be ambivalent due to the logic of fetishisms.

However, when analyzing subaltern experiences, the split seems to assume other possible directions, since it can be barred precisely in the operation that authorizes the ideological misrecognition. In these terms, as posed by Spivak, the subaltern body cannot be overridden by the signifier, and because of that, the subaltern cannot enjoy the linguistic paths of rearticulation. On the other hand, if this barred condition does not entail a silence at the level of *dire* (saying), it does prescribe a nonsensical destination for the speech in terms of the statement. This impossible *dit* (said), unable of discursive consistencies, assumes manifestations whose meanings remain undiscovered, but whose symptoms can be grasped. That is why, as I pretend to analyze in the last chapter, every time the subaltern's desire invades the symbolic order, it sends a message that is unintelligible, but whose affection can interrupt fantasy by opening a domain where the involved bodies express jouissance without a formalized communication.

As Thakur explains, when "the colonized announces its desire or breaks out of its objectified positions (that is, whenever it speaks!), such as in the times of armed anti-colonial resistance, the colonial imaginary breaks round this fault" (2012, 245). As a result, the symptom of anxiety emerges as the mark of the Real's intervention in fantasy and the following liberation of jouissance.

Meaning and identity in colonial discourse is extended in two different directions: the signifier and jouissance, that is, towards a symbolic sign of the Other and the sign as the signature of the real. The bar separating the two is critical for sequestering meaning, signification and identity, and keeping anxiety over the dissolution of these at bay. Schematically put, anxiety represents the anguish of encountering what is buried or repressed by the bar, namely, the real. When the bar disappears to reveal the real, as it did in the case of the relief officer, anxieties surface. (THAKUR, 2012, 250).

This feeling of anguish is one type of communication or mode of representation that stems from the unconscious and embraces a sense of agency. Of course, considering that the unconscious is disconnect from any subjective involvement, it does not suggest a modern idea of agency, i.e., as a source of

solipsist and intentional acts⁴⁸. Instead, the functioning of the unconscious involves the already mentioned concept of *cause* that accounts for the reciprocal interaction between the three registers. As I present in the beginning of this topic, since language "never completely transforms the real, never drains all of the real into the symbolic order", then there is always a residuum, the persisting Real, that assumes a kind of causal or a resisting effect. (FINK, 1956, 26). This residue, here, translates the subaltern difference that returns and can appear as a "silence" in the sphere of the Real, taking silence as an unrecognizable difference; however, and here is my point, such condition does not mean an ex-sistence deprived of agency. If we assume the Real's movement of interruption as some sort of performative representation, then it introduces a kind of epistemological turn that opens our investigation to the subaltern "voice".

4.5. Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to explore the Lacanian conceptual grammar in order to give substance to the proposition raised in the second chapter, which is: to interpret the subaltern position as a problem of recognition. I started by describing the Borromean knot that represents a kind of topographical scheme for the interrelated triad of Lacan, which is comprised of Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real (ISR). Similar to the change in emphasis presented by Lacan himself in his later works, that goes from ISR to RSI, attaching growing importance to the Real, this chapter also advances towards a direction that gradually brings a particular weight for that last register. So, in order to understand how subalternity is produced through the economies of discourse and pleasure, which produce respectively the subject as ego (the castrated subject) and the subject as object (the subject of desire), I have brought Lacan's debate on the three modulations of negation: repression (*Verdrängung*), disavowal/denial (*Verleugnung*), or rejection/repudiation (*Verwerfung*).

The importance of these three modulations relies on their capacity to offer us the conceptual instruments to understand how each of those formats of negation makes their return into social experience. These returns can also be

⁴⁸ On the other hand, for Lacan, the ego's imaginary does not embrace a site of agency as it usually does in the liberal philosophy. (FINK, 1995). The ego is a place of fixation, whereas the unconscious presents a movement capable of interrupting the false idea of self.

addressed as *modes of representation* that emerge from interpellation. Therefore, according to Lacan's theory, while the repressed elements are reintegrated into the unconscious through the symbolic, the rejected ones, in turn, have to return through the Real. As a result, *Verwerfung* encompasses contexts of representation that stress the symbolic and its linguistic structures. Drawing on this debate, I initiate my argumentation around the validity of that notion to the reading of subaltern formation and representational performances.

Through the theory of foreclosure, I call attention to both discursive and libidinal aspects of subalternity. The articulation between those dimensions is well demonstrated in Bhabha's theory, which ends up prescribing mimicry and fetishism as the general modes of representation employed by the subaltern's attempts to assume some kind of presence in the symbolic. On the other hand, assuming that interpellation is a contingent phenomenon, and that colonial power interpellates the subaltern through a set of strategies, my proposition takes a different direction. As I see, when analyzing groups in the radical context of marginalization (like those related with the most precarious jobs in globalized economies, which I analyze in the last chapter), hegemonic power employs not only strategies of narcissistic fixation (through stereotype) but it also produces moments of complete rejection of any signifier that could provide to those groups a recognizable status for their interests.

Consequently, such individuals cannot access the domains of contestation that require institutionalized recognitions. Because of that, they are unable to create a sense of identity in relation to hegemonic signifiers, such as consumer, citizen, worker, and so on. From that condition arise the numerous proxies of modern politics, each of which manipulating a different desire to the subaltern. As I propose in the next chapter, this absence of anchoring points explains what Spivak suggests as being the subaltern disability to perform class consciousness. However, in this thesis, I sustain such argument in terms of a failure on castration process, which results in a condition of constant slippage under the flux of signified. In that sense, in order to grasp such type of experience, our analytical lenses have to be prepared to manifestations other than mimicry, stereotype, misrecognition, or even silence — although these are all important modes of representation of contemporary politics.

Thus, it was with such analytical expansion in mind that I built this chapter. To some degree, I justify my theoretical parallax regarding the subaltern interpretation by asserting that Lacanian concepts allowed me to approach the bond between power and desire, which was already described by Spivak, but not yet explained in its functioning. This link sustains the dialogue between silence at the level of the social, as intersubjective relations, and silence at the level of the subject, then involving interior relations. In other words, it is the debate on recognition that opens the path for us to investigate the connections interweaving micro- and macro-spheres of power. With this terrain laid, I now look at the next chapter for way to understand how this position of subalternity, taken as foreclosure, is manifested in the contemporary discourse of capitalism. Particularly, my attention is concentrated on capitalist systems at peripheral economies, and then related to postcolonial societies, especially those of Latin America.

5. Power and Discourse: Capitalism and Subalternity in Latin America

5.1. Introduction

According to Lacan, every discourse retains a logical impossibility around which it circles. Such impossibility, as debated in the previous chapter, results from a specific law ruling each signifying chain, which can work through foreclosure (*Verwerfung*), repression (*Verdrängung*), and denial (*Verneinung*). Considering contemporary articulations between those modulations, my proposal in this chapter is to apply the previous discussion around forclusion and subalternity in order to read capitalist dynamics. In other words, regarding global capitalism, which organizes economic, social, and libidinal relations, how does subalternity attempt to enter the signification process, or how does it deal with not getting into it? How does the process of foreclosure help us to understand such barred movements inside peripheral societies? And finally, if positions of forclusion can harbor alternative modes of representation, as argued in the last chapter, what is this alternative "speaking" all about?

To start this investigation, I draw attention to Lacan's theory of discourse, which departs from four initial algebras, the discourse of (1) the master, (2) the analyst, (3) the hysteric, and (4) the university, each of which manifesting a specific discursive structure responsible for the production of social bonds. These four logics offer elements to understand how a signifying chain works, and through which ways they can manage the subjectivity processes, such as recognition, identification, and negation, in order to design social formations. Therefore, in the first section, following this introduction, I present that discursive matrix yet focusing on how it engenders a new formula, as if a fifth paradigm. Lacan calls this new algebra "discourse of the capitalist" which is known as a derivative formula that both disrupts and incorporates the four previous schemes.

For Lacan, the capitalist mathema manifests a new type of master, which results from the historical association between capital and science. In that sense, the capitalist's discourse emerges, along with university discourse, as a response of modernity to the decay of the master's functioning that had to incorporate new

strategies. Therefore, it now works through knowledge, which is placed at the service of an 'exploitation of desire'. The idea behind that proposition, according to Lacan, was to demonstrate how modernity brought not only a new political economy, but also a new libidinal economy, on which the global ideology of consumption is dependent. However, as we can notice, there is a specific historiography underlining such theorizations around discourse transformations, and one that is uncontestably European. Because of that, in the second topic of this chapter, I propose to re-read the capitalist discursive structure, in order to open it to reflections on subalternity. Basically, assuming that there is no universal history of power, my attempt is to construct an interpretation of the shapes that such capitalist discourse could assume in postcolonial scenarios.

As debated in the first chapter, the operations of power are composed by fragmented and unstable gestures that, themselves, disrupt any unitary approach on politics. In that sense, colonialism configured a specific manifestation of global structures of power, which, according to Young (2001), did not implicate a denial of capitalism as a global force; on the contrary, it only drew attention to the impossible universalization of its effects. Thus, in this chapter, I depart from that presupposition, which assumes capitalism as a phenomenon that can present variable discursive mainsprings, depending on the historical and social contexts where it is manifested. Particularly, my interest lies on the social, political, and economic terrains of postcolonial regions, which I take as part of a global system of modern/colonial power.

With that interest in mind, I turn my analysis to the theoretical contributions developed by the Dependency Thesis. The historical lenses produced inside such school of thought serve as a fertile terrain for a dialogue between Lacan's theory and contemporary subaltern experiences in peripheral economies. Diverging from orthodox readings of Marx, Dependency theorists mobilize Marxism from the perspective of colonial difference. In this sense, important categories, such as class, imperialism, surplus value, among others, are incorporated in their analysis yet not without being transformed by the antithetical historicity of peripheral experience. From that came the dependentist claim that the global production of oppression is not a particular stage of capitalism, but an ontological structural condition of it. Such reformulation comes from the

recognition of colonial experience, which then reallocates the dilemmas of capitalism in terms of a world system.

In other words, the dependentist reflections are particularly important for my study since they lead to a rupture with modern epistemology by bringing the history of the colonized into the center of the capitalism debate. Thus, the Latin American reflections on dependent capitalism allow me to read intersubjectivation processes, such as those proposed by Lacan, but without losing the commitment to historical experiences of oppression. In that sense, my previous argumentation on subalternity as a subject position produced through forclusion assumes now a more direct engagement with the social dimensions of such process. Applied to the reading of peripheral capitalism, the idea of a barred recognition can show how it extrapolates inner relations to emerge as part of a collective system of oppression.

Moreover, the region of Latin America, like others with a colonial past, exemplifies the inevitable sense of ambiguity that relies upon social, cultural, political, or economic phenomena under forced hybridization. For Eneida Maria de Souza, such condition makes any attempt of representation of local experiences an epistemological exercise that has to face the challenge of traveling across “the creative and paradoxical margins of the tropics” (FANTINI, 2003, preface 20, my translation). This means that, like most postcolonial societies, Latin American countries embrace a complex process of interpellation, through which a considerable amount of difference remains echoing only through some sort of “language of the unspeakable” (ROSA *apud* FANTINI, 2003, 57)⁴⁹. The presence of such silencing spots makes Latin American contemporary dynamics an interesting object for this analysis, in the same way that colonial India was a valuable terrain for Spivak’s and Guha’s reflections.

Throughout this investigation, my attention is particularly focused on how subaltern impossibilities interact with the signification process established by the hegemonic structures of capitalism. In order to investigate that, I use the knowledge offered by both Lacanian and Dependency theories to propose an algebra of the *dependent capitalism discourse*. Once established, such formula

⁴⁹This phrase was spoken by Guimarães Rosa, when he was asked about the meaning of *brasilidade*, to which question he ironically replied paraphrasing the poem of Goethe that says: “poetry is the language of the unspeakable”

helps me to organize the scene of subalternity in peripheral economies, from which I start a study on the possible interruptions in such discursive functioning. My attention is mostly focused on those elements capable to attest that the name-of-the-father is no longer able to ensure the authority of knowledge. Regarding our context, in the next chapter, I propose that such interruptions can come from clandestine events. Those acts are related with the return of the expelled signified that, then, directs its unbearable ambiguity towards science and reason under neoliberal ideology. Therefore, I lastly argue that the authority of master signifiers, such as those of autonomy, consumer, citizenship, development, and so on, come to be the targets of a disruptive act of the subaltern performing as a symptom.

5.2. Lacan and the discourse of the capitalist

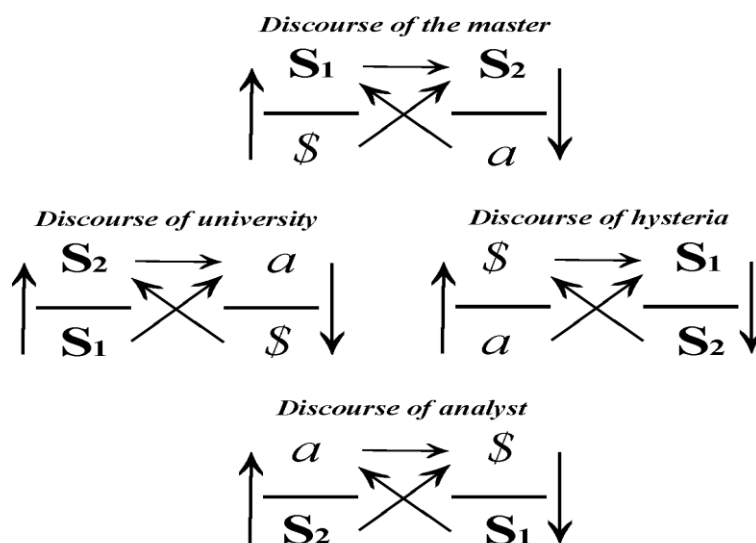
As explains Braunstein (2010), after the events of 1968, that shook European political and social contexts, Lacan proposes a theory of discourse organized around four categories: the discourse of (1) the master, (2) the hysteric, (3) psychoanalysis, and (4) university. Such typology was presented at the XVII Seminar (1969-1970/1991) and brought the idea of discourse as being, in a simple definition, the source of social and cultural bonds (BRAUNSTEIN, 2010). The formulation of such theory followed a mathematical vocation and assumed a structural and logic line based on four positions (the agent, the other, the production, and the truth) each of which related to the other through vectors that demonstrate the need for or the impossibility of some connections.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{agent} & \longrightarrow & \text{other} \\ \hline \text{truth} & // & \text{product} \end{array}$$

The horizontal vector that goes from the agent position towards the other position expresses the impossibility that underlines such relation. For Lacan, the other never fully responds to the agent's call, which creates a sense of impotence in the repression dimension, represented by the vertical bars at the bottom side [//]. Thus, whereas the two positions above (agent and other) translate the

manifested signs of discourse, the two positions below (truth and product) represent the repressed levels. In that sense, those bars states that there is a structural mismatch between truth and production, since the subject can never have full access to its desire (BRAUNSTEIN, 2010).

From that formula, Lacan derives four mathemas, all playing with a same set of elements (S1, S2, a and \$)⁵⁰ that are differently combined in each scheme. As a result, we have the following matrix:



The four discourses are not isolated structures, but rather they articulate a fluid movement that works by changing the letters that occupy the fixed positions according to a clockwise or counterclockwise rotation. With this circular motion, going one quarter backwards or forwards, we could say that Lacan's matrix about the four discourses is underlined by a sense of historicity. According to Žižek, departing from the first matrix (the master's discourse), the two discourses that follow (university and hysteria) represent responses to the vacillation of the master, representing the modern European development. Thus, in his historical reading of the four structures, Žižek correlates the discourse of the master with the absolute monarchy, while the following two mark the transformations in the hegemonic logic with the beginning of modernity.

⁵⁰ S1 (master-signifier), S2 (knowledge), a (object remainder or plus-de-jouir), and \$ (barred subject).

In this sense, the university discourse⁵¹ presents a modern master, the scientific knowledge that takes the place of the classic master which was related with the imposition of law and repression. In European modernity, science (S2) replaces the master's signifier in the position of domination (the quadrant of the agent), and then incites the emergence of a new 'master', or a new authority capable of establishing a new "tyranny of knowledge".

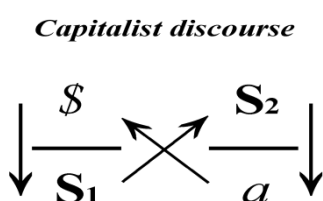
Knowledge here interrogates surplus value (the product of capitalist economies, which takes the form of a loss or subtraction of value from the worker) and rationalizes or justifies it. The product or loss here is the divided, alienated subject. Since the agent in the university discourse is the knowing subject, the unknowing subject or subject of the unconscious is produced, but at the same time excluded. Philosophy, Lacan says, has always served the master, has always placed itself in the service of rationalizing and propping up the master's discourse, as has the worst kind of science. (FINK, 1995, 132).

According to Lacan, "this is what makes it impossible in the course of historical movement for truth to appear, as we might perhaps have hoped" (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 30). That explains Lacanian conclusion about how science promotes the forclusion of the truth of the barred subject, considering that its unconscious features, its castration, is repressed through the agency of the knowing subject. What is more, in such scheme, there is an effect related to the attempt at wholeness, which is manifested in the *all-knowledge* presupposition, in the sense of knowing all (BRAUNSTEIN, 2010). However, it is only after the association with capital that science can finally reject castration by unmaking the structural split between the subject and its desire's cause, as sustained by fantasy ($\$ \diamond a$). So, if in any of the four discourses, regardless of the positions of the letters, the place of the production and truth remained barred from each other, in the capitalist's discourse such impotence condition is exceptionally disrupted.

Hence, with the mathema of university discourse, Lacan launches the terms based on which he starts an initial reflection about capitalism that later culminates in the 'fifth' discursive structure. Then, at his 17th Seminar, in 1972, Lacan announces the "*tout petit tournant*", a discrete turn on the operation of knowledge that changes the historical association between science and capital (BRAUNSTEIN, 2010). This *petit tournant* marks the emergence of a fifth

⁵¹ It is important to clarify that the university discourse does not presuppose, ontologically, the discourse of the University, but simply its epistemological logic: objectivity, neutrality, and so on.

mathema, the discourse of the capitalist, whose particular feature was the rejection of the subject lack through the operation of consumable gadgets forged by science. In that sense, “what distinguishes the capitalist discourse is this – *Verwerfung*, rejection from all the fields of symbolic, with all the consequences that I have already mentioned. Rejection of what? Of castration” (LACAN, 2011, p. 88). The idea that underlies such deviation is the liberal ideology of consumerism that, like science, promises an *all-satisfaction*, in the sense of a totalization of *jouissance*. Hence, while the ancient master operates the repression, the modern master qua capitalist works by authorizing the exactly opposite: a non-limited *jouissance*.



The formula of the capitalist discourse inverts the positions of the left quadrant (agent and truth) as it appears in the master's discourse. However, as Lacan explains, “a little inversion simply between the S1 and \$... which is the subject... it suffices so that that goes on casters! Indeed that cannot go better, but that goes too fast, that consumes itself, that consumes itself so that is consumed” (LACAN, 1972 *apud* DARRIBA; D’ESCARNOLLE, 2017, 571). The self-reproduction of this formula derives from some particularities that subvert the very logic of the four-discourse matrix. As we can see, the capitalist discourse presents a different structure, in which the horizontal superior vector is abolished, detaching the relation between agent and other. Furthermore, the vertical vector from the left is inverted, now assuming a downward direction, going from the place of the agent to the place of truth. With that, the capitalist discourse maintains the same relation between the letters $\$ \rightarrow S1$ that was present in the master's discourse.

In terms of letter organization, the barred subject (\$) occupies the place of the agent, which is now disconnected from the other position occupied by knowledge (S2). The master signifier, in turn, operates from the position of truth,

which allows it to be in charge of the Real, from where it directs itself towards the other (diagonal ascending vector: $S1 \rightarrow S2$). Then, notice that it is not the agent (\$) that directs knowledge (S2), since they are disconnected, but the capitalist master (S1) that rules from the position of truth. Thus, knowledge (S2) works through signifiers that talk from the place of truth, and from that position it is led to produce objects of pleasure, the gadgets (a). Consequently, the barred subject believes to perform the function of the master, but the absence of the horizontal vector tells us that, actually, it only functions at the level of semblance (BRAUNSTEIN, 2010).

Finally, the relation between the subject (\$) and the cause of desire (a) appears connected in this formula, thus dismantling the structural hiatus that used to separate them in the master's mathema. To better understand the consequence of this novelty, it is important to realize that, according to Lacan's theory of discourse, the structural impossibility (the discursive impotence of the subject to have access to its desire) represents the point around which social bond is created. Because of that, the logical implication of such statement is the absence of a social bond in the capitalist discourse. By turning *objet a* into an object of jouissance, which is then offered and controlled by the modern master, the capitalist discourse produces an atomized subject whose sense of mastering is only narcissistic. While believing in his/her status of agent, the subject ends up unconsciously following again the master's orders (BRAUNSTEIN, 2010).

Therefore, the cleverest of the discourses, as Lacan called the capitalist mathema, takes its power from a productive mobilization of desire. In a dialogue with Marxism, Lacan reads the modern master in opposition to the classic master given its attempt to explore the desire (objet a), instead of effacing it. In other words, for Lacan, whereas the four-discourse matrix requires a structural impossibility between the subject's truth and the cause of its desire, the capitalist discursive, on the contrary, points towards an anti-castrational context. This promise of satisfaction is represented by a surplus-enjoyment, an excess that is appropriated by the bourgeois machine. In a direct association with Marxist vocabulary about the surplus value⁵², Lacan coined the terms *plus-de-jouir* or

⁵² Put simply, surplus value corresponds to what, in liberal terms, is called 'profit', i.e., an amount of abstract value that exceeds the circulation based on the satisfaction of needs (use-values). The surplus value comes from the exploitation of labor-power and indicates the moment when the

surplus-enjoyment to deal with the production of "objet a" (object-remainder of enjoyment) in capitalist discourse (lower right-hand corner). In this sense, Lacan's contribution suggests that the power of this new political economy lies in its capacity to handle, along with labor operations, a libidinal economy, as well.

Between surplus-value and surplus-enjoyment lies a homology, not an analogy, indicating that those concepts share the functioning of the same *jouissance*, being both figures of the surplus. Therefore, resembling the symbolic castration, the economic register engenders an extraction on the subject (the worker) as he/she enters the market structure. The surplus transferred to the capitalist is experienced as a minus from the worker's perspective, in as much that, homologous to language, the capitalism produces a loss (FINK, 1995).

The employee never enjoys that surplus product: he or she "loses" it. The work process produces him or her as an "alienated" subject (S), simultaneously producing a loss, (a). The capitalist, as Other, enjoys that excess product, and thus the subject finds him or herself in the unenviable situation of working for the Other's enjoyment, sacrificing him or herself for the Other's *jouissance* — precisely what the neurotic most abhors! Like surplus value, this surplus *jouissance* may be viewed as circulating "outside" of the subject in the Other. It is a part of the libido that circulates *hors corps*. (FINK, 1995, 96).

In summary, surplus-value and surplus-enjoyment operate the same type of interruption in the idea of wholeness, opening a hole in the metaphysics of presence. In both cases, the production of an excess, experienced as lack by the subject, involves a contradiction between two moments: the labor-power and the living-power, in the production economy, and between desire and *jouissance*, at the libidinal domain. Thus, in one level, capitalism requires a double move, through which the capitalist enters the market first as buyer of labor-power and then as seller of commodity. From this equation, he extracts the accumulation of abstract value. At another level, capitalism also presupposes a specific libidinal route, first requiring castration as a way to inaugurate the desiring subject, and then the forclusion of the split condition, replaced by an all-enjoyment promise that sustains the consumption ideology.

But what happens with the mainspring of such discourse when the circuit of capitalism works differently? As mentioned in the beginning of this topic,

worker's production no longer serves to satisfy its own needs, but to satisfy the capital's needs for accumulation.

Lacan's theory of discourse subscribes a specific sociological formation related to the development of modernity in Europe. In other words, it does not describe the functioning of capital in those portions of the globe where science is not only at the service of the market but also of coloniality. So what about the association of colonial past and global market? How to read the working of capitalist discourse in contexts of subalternity?

To start thinking about these questions, I highlight the importance of Marini's thesis about the super-exploitation of workforce as being a particular structuration of production in peripheral economies. As I will present in the next topic, such thesis denounces the mechanism that allows the transference of value between the small and media bourgeoisie to the monopolistic groups, going from local economies up to the global level. What is important to grasp, for now, is that such transference is possible due to an appropriation of a part of the use-value of the labor force, exceeding the expropriation of the surplus amount. In that sense, for Marini, the combination between extremely low wages and extended working hours explains some of the capitalist strategies at the margins of the system.

Today, with the advance of neoliberalism and the transnational dislocation of industries, what we see is the extension of such super-exploitation context into the direct locus of commodity production, leading the use of forms of semi-slaving into the heart of factory machines of global corporations. In a way, following the libidinal logic, it seems that, for some populations, the capitalist discourse has no space for any productive solicitude of desire, as presupposed in Lacan's mathema. With this in mind, I ask: how does the hegemonic discourse work upon those who are not integrated into the consumerism ideology? How do the libidinal and discursive economics manage (and are managed by) those that cannot fit the role of the Marcuse "one dimensional man", the atomized integrant of the consumer society?

My attempt is to answer these questions with the support of the debates held on the previous chapters in combination with some Latin American reflection on political economy. The efforts to construct a dialogue between subaltern studies and psychoanalysis have come to this point where I finally propose a reading of the contemporary position of subalternity as it appears in many postcolonial contexts under the power of global capitalism. Thus, the argumentation follows the concepts presented in the fourth chapter, through which

I present the subaltern as a point of inflection on the libidinal knot of the signifying chain, but now such chain is taken as part of the capitalist discourse. However, to access this historical reading of subalternity formation we have to dislocate the capitalist discourse beyond its European grounds. To do so, I call the support of dependency theories, from which I take the substrate to understand capital dynamics under non-hegemonic realities.

From Spivak to Quijano or Escobar, there is a plethora of arguments suggesting the importance of reading capitalism neoliberal transformations in order to grasp the contemporary experience of subalternity. Similarly, I propose that the "new" subaltern points towards an organization of discourse that works differently from that experienced by a typical consumer from center economies. At the periphery of global capitalism, the *Verwerfung* of castration does not result in the dismantling of the barred condition between desire and jouissance, as proposed by Lacan. If the center capital works with knowledge in order to promise *all-enjoyment* by the consumption of gadgets, at the periphery, the rejection of castration is felt by disenfranchised people as a loss of signifier. This translates the condition of foreclosure debated in the last chapters, which is responsible for barring any inscription of subaltern desire into the symbolic domain. In this sense, expelled from neoliberal consumption ideology, the subaltern is constructed as a place of no possible (or impossible) enjoyment.

In other words, the promise of total enjoyment that emerges as the product of capitalist discourse is confronted, in the case of the subaltern, by a jouissance that cannot be captured by scientific knowledge. The forclusion of the significant master, in this case, does not end in a disallowing of the name-of-the-father by a technical knowledge whose autonomous action intends to unmake the limitation of jouissance. On the contrary, what we see in peripheral economies is a pluralization of the naming fathers, as manifested in the extension of proxies that claim to speak for the unrecognized enjoyment of the subaltern. In the following section, I develop such argumentation, suggesting that in order to explore the desire of the consumer, global capital has to create non-desirable subjects that can only ex-sist as objects of the other's enjoyment.

Given the level of exploitation that some workers are submitted to in regions such as Latin America, we can infer that there are interpellation processes that work to engender the limitation of all sources of recognition that could claim

a desiring condition for those bodies. As I debated in the previous chapter, before its characterization as a silent being, the subaltern seems to be a subject that cannot have its repressed features returned through the symbolic. Because of that, subaltern desires return as symptom. When working in peripheral regions, the capitalist discourse seems to banish the subject of desire from the position of enunciation, i.e., from the quadrants of enunciation (upper right and bottom right corners). Then, the subaltern has to return in the positions of messenger receiver, conceiving a mathema that has similarities with the analyst discourse, yet presenting different effects. In the next section, I propose what such algebra would be like, which I call "the peripheral capitalist discourse".

5.3. Peripheral economies, peripheral desires

As is known, in Latin America the colonial dynamics were quite different from the colonization (and decolonization) processes that took place in Africa and in Asia. To begin with, we can mention the temporal gap between them, since the colonial experience in the American continent started three centuries earlier than the neocolonial interventions of Europe on other portions of the globe. Therefore, back to 16th century, the lands west of the Atlantic circuit entered the European map as a key piece for the first wave of capitalist expansion. As a result, by the nineteenth century, while the African and Asian continents were witnessing the beginning of imperialist neo-colonizations, Latin America was experiencing the first post-independence modernization and urbanization projects, albeit all of them were under the domination of the same group of imperialist powers.

These three centuries of 'colonial anticipation' brought to the region a brutal destruction of native civilizations that were forced to merge into the colonizer cultural and social systems, so much so that, according to Santiago (2000), it is impossible to identify in any Latin American society a condition of unity or purity. In this sense, in reaction to imperialist imposition, the local culture has responded with an active and disruptive movement of deviation from the norm, instead of a claim for a radical negation of it. This deviation, not in itself planned, inhabits a non-place produced by the impossibility of such signifieds to return to a previous native structure, already wiped out, and the equally

impossible self-recognition in terms of the colonizer culture⁵³. As explained by Todorov (1999), since Latin America was the main stage of transculturation of modern history, it became a place of conflicting heterogeneities (in terms of time, space, and subjectivity). The ambiguous aspect of the region and its endless contradictions point out to difficulties in translations, since it keeps offering complex signifiers that do not cease to not being inscribed in the hegemonic language, which results in a central condition of inexplicability⁵⁴.

That is why, as stated by Bortoluci and Jansen (2013), knowing the idiosyncrasies of the colonial and post-colonial history of Latin America is an indispensable condition for those interested in understanding the specific developments of the critical thought and the political theories that emerge from such region. In Souza's perception, such particular direction is mostly related with the diagnosis of dependence⁵⁵ (in cultural, political, and economic terms), which had a central effect on the critical discourses developed along the 20th century in all Latin American countries. According to her, the challenges posed by the transculturality revealed "two basic attitudes towards cultural dependence: an expression of cultural malaise and a ludic attempt to overcome it" (SOUZA, 2014, 379).

⁵³ Such situation involving the impossibilities of colonized place could lead us to Bhabha's theorization about mimicry, or to the border thinking of Mignolo, or to the mentioned conceptual debate on anthropophagy by Silviano Santiago. All of them share a certain engagement with the challenge of translation and representation as it is posed by the postcolonial phenomena, which also implied the task of investigating how the oppressed find ways to speak - or how they deal with not finding one. However, here, I intend to read them through a different lens, as already explained.

⁵⁴ The postcolonial societies does not have easy translations, since its margins ultimately embrace "the language of the unspeakable" (ROSA *apud* FANTINI, 2003, 57). This phrase was said by Guimarães Rosa, when he was asked about the meaning of *brasilidade* to which he ironically replied paraphrasing the poem of Goethe: "poetry is the language of the unspeakable". The presence of such silencing spots is what makes Latin American discourses particularly interesting for this proposal, which is curious about how those impossibilities interact with the signification process established by the hegemonic structures of language.

⁵⁵ For Caporaso (1978), dependence and dependency, as concepts, share the general engagement with a scenario of asymmetry, as well as a structural perspective of power. On the other hand, these concepts have important differences in terms of purpose, scope, and theoretical developments. Among the differences between them, it is possible to point out that dependence is related with the notion of asymmetric interdependence. Hence, it constitutes a dyadic concept, which implies a relation between A's reliance on B and B's reliance on A. The concept of dependency, on the other hand, presupposes a causal relation, which aggregates all external influences as a unique variant. In this sense, dependency did not require an evaluation of a reciprocal dependency between the actors. Dependence would translate the "pattern of external reliance of well-integrated nation-states, while dependency would point to a more complex set of relations centering on the incorporation of less developed, less homogeneous societies into the global division of labor".

During the 20th century, for example, the focus on the "other" side of modernity emerged as a common issue to the main schools of critical thought of the region⁵⁶, such as the "dependency theories", "theology of liberation", "philosophy of liberation", and the "decolonial group" respectively represented by names as Ruy Mauro Marini, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Enrique Dussel, and Anibal Quijano⁵⁷. Despite their differences, those traditions shared a specific employment of an epistemological base oriented towards social transformation⁵⁸ and a particular interest in understanding the tendencies that guide capitalism's dynamics within their societies. Such academic direction became stronger due to the transformations that took place during the 20th century, when the rise of USA to the position of global power sheds light on the theme of economic development as part of a new international agenda.

The general perspective was that, after the colonization period, Latin American countries were summoned as part of a global strategy based on projects of industrialization and urbanization, which, despite the semblance of novelty, did not interrupt the logic of colonial paradox. According to Osório (2009), the second half of the 20th century offers the material terrain for the creation of some sort of Latin American Tradition⁵⁹, mostly engaged with the diffusion of an argument about the global production of domination and derived concepts like "dependency"⁶⁰, "sub-imperialism", and later, "coloniality"⁶¹. In short, such

⁵⁶ It is important to point out that each of these traditions produced different visions and different degrees of resistance to the figure of "Europe" or to the "central" countries.

⁵⁷ As Osório pointed out, "to dialectics and praxis, Latin American thinkers add work categories such as poverty, oppression, dignity, and the need for liberation" (OSÓRIO, 2009, 31).

⁵⁸ Therefore, the centrality of the idea of political relation as source of dependency led most of Latin-American social thought, and social movements, to integrate the Third World critical trajectory by assuming, as its particularity, a liberating praxis and a dialectical teleology as its main resistance strategies. Therefore, the thing about this macro diagnosis of dependence is that it presupposes a specific relation in the micro domain, particularly between the subject sphere of interests and desires, where both are condensed in the predetermined political goal for liberation/independency/autonomy.

⁵⁹ The rise of the Third World as a geopolitical sign, the vigor of the socialist political experiences at the period, and the processes of decolonization in Africa came together to echo Latin American reality, promoting the strengthening of the so-called "critical sociology". According to the systematization of Viales Hurtado (2006 *apud* ANSALDI, 2015), the historiography of the social studies in Latin America could be divided in three phases, with the last one being the critical sociology stage, inaugurated in the mid-1970s by the specific concern of changing the status quo.

⁶⁰ From this phase, emerges the Dependency Theories and The World System Analysis, guided by names such as Marini and Wallerstein, which represent two of the most known replies that the region provided to the dilemmas of modernity. "Their critique of modernization theory, their rigorous account of imperialism and their concern for continued inequalities between the so-called "core" ("metropole") and "periphery" ("satellite") makes them parallel to postcolonial theory in the humanities. They stand, in a sense, as sociology's best answer. And a booming, loud and

concepts translate an attempt to associate the materiality of the underdevelopment with other dimensions of subordinations⁶², showing how capital domination rely on different discourses and produces multiple effects on bodies. My purpose here goes in a similar direction, insofar as I resume the super-exploitation thesis as a bridge to apply the Lacanian theory to grasp contemporary positions of subalternity.

As I debated in the second chapter, all studies concerning the subaltern have offered special attention to Marx's theory of power. From Guha to Spivak, passing through other important names to the study of colonial experiences, such as Fanon, Quijano, Escobar, etc., they all indisputably share one point: the centrality of Marxist conceptual legacy. That is why any attempt to understand the production of subalternity, whether trying a dialogue with Lacan, Derrida, Freud, or Foucault, cannot abstract from debating its articulations with Marxist categories, such as class, capital, and so on. Bringing the Theories of Dependency to our debate helps us with this task, since it reveals a genealogy of subordination for the region.

According to such genealogy, we can go back to "colonial dependency" catalyzed by the direct exploitation of colonial powers; then, follow to the end of the 19th century, when a "financial-industrial dependency" marked the consolidation of the periphery as exporters of agricultural products; until we finally get to the more recent type of dependency related to a technological sphere and which emerges under the logic of transnational companies and neoliberal ideology (AMARAL, 2006). At all phases, what we see is a specific capitalist

vibrant one at that. Still, we must not neglect the stark differences between postcolonial theory in the humanities and dependency/world-systems theory" (GO, 2013, 8).

⁶¹ The notion of coloniality, coined by Quijano (2000), is directed towards the reading of the colonized people who had experienced a net of structures of domination (in the domains of race, gender, knowledge, economy, and so on), which remains active even after the end of the colonial period.

⁶² The modernity/coloniality group is an example of such efforts that dialogue with the capital structure with "different framings, emphases, and goals - political economy for Quijano, philosophy of liberation for Dussel, literature and epistemology for Mignolo" (Escobar, 2003, 61, my translation). The group does not account for a homogeneous corpus of research; instead, it incorporates a plurality of sources, making any attempt to construct a genealogy a particular challenge. Hence, according to Escobar (2003, 53, my translation), among the inspirations of the program, the following could be highlighted: "the Latin American debates of philosophy and social science on notions like philosophy of the liberation and an autonomous social science (for example, Enrique Dussel, Rodolfo Kusch, Orlando Fals Borda, Pablo Gonzales Casanova, Darcy Ribeiro); Dependency theory; Latin American debates on modernity and postmodernism of the 1980s, followed by discussions on hybridity in anthropology, communication, and cultural studies in the 1990s; and, in the United States, the Latin American group of subaltern studies".

formation that tries to increase its internal process of capital accumulation through a hyper-exploitation of their labor force. This movement erases the worker consumption capacity, going in the opposite direction of that expected by the capitalist logic in center economies.

Following the ECLAC⁶³ critique, names such as Raul Prebisch and Celso Furtado highlighted the idea that different types of development are part of a global structure of capitalist expansion. Mostly catalyzed by the global dynamics of the monopolist capital, the attempts at modernization arrive at 'peripheral economies'⁶⁴ producing a heterogeneous and non-diversified capitalist structure. As such, the industrialization projects⁶⁵ from the 1930s and 1940s adopted a logic of "import substitution", which relied on a partial transference of technical knowledge from the center economies to the peripheral structures. As a result, the marginalized economies were raised through an ambivalent coexistence between traditional and modern strategies of accumulation.

[...] the substantial difference between advanced capitalism and dependent capitalism lies in the fact that, in the former, relative surplus-value is hegemonic in the productive system, while in the latter, surplus-value is subordinated to old capitalist means of production: absolute surplus-value and overexploitation of labor, which preceded relative surplus-value (VALENCIA, 2016, 40, my translation)

From those reflections came the famous conceptualization around the pair center-periphery that serves to interpret the asymmetrical distributions of gains in global capitalism. As stated by Aníbal Pinto, underlying the diagnostic of "structural heterogeneity" are the reasons that explain why the periphery cannot retain the surplus of their productive sectors. Such hypothesis sustains that, due to the appropriation of scientific knowledge, central economies limited the increase

⁶³The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLA), the Spanish acronym is CEPAL.

⁶⁴Expression as coined by Raul Prebisch.

⁶⁵In part, the ECLAC thought emerges as a critique of modernization perspectives, which assumed an important position between the interpretative sources for reading the economic issues from the region and which had influence over several institutions and their international affairs. Theorizations by Prebisch and Furtado pointed in a different direction of the lenses proposed by foreign authors such as W. W. Rostow and William Arthur Lewis, whose analytical categories suggested advices based on replications of the social, political, and economic structure of the center capitalist societies.

of productivity by technical advances in the periphery. Add to that the fact that most of the export segment surplus is transferred to the center economies due to the tendency to deterioration in the terms of trade⁶⁶, and at the end, what we have is a cycle of underdevelopment that prevents peripheral societies from furthering their process of modernization as stipulated by the liberal ideology.

In the political arena, the first decades of the 20th century supported the expansion of the Development agenda to other fields, surpassing the economic circuits until it reached the core of social and political mobilizations of nationalist groups. Most of them were related to the local bourgeoisie, which was engaged in strategies to minimize the residual asymmetries from the colonial period in order to finally get a more autonomous prospect of profit. Therefore, following the developmentalist paradigm, the normative goal started to revolve around the idea of obtaining more autonomy in the decision-making process, especially concerning foreign trade actions⁶⁷. Of course, it did not take long to realize that the autonomy claim was not about a radical transformation of the social order, but rather, most of the nationalist groups were actually looking for a dispute of asymmetric dependence through bargain stratagems involving the pluralization of power relations. Thus, instead of confronting the foreign capital, the local economies allied themselves to the small and medium national bourgeoisie, which in turn, was associated with the monopolistic segments of global economy.

Furthermore, along the decades ahead, important international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank, with the help of scientific reports, adopted a discourse of development based on a liberal understanding of political and economic progress, which took a high position within local politics. In other words, we could say that, not being able to find a way out of liberal discourse, but being also prevented from genuinely achieving such values, the national elite narratives from Latin American countries translated an impossible desire for autonomy, democracy, and development that,

⁶⁶Prebisch–Singer hypothesis argues that over time the price of primary commodities tends to decline in relation to the prices of manufactured and capital goods. Thus, observing empiric exchanges between countries, Prebisch–Singer realized that the terms of trade have been moving against the developing economies that remains with a low diversification of their commodity pattern (SINGER, 1999).

⁶⁷During the 50's, many countries were crossed by nationalist and socialist colors, as we can see in Brazil, with Vargas, in Argentina with Peron, or in Cuba with Fidel Castro's front, Bolivia and its national revolution, and Chile with the "Chilean way of socialism" led by Salvador Allende, among others.

nevertheless, turned out to function as important constructors of fantasy - in the Lacanian sense. As it seems, during the middle ages of the 20th century, as described in the university discourse, science and reason assumed an authority position sustained by the work of master's signifiers such as citizenship, democracy, development, and so on. Such 'names', popular among the ruling classes, seek to fixate objects of desire that mask the lack, i.e., they work as signifiers that take their authority from the ability to create cohesion where there was lack, ideologically filling the absence.

In other words, the political mobilization of some groups around such a discourse as that of autonomy was only possible because it works by promising a meaning at the same time that it denies any chance of pinning one down. In that sense, most of us, the local subjects, are engaged "in a search for identity and a struggle over meaning", which accounts for the construction of a desire that masks lack (Glynos; Howarth, 2007, 131). However, the impossible nature that involves the process of identification without identity, that expresses the subaltern's failure to attain a full identity, provokes a series of affections that embrace both complicity and resistance, speakable and unspeakable agencies. Putting it differently, we could say that, since signifiers (as autonomy, citizenship, etc.) stand in for the non-representable (objet a), they ultimately configure an object of both anxiety and fascination.

At the level of national hegemonic groups, the signifier of autonomy, for example, was ideologically raised to the level of *point the capiton*, and hence, it both pinned down meaning and turned it in a phantasmatic fetish. In this case, it incorporates, as Bhabha proposes, the ambiguity around which the political discourse of promise revolves. "This impossible is embodied in the structure of the political discourse as a promise; it is not the subject's breaking point where jouissance has been made impossible by language" (APOLLON, 1996, xxiv). On the other hand, such nationalist project also represents the consolidation of an internal coloniality, which is responsible for a permanent process of social exclusion manifested in growing levels of violence, regressive distribution of wealth, and subordination of public politics to the financial capital. Consequently, an important portion of the local population was excluded from that "local" ideology, i.e., they could not experience it as fetish but only as forclusion.

That probably explains the multiplication of proxies (academic or institutional) that claim to talk for the subaltern or to let them speak for themselves. However, the fact is that, by the end of the first half of the 20th century, the dream of development went through a strong discrediting process, either via the bankruptcy of the national projects, or via the critique promoted by revolutionary movements. After all, while international institutions, the political class, academic groups, and the economic elite discussed the limits and possibilities of those modern signifiers, a huge portion of the Latin American population was diving deep into poverty with none of their needs being in the slight recognized within those signifiers (DUSSEL, 1995). In that sense, since the 1960's and 1970's, an increased number of authors have been debating the philosophical condition of exteriority.

Among Latin American thinkers, the notion of exteriority was mainly mobilized by Enrique Dussel who got it from Levinas in the mid-1970's. More recent works highlight the study of Walter Mignolo, from the modernity/coloniality group, which has advanced Dussel's reflection on exterior frontiers. It should be noted, therefore, that contrary to what can be inferred, the category of externality does not suggest an ontological position absolutely detached from modern circuits — but rather, a position to which is denied a full inscription within the system. As I see it, regarding the necessary conceptual prudence, that notion brought by Dussel and Mignolo can be put to dialogue with the Lacanian idea of ex-sistance: an expelled existence that returns as Real. Thus, I here propose my articulation, starting from the link between the conditions of forclusion as being a good diagnostic to the barred access that disenfranchised people experience in peripheral economies. More precisely, I argue that the subaltern, in Latin America, occupies the position condemned to an ex-sistance in relation to the capitalist jouissance promised by the neoliberal ideology of consumerism.

As already mentioned, I sustain such argumentation by joining my efforts to the Lacanian perspective with the Latin American readings of the Marxist thesis on accumulation, especially those produced from the second half of the 20th century onwards. In this horizon, I draw attention to the Marxist theory of

dependency⁶⁸, which emerges in the 1960's as a creative source to understanding a series of global institutions and structures of constraints that account for the reproduction of capital all over the globe (BORTOLUCI e JANSEN, 2013; KAPOOR, 2002). As most of the notions inspired by Marxism⁶⁹, the category of dependency does not configure a unidimensional concept, that is, it does not reproduce the traditional borders between national and foreign contexts, or between politics and economy. Because of that, dependency would represent a synoptic term, which describes certain characteristics (economic, social, and political) of the society as a whole.

According to Ruy Mauro Marini (1973), capitalism has assumed different forms throughout the globe, each of which is codependent and bound to a global system of accumulation. Therefore, in order to understand the failure of industrialization projects in peripheral regions, as well as their difficulties undermining the high poverty index, Marini and Theotônio dos Santos proposed an important idea: the super-exploitation thesis.

My only argument is that, in conditions of exchange marked by a clear technological superiority of the advanced countries, the dependent economies had to resort to a mechanism of compensation that, allowing the increase of the mass of value and surplus value, tries to compensate, at least partially, the losses of surplus value to which they were subordinated; this mechanism is called the super-exploitation of labor (MARINI, [1978] 2008, 173, my translation).

According to Marini ([1978] 2008), the deterioration of the terms of trade prevents peripheral economies from attaining their surplus in the sphere of circulation, a situation that is exacerbated by the limited transference of technology from the center to periphery. Consequently, the dependent capitalism is led to apply strategies to reduce its production costs through hyper-exploitation of the workforce. In other words, unequal exchange and other types of

⁶⁸ It is necessary to recognize the complexity of the theoretical tradition of Dependency, within which there are important variations, such as the Marxist perspective - formed by Ruy Mauro Marini, Theotônio dos Santos, and others. - and the pluralist or Weberian line - represented by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto.

⁶⁹ In fact, despite the structural discourse, the schools that work on such diagnosis assume two filiations, the Marxist and non-Marxist lineages. The latter, the Weberian tradition of dependency proposed by Cardoso's writings, operates with the idea of a relative autonomy that is articulated by the notion of an 'associate capitalism' as the normative goal. Both lines, however, remain attached to the enlightenment ideal of an autonomous subject, although with different degrees of assimilation and reappropriation of it.

asymmetrical transfers of profit lead the dependent capital to compensate for its loss of accumulation through operations in the sphere of internal production. In that sense, along with the intensification of work hours, the capitalist also employs strategies of reduction in the worker's purchasing power.

Finally a third procedure must be emphasized, Which consists of reducing the worker's consumerism beyond its regular limit, through which *"the necessary consumer fund of the worker becomes in fact, within certain limits, a fund for accumulation of capital"*, thus implying a specific way to increase the exceeding work time(MARINI, 1973, 333, original emphasis, my translation).

Such type of appropriation becomes possible because, within the export-oriented economies, the circuit of production-consumption is interrupted by the intervention of an external market. Hence, the traditional relation, whose reciprocity should end between a national bourgeoisie and the working class, no longer engages the same set of actors. In other words, in dependent economies, the circulation of goods is directed towards the foreign market, so much so that the local workers do not interfere in the consumption of products.

In dependent capitalism, there are objective conditions for super-exploitation to become an essential exploitation mechanism by the capital. The first factor that encourages it consists of the split in the cycle of capital present in reproduction patterns of the capital, which were engendered by independence processes. The exporting vocation present in all these patterns, which only subsided in the short-lived industrial standard, creates a suitable scenario for the capital to generate productive structures that remain far from the needs of the majority of the working population. Thus, inasmuch as workers do not play a relevant role in the realization of the goods produced by cutting-edge companies of accumulation, the capital might have more room to implement the several forms of super-exploitation, particularly the direct underpayment of the workforce and prolonged work hours. (OSÓRIO, 2018, 492, my translation).

Therefore, it is the bourgeoisie class from central economies that occupies the place of the consumer of the major goods produced in the periphery. Such circulation, however, is performed through prices that are low enough to bring down the productivity costs of the central structures (supplies and raw material), which only then can retain the relative surplus value from the exchange of their commodities. Meanwhile, at the margins of the system, the most visible and gross result of this is the violation of the value of the work force, which is bought by

salaries so low that sometimes it becomes impossible for the worker to consume what is strictly necessary to keep his/her subsistence. In the era of neoliberal globalization, the super-exploitation operation is also mobilized by other actors, such as the transnational companies that seek to allocate their factories to economies with no regulatory mechanisms that could ensure the validity of human rights, as is the case of Bangladesh, Philippines, Mexico, and so on.

Following Quijano (2005), to understand these different forms of work remuneration that sustain modernity expansion, it is also necessary to consider their joint operation with race category. During the colonial period, the signifier of race assumed the function of mastering, capable of legitimizing an entire system of domination relations imposed by global powers. Slavery, servitude, reciprocity, salary, these are some of the historical categories crossed by the combined signification between race and capital. Because of that, for Quijano (2005), the center-periphery system can also be read as a geo-cultural formation, based on a logic of a racial division of labor. In that sense, while Europe, as the locus of white and western civilization, concentrated the salaried work with consumption potential, the periphery, in turn, enters the global capitalist system as the arena of non-remunerated or under-remunerated activities. As stated by Fanon, "in the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" (FANON, 2004, p.40).

To this reflection, Lugones (2008) adds the axis of gender, which enters the layers of historical signifiers of domination. In her theory, gender is no longer presented as a category restricted to the control of sexuality, but rather it represents, along with race and capitalism, the central mechanisms of structuration of exploitation in vulnerable regions, such as Latin America. In this sense, aside from the racial division of labor, there would also be a sexual division of labor, which together assures the material inequalities of global capital accumulation (LUGONES, 2008, 2014; SEGATTO, 2011). This symbiosis between patriarchy, coloniality, and capitalism helps us to understand the role played by women of color in peripheral economies.

Within the labor force that has their use-value extensively violated, that of black and indigenous women seems to occupy the most precarious position. Either

as informal employees of domestic work, agricultural workers, or factory human resources, the poor and racialized women became the central target of super-exploitation strategies in dependent economies. So, how can we read such position that is not recognized as a space of legitimate demands by the nation-state, whose bodies is continuously violated by a patriarchal society, and from which even the liberal freedoms are rejected by the capitalist machine? In other words, how can we interpret a position of subjectivity that seems to experience a foreclosure from the main socio-symbolic arenas, that is, that cannot have their needs recognized by the hegemonic ideologies, either in their political, subjective, or economic manifestations in discourse? In the next topic, pursuing those questions, I propose a new algebra for interpreting the logic of the *dependent capitalism discourse*.

5.4. The Discourse of Dependent Capitalism

Considering the discussions carried out so far, I finally come to the point at which I present my reading of a subaltern discursive mathema. Such effort, at the same time that mobilizes Lacanian perspectives on the theme, does not abstract the methodological commitment required by postcolonial lenses, which state the need to perceive the historical functioning of power in contexts of disenfranchise people. In that sense, it needs to dislocate the eurocentrism of the capitalist discourse, as it appears in Lacan's theory. Such model, as described, presupposes a scientific knowledge that forecloses the truth of the subject (its castration) in order to produce an object that functions as a target of unrestricted jouissance. In other words, in the capitalist discourse, the absence of the paternal metaphor manifests itself in the lack of an authority capable of imposing limits to the jouissance. For Lacan, the dismantling of the structural mismatch (impotence) between the subject and the object (as cause of desire) opens the path for the capitalist exploitation of jouissance through the fantasy of consumption. Without the knotting function of the name-of-the-father, the subject in the capitalist's discourse became atomized and easily mobilized around the volatile imaginary identifications with consumable products.

However, as the Dependency thesis allows us to see, capitalism works differently in peripheral regions. As Marini's theory suggests, the jouissance

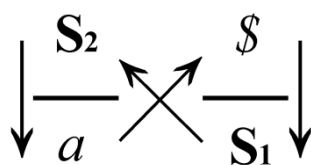
mediated by the scientific production of gadgets does not appear as a promise to the hyper-explored worker, whose desire seems to remain barred from symbolic signification. On the other hand, this *jouissance* barred from symbolic or imaginary returns finds in the Real its mechanisms of signification. Therefore, it is important to mention that, according to Lacan's theory, although *objet a* did not belong to the symbolic or imaginary operations, this does not imply an absence of signification. Being a partial manifestation of the Real, the *objet a* embraces a libidinal signification. Therefore, the paternal metaphor has a double effect: between the register of imaginary and symbolic, it institutes the anchoring points, *points de capiton*, that translate the moment when the signifier and the signified are tied together, producing a stabilized signification; and, at the register of the Real, the phallic signifier situates the *jouissance*, that is, it circumscribes *jouissance* by making it obey a partial and measurable logic.

Thus, when Lacan states that the foreclosure of the naming father produces a return as Real, he opens his conceptualization to those discourses where the lack of signification also affects the libidinal economy. In that sense, if on one hand the foreclosure of the paternal father can result in a disperse and atomized *jouissance*, which leads to a pluralization of the naming father incorporated in the incessant flow of technological production, on the other hand, such absence can also produce a concentration (or appropriation) of *jouissance* in the place of the Other. In the latter case, instead of a subject of the capitalist society, foreclosure is manifested through another face: expelling subjectivities that can only exist as objects of the other's enjoyment. Here, in this hidden facet of foreclosure, is where I anchor my proposition of the *discourse of the dependent capitalism*, which appears as an omitted manifestation of the capitalist rejection of castration. In other words, I read the subaltern position of foreclosure as a sort of compensation that the very capitalist system had to produce in order to sustain its dismantling process of the impotence between subject and *objet a* (as cause of desire).

As Lacan demonstrated, in the discourse of the master the desire can only achieve satisfaction when it is alienated, i.e., when it partially renounces the condition of being inscribed in the symbolic. In that sense, when the modern master (the capitalist) unlocked such limitation, undoing the demand for resignation, the primordial effect was an overwhelming and violent *jouissance*

that necessarily produced an aporia. Socially, the subaltern is that aporia, i.e., that return of the released jouissance as Real. This means that such jouissance is no longer localized in the symbolic as a hiatus, a lost signifier (objet a), but is placed at the core of a symptom.

In terms of the Lacanian schemes, I propose an abstraction exercise to analyze these functions of the discourse of *dependent capitalism*. However, instead of a (anti)clockwise rotation, this new algebra assumes the movement of a mirrored dislocation from the capitalist mathema. Thus, in such figure, the letters appear twisted, but the structure of positions and vector directions are maintained. The dependent capitalism discourse is not a discourse separated from the capitalist algebra presented by Lacan. On the contrary, as I propose, they appear bonded by a sort of aporetic mainspring — in which the dependent capitalism is a non-European manifestation of the capitalist discourse.



In this proposition, as you can see, the agent position is occupied by the same letter of the university discourse, namely, S2 (as knowledge), which assumes the function of mastering. However, as in the capitalist discourse, the position of agent is detached from connections to the place of the other, so much so that knowledge (S2), as agent, cannot interrogate the subject (\$), as other. That explains what I have described as the impossibility of the scientific knowledge to resonate the subaltern difference, which cannot enjoy a stable meaning (narcissistic fixation) within the hegemonic narratives. In other words, the foreclosure of the subject by science, which prevents phallic signification, isolates knowledge from the truth of the subject. In that sense, the knowledge (S2) that used to belong to the slave, as the occupant of the position of the 'other' in the master's discourse, now becomes an agent in service of the truth of the objet (a). Hence, once barred from an inscription in the symbolic, either as unconscious or as fetish, the subaltern is suspended from fixed positions within knowledge.

The absence of anchoring points leads the subaltern's signifiers to a constant slippage under the flux of signified, being prevented from mechanisms of social bounds — or of class-conscious formation to use Spivak's reading. In part, what Spivak suggests as an instrumental logic of class formation in the globalization era (which accounts for the lack of infrastructural resources for consciousness strategies) is approached here as an effect of a lack in the master's attempt to insert the subaltern under symbolic law. Therefore, as illustrated by the erasure of the upper horizontal vector, the agent (S2) of the discourse of dependent capitalism is nothing but a semblance of the master functioning, which is really ruled by the objet (a), as the occupant of the position of truth. Those two positions (agent and truth) are linked by a downward vector (as in the capitalist discourse), stating that the agent invokes the object to respond its call. This means that the authority of the agent in the dependent capitalism discourse emerges as a phantasmatic appeal, insofar as the actually command of the functions of enunciation is in the hands of the objet (a), which is the only one to directly address the other (\$) — as shown by the ascending diagonal vector.

Therefore, in the discourse of dependent capitalism, the only way for the barred subject to exist (\$) is in the position of the other, from where, however, it cannot be summoned by the commands coming from the agent position (S2). In other words, the subject (\$), qua other, cannot respond to the agent's interpellation, except as indirect injunctions coming directly from the place of truth mediated by the *objet* (a). With this, we verify what I debated in the previous chapters as being the failure of a recognition process during the subaltern formation. In this scheme, the call is not sent by the father, the state, science, or other figures of master's authority, but it comes from the object. Practically, it means that it is the market, as the producer of gadgets, that interrogates the other (\$) from a position of truth. At the end, it is the gadget, as object of desire, that has the power to rule, assuming the mastering function.

On the other hand, different from those on the position of agent (the upper left corner), the object, as the occupant of the position of truth, cannot operate its call through an economy of discourse. The truth position, as part of the repressed levels, sends messages from a libidinal economy, the lost jouissance that I described above. For that reason, the subaltern interpellation is operated as Real,

through which the subject is addressed as symptom. As Freud describes, the symptom constitutes an unformalized route for the satisfaction of the Real's drives. Therefore, as I explained before, this Real core of *jouissance* operates through a paradoxical satisfaction, or a backward satisfaction.

In other words, in the dependent capitalism discourse, it is the gadget, the faceless object incorporated by the globalized commodity, that carries the truth of the discourse, i.e., that carries the message capable to disrupt fantasy. However, *objet a* can only deliver a mute message, a nonsensical call that imposes its terms through a violent interruption of fantasy, which orders: enjoy or die! To put it simply, with *objet a* stuck at the unknown place of truth, the place of an impossible signification, the dependent capitalism discourse illustrates how the subaltern cannot answer that order coming from an economy of pleasure with the voice of a castrated subject. S/he cannot respond to the call of enjoyment. Instead, what we see is a barred subject that responds to such interpellation with a death pulsation, that is, a kind of inverted *jouissance* whose effect is to reveal the desire's aporia. In that sense, the unlocked encounter between the subject and the object *plus-de-jouir*, which characterizes the capitalist discourse, is maintained in the dependent societies but as an inverted figure. Hence, instead of going from the position of product towards that of the agent (a direction that sustains the neoliberal ideology), the lost *objet a* in the dependent capitalism discourse is under no control, ruling the Real from a position of truth.

From such position, the object operates regardless of the social and political determinants of its production. Ultimately, it is the object, along with science, that catalyzes the foreclosure of the subject. From its position of truth, the object, transformed into commodity, is raised to the level of source of knowledge, taking the place of the other, the hyper-exploited worker, which became her/himself a consumable product. So, regarding all of this, we can finally ask: and what about the position of product? What does the subject accomplish as a response to this interrogation coming from the object? Following Lacan's reflections on discursive structures, we can infer that when the object directs its call towards the barred subject, they should respond with the production of a surplus (right bottom corner). However, in the case of the dependent capitalism,

such surplus is no longer a *plus-de-jouir*, but the very master signifier (S1) that, once appropriate by the capital, returns as a loss to the subject.

By replacing the position that used to belong to the object (a) in the discourse of the capitalist, the master signifier (S1) is experienced as a minus by the super-exploited worker, and then become a source of appropriation for the dependent capitalist. Hence, in order to sustain its precarious existence as a speakable being, the overexploited subject of the peripheral economies is led to invoke, or to desire, the signifiers that were previously denied to them during symbolic interpellation. The subaltern holds herself to the promise that such names could, at some point, represent her unrecognized needs. Such promise, as mentioned, is in part phantasmatic, since the agent (S2) cannot repair the impossible operation of the paternal metaphor. In its place, what we see is an agent (S2) whose semblance to the master functioning offers two possible reactions to that place of foreclosure: the pluralization of names, that leads to multiple and volatile identities; and the disavowing of the naming function by work of a delusional metaphor that emerges against the hegemonic language, thus suggesting a break with the dyadic narcissistic model of representation.

Concerning the first response, the pluralization of the function of the naming father, it involves a scene where the hegemonic knowledge ends up producing multiple S1's. However, these signifiers are volatile enough never to provide anchoring points that could finally accomplish the course of recognition for the subaltern desires. That is the case of modern signifiers, such as democracy, citizenship, development, consumer, among others. In a way, having the master signifier as a product means that the dependent capitalism sells 'names'. Those names, however, have an end in themselves, showing no intrinsic engagement with the bodies they should represent. In other words, the discourse of the dependent capitalism creates a pluralization of identities that does not require (mis)recognition process, and because of that, it does not operate the castration of the body as the condition for its inscription as speaking beings. The result is virtual identities which are presented as commodities in a market that is, above all, preoccupied with the expansion of a modern ideology that, despite its impossibility, helps to sustain and masquerade its strategies of exploitation.

These names, as products, are ostensibly advertised, either by the global media, international organization reports, the elite's narratives, or even by local intellectuals. As Escobar argues, before being a question of materiality, the agenda of development was raised as a discourse — or more precisely, "the 'Third World' has been produced by the discourses and practices of development since their inception in the early post–World War II period" (1995, 4). According to that author, after the 1940's, capital, science, and technology started working together as political instruments of US hegemony over the so-called undeveloped world. In Escobar's words, from the association between them, "development had achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary" (1995, 5).

Following the conceptual structure proposed here, the idea of development seems to work as a lost signifier, which is experienced as a minus in postcolonial societies, while it is appropriated as a surplus by the capitalist. In that sense, the development sign appears as a kind of commodity, spread as a mechanism of social bind for the periphery, while its impossible realization is converted into profit to the global capital. With it, the very condition of consumption has become a consumable object (or a cause of desire). As such, before claiming dignified conditions of life, the main claim of the periphery is to be recognized as a modern economy, that is, to find recognition within the development signifier. This illustrates how the S1 works in the dependent capitalism discourse from the place of the product, thus posing *development*, for example, as a cause of desire, which will never be achieved but which works as fantasy. The point is that which such signifier mobilizes is not exactly the materiality of higher levels of social equality, but the very promise of a recognition that was forever lost during interpellation.

Similar to the paternal metaphor, such lost signifiers, such as development, try to replace the instauration of a subject of desire, but can only do that through the position of a product. As a result, the colonial/capitalist power appropriates such move, through which it exercises the strategies of hierarchization and/or exclusion. For every person familiar with Latin American histories, it is does not come as a surprise to realize the disciplinary aspect prescribing those modern signifiers. After all, from every encounter between "languages of the past and languages of the present (such as the languages of “civilization” and “barbarism” in post-independence Latin America), internal and external languages, and

languages of self and other", the result has been a violent process of symbolization and domination (ESCOBAR, 1995, 10). Within these terms, the idea of development becomes a modern facet of such violence, which was particularly important for power relations over Latin American countries during the 20th century.

According to Escobar's readings (1995), the development signifier mobilizes specific operations, especially when taken as a mode of representation brought by International Organizations, US foreign policy, and corporative agendas. On one hand, it arrives at the margins as a narrative operating something similar to Bhabha's proposal on fetishism. That is, it works by fixating racial and cultural discriminations in order to ensure control over those barred countries.

These terms — such as overpopulation, the permanent threat of famine, poverty, illiteracy, and the like — operate as the most common signifiers, already stereotyped and burdened with development signifieds. Media images of the Third World are the clearest example of developmentalist representations. These images just do not seem to go away (ESCOBAR, 1995, 12)

The construction of such images exemplifies the moments when colonial/capitalist power responds to the paternal failure with a hyper-narcissistic fixation. The point about those strategies is that such recognition is not only discriminatory, but also relentless in its temporal crystallization. There, the symbolic law works through stereotype, transforming the master's signifiers, such as citizenship, democracy, or development, into a kind of incomplete or antithetical signification. As such, there is always a mark of a fixed lack, which can be seen in signifiers as poverty, corruption and undevelopment. However, as I argue, in spite of moments of fixation, the contemporary moves of signification seem to gain much more from strategies of pluralization of names, pronounced by multiple proxies, than otherwise.

The colonial/capitalist power has under its focus bodies that cannot be overwritten by a neoliberal libidinal economy. Therefore, their entrance (or representation) in the ideological system has to be played by multiple and volatile names, wherein none of them is capable of offering a sense of consistence, or of tying up law and desire, signifier and signified, body and thought. From thence

came the numerous proxies, each of which manipulating a difference desire to the subaltern: "underdeveloped societies desire modernization", "for the unemployed populations, the jobs in production lines of transnational factories are the best source of livelihood", "when integrated in urban production, the peasant women find a path for freedom from their non-modern traditions", and the like.

As the super-exploitation thesis helps us to understand, it is this limitation of regularized and well-paid jobs that make it possible for the subaltern needs to remain unnamed, as well as their bodies uncastrated by the hegemonic discourse. Therefore, the subaltern desire is barred from symbolization in the ruling systems of narratives, which does not mean, however, that the subaltern's body is detached from the functioning of all symbolic laws. It is likely that such marginalized portion of the population participates in other discourses, anti-hegemonic ones, whose modes of representation have a small, if any, impact on the dominant structure of social recognition. Still, the verbal performances, storytelling, songs, dance, and other modes of expressions often work as interpellation systems among their own peers.

Meanwhile, those performances can have furtive appearances in hegemonic narratives, assuming the aspect of a nonsensical and disruptive communication. As mentioned, aside from the strategy of pluralization, a second scenario can emerge from the dependent capitalism discourse. In that scenario, the lost signifier (S1) is not manipulated by the agent, but on the contrary, from the position of product it interrogates the agent in a way to create a delusional metaphor. Frequently related with the aesthetic field, such idea dialogues with the poetic of surrealism. According to Lacan (2001), the delusional metaphor works as a symptom that moves along the principle of the foreclosure (*Verwerfung*) of the Name-of-the-Father, providing a substitutive and paradoxical stabilizer for the relation between signifier and signified.

It is the lack of the Name-of-the-Father in that place which, by the hole that it opens up in the signified, sets off the cascade of reshaping of the signifier from which the increasing disaster of the imaginary proceeds, to the point at which the level is reached at which signifier and signified are stabilized in the delusional metaphor (LACAN, 2001, 165).

Here is where we see the operation of the other (\$) as a subject of the symptom. As mentioned above, in the dependent capitalism discourse the position of truth, occupied by the object, becomes more opaque, appearing in language through disruptive messages. That is why the foreclosure signifier, the subaltern signifiers, can only be summoned through breaches, dreams, slips of the tongue, discursive distortions, paradox, or symptoms. Therefore, such delusional aspects carry affectations that enter the discourse triggering a deformed satisfaction, a sort of substitutive satisfaction for the desires that were expelled into the Real. That is why they are generally experienced as anguish, as a message that carries the unpleasure vocabulary of the Real core of jouissance.

For psychoanalysis, besides the unconscious knowledge that comes from the castrated subject, there is also a type of knowledge provided by the subject of jouissance. It is this knowledge that we refer to when debating the manifestation of subaltern speech as Real. The opening of discourse to this type of communication coming from the drive constitutes one of the central tasks of the discourse analyst. The dependent capitalism mathema, as I propose here, shares the right quadrants (upper and bottom corners) with the discourse of the analyst, which means that both have signifiers (S1) as their products. In the case of the discourse analyst, such production of signifiers aims to access the individual's singularity: that core of difference that cannot be recognized in the other, since it is an irreducible difference — the difference as it appears in the Real. Thus, regarding the discourse of the dependent capitalism, those moments when the lost signifier is caught by a breach or a nonsensical metaphor configure the situations where the analogy with the analyst operation become possible. Those are moments when we verify the operation of what Lacan called *la traversée du fantasme*. In the next chapter, I intend to dig deeper in such relation, looking for moments where subaltern ex-sistence promotes that crossing of fantasy.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter was designed to serve two main objectives: first, to offer a contemporary and more concrete illustration of how the subaltern position operates as foreclosure inside a discursive mainspring; and second, to establish the path through which the reading of subaltern agency as Real could be grasped. In

order to develop the first objective, I decided to dialogue with Lacan's reflection on the capitalist discourse with critical readings on political economy produced by non-European lenses, focusing on the contribution produced by the Latin American studies on Dependency. With the support of Dependency theorists, I came to a better reading of how capitalism organizes production and class formation in postcolonial societies. Additionally, with the help of more recent literatures, such as those proposed by Quijano, Escobar, and Lugones, I was able to approach such contemporary relations of power, understanding their combined action with other systems of interpellation, such as racism and patriarchy. From that, dialoguing with Lacan's theory, I proposed what I called the discourse of dependent capitalism, which translates an algebra that explains how the process of subjectivation operates the construction of social bonds in peripheral societies. With this scheme, it became easier to illustrate the discursive operations and subject relations developed in the previous chapters.

After that, in order to achieve my second claim related with the attempt to grasp subaltern return as Real, I started a discussion on two political strategies available in contexts where castration is under forclusion: a) the pluralization of names, and b) the disavowing of the naming function by work of a delusional metaphor. While the first appears as a strategy mostly exploited by hegemonic actors, such as International Organizations, the elite's discourses, and state representations, the second one appears generally related with clandestine practices and furtive acts, whose effects get closer to the analyst logic, known as the crossing of fantasy. Thus, with this idea, I got finally to the point where the subaltern, as an expelled difference, can find "agency" through the operations of the Real.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Real not only manifests itself as anguish but it also assumes the structure of an "Act". According to Lacan, this means that the Real interrupts reality, but always through a precarious appearance which lasts only the time of an act. In this regard, Lacan correlates the structure of the Real with the structure of the "poetic act". Drawing in a dialogue with surrealism, Lacan infers that the method of such aesthetic tradition is quite similar to the analyst method in the sense that both, analyst and surrealists, try to reach the Real through a dualization of reality. This dualization breaks the harmonic

sense of unity, so when a surrealist artist exposes a nonsensical representation of reality, his/her audience is forced to confront the question: "where is the truth?". From that interrogation comes the conclusion about the feature of fiction that relies on both, reality and fantasy, science and literature, experience and dream, and so on. As result, the analysant and the public of surrealist art are both led to the investigation of the *inter-dit*, i.e., the gap produced during the process of dualization.

As I pointed above, this process is related with the idea of "*la traversée du fantasme*", which tells us about the path for a recognition of the Real, i.e., a recognition of the unrecognizable. For Lacan, the difference in the register of the Real has a semantic value, as opposed to its mobilization as an imaginary and symbolic semblance. This semantic kernel, when accessed, points towards a reflection on the being condition, even if as non-being, as emptiness. That is why the recognition of the Real has an ontological appeal, as I am going to explain in the next chapter. Consequently, the poetic act, similar to the Real act, emerges as a gesture, a short-time act that breaks up fantasy. As Žižek says, it is "a gesture which is no longer 'covered up' by the big Other" (Žižek, 1998, 7). This act comes close to the idea of *event* that approaches the political realm through operations that are fundamentally contingent and whose effects cannot be previously planned. Following this horizon, the subaltern's difference — the element under foreclosure — is no longer deprived of agency, although it does present a barred existence in language. Such agency, in turn, disrupts the rational and solipsist concept of agent, and assumes a more diffuse aspect which is responsible for a transformation on the bases of the discourse structure.

Perhaps in Lacanian terms, the Event might refer to that radical transition from one Discourse to another - in which there is a sublime infinitesimal space where everything is momentarily suspended and anything is possible. It would be this kind of space between two structural positions or signifying regimes that could be truly said to be political. (NEWMAN, 2004, 13).

In the next chapter, I attempt to look for these gestures, where the trauma (coming from super-exploitation) is accessed in its pure state. These are moments when the phantasmatic jouissance of the signifier is suspended, the masking of truth by the object is interrupted, anguish is released, and difference, as singularity

or incommensurability, is revealed. As I see it, these are the moments when the exploitation deployed in the peripheral economies is interrupted by its paradoxical signification. In other words, these are the moments when the Lacanian perspective combined with postcolonial ethos can help us to read the subaltern as a poetic act, as a Real return that forces recognition precisely by interrupting the course of recognition while showing its tragedies.

6. Anguish, Death and Poiesis: Towards a politics of the impossible

*A poesia não – telegráfica – ocasional –
me deixa sola – solta –
à mercê do impossível –
– do real.⁷⁰*
(Ana Cristina Cesar)

6.1. Introduction

Taking Latin America as my terrain of analysis, the main objective of this chapter is to grasp the strategies of return played by the expelled signifieds from the dependent capitalism discourse. As defended in the last chapter, the subaltern position in such contexts embraces subjectivities whose dimension of unrecognized meaning is extended to the point of being trapped in a floating spot within the signifying chain. This means that subalternity translates, above all, a condition of vulnerability that allows those suspended signifieds to be manipulated by hegemonic signifiers. According to Spivak, the result of this impossible representational condition is a subject position from where one can never experience its desires as being of his/her own. However, at the same time that the modern/colonial power prevents the subaltern from performing him/herself as a desiring subject, once it launches their drives into the real, this very foreclosed difference can then return as a disruptive and paradoxical symptom⁷¹.

⁷⁰ In english: "The poetry no - telegraphic, occasional - leaves me alone - free; at the mercy of the impossible - of the real.

⁷¹ The conceptualization of symptom is target of a central and permanent exercise in Lacan's works. It appears at different moments, assuming along them new directions and reformulations. According to MAIA et al (2012), in his early reflection, that was under a decisive influence of Freud and Saussure, Lacan placed his idea of symptom as part of the signifier order. As such, a symptom translates the signifier of repressed signified, which puts it in intimate relation with the unconscious and its metaphors operations. As part of the symbolic, the symptom functions as a knowledge which the subject refuses to recognize, which results in its continuous return, or to be more precise, to its inherent link with repetition. However, as Lacan's theory advanced, it walked towards a passage from the focus on the symbolic to an emphasis on the Real register. In that sense, the symptom became "that which comes from the real" and which carries the truth of the deadlock present in every subjectivation. As the representant of the leftover from symbolic operations, the symptom brings in its core a certain sense of enjoyment, even if through suffering. That is why the subject cannot cease to repeat it, as a tendency to finally meet its death drive. The symptom as Real carries, then, an inverted or paradoxical type of jouissance, which does not work through pleasure but by means of death. The contact with such drives leads the subject to an encounter with the modes of structuration of its subjectivity, that is, its singularity. At this point,

Therefore, at the topic that immediately follows this introduction, my attention is directed towards possible empirical manifestations of that sinthome. My proposal is to read the subaltern ex-sistence as Real through the case of poor and colored women working at multinational factories installed in Latin America countries. In the wake of the theoretical debate developed in the last chapter, I now turn to those women's experiences in order to understand how they are inscribed in the dependent capitalism discourse. More precisely, regarding capitalist libidinal economy, my claim is to demonstrate how the body of poor and racialized woman has its jouissance stolen by the dependent capital that super-exploits their workforce as a way to prevent profits from dropping. On the other hand, I also claim that such bodies (prevented from participating in capitalist libidinal economy from the position of desiring subjects) finally encounter breaches through which they can affect the symbolic, then functioning as disruptive forces against the fantasy of liberal development.

Therefore, drawing on a Lacanian perspective, this first section circles around the application of the previous argument, which states that subalternity can irrupt the knot of social discourse through an operation as Real. In the second section, this discussion is addressed to the political impacts of such subaltern manifestation as Real. The main objective is to answer what the impacts of reading the subaltern resistance would be in parallel to what Lacan called *la traversée du fantasme*. Through this concept, I try to understand the political links that can emerge between an aesthetic logic of the Real and the death mechanisms implied in the process of contestation of fantasy. With this link established, I draw attention to the aspect of indeterminacy and contingency that characterizes the manifestations of the Real at the symbolic order.

Lacan coins the *sinthome* to designate this recognition of the lack in the Other, or of the failure in the knotting of the three rings (imaginary, symbolic, and the real). The sinthome brings ways to deal with that which the symbolic cannot manage (MAIA et al., 2012). In this chapter, I mobilize the concept of symptom as part of that last move by Lacan, thus related with the Real register and with what he later termed the sinthome. However, the subaltern position as sinthome approaches such phenomena from an intersubject dimension, as a sort of symptom not aligned with individual structures but with the capitalist system itself. In other words, as a sinthome of dependent capitalism discourse.

However, a question remains: what would be the social effects of those experiences of subaltern as indeterminacy? In order to answer it, I follow to the next topic searching for these implications of subaltern resistance with a particular focus on its impacts on politics of recognition. With that, I intend to complete a certain circle of analysis: if I started the problematization posing the question of subalternity dialoguing with theories of recognition, I now turn my lenses to analyze how the resistance coming from those spots of limited recognition can alter the politics that sustain such subalternization. The idea is to debate an alternative approach on recognition, as a result of the activation of difference as an element with Real attributes.

After that, I follow to the last topic, in which I build a brief discussion on non-hegemonic discourses. Calling attention to other spheres of interpellation seems to be a task that we cannot dismiss if we want to avoid the narrow view that associates political power strictly with narratives of the ruling classes. This last topic has this function, and then tries to recognize that, although new modes of subjectivation can emerge as breaches in the hegemonic knot, as is the focus of my analysis, other paths of resistance can be operated as hidden performances situated in discourse structures that coexist and counterpose the global and hegemonic ones. The idea is to demarcate the relevance of this complementary discussion but without the claim of exhausting the theme or of opening a new front for investigation.

6.2. From stolen jouissance to clandestine bodies: female resistance in Latin America

In this section, my attempt is to start a reflection that leads us to understand how subalternity can irrupt the knot of social discourse through the operations of the Real. For that, I take as my focus of analysis the violation of labor force perpetrated by global capitalism against poor women of color⁷² in Latin America. I choose these subjects because they inhabit an intersectional

⁷² As Mohanty (1991, 7) asserts, *women of color* is in "a term which designates a political constituency, not a biological or even soci-ological one. It is a sociopolitical designation for people of African, Caribbean, Asian, and Latin American descent, and native peoples of the U.S. It also refers to "new immigrants" to the U.S. in the last decade- Arab, Korean, Thai, Laotian, etc. What seems to constitute "women of color" or "third world women" as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications."

space of oppression that makes their female bodies circulate across interpellation systems of class, race, and gender, having in all of them their linguistic inscription barred by what I call as a foreclosure of difference. Therefore, in the line of the reflections presented up to this point, I take the case of female exploitation in peripheral economies as a terrain where such subaltern bodies have to operate their resistance through a paradoxical satisfaction.

My general argument circles around the ways that such women are inscribed in the neoliberal libidinal economy by positions of loss. Thus, by the end, my objective is to demonstrate how their stolen jouissance returns as a disruptive force against the fantasy of liberal development. To begin with, I call attention to the second half of the 20th century, when the increase in global demand for foreign investments turned most of dependent societies into susceptible territories for the implantation of liberal agendas. The creation of EPZ (Export Processing Zones) emerges in such context and illustrates a specific type of response from the peripheral economies to the new stage of globalized production. In part, in order to avoid capital scape, most countries faced an increase in the demands for intensive forms of accumulation and found in the EPZ a way to reinforce such incentives at the production level (low costs, tax exemptions, and absence of legal restrictions for labor protection).

In fact, one of the distinctive features of contemporary societies is the internationalization of economies and labor forces. In industrial societies, the international division of economic production consisted in the geo-graphical separation of raw-material extraction (in primarily the third world) from factory production (in the colonial capitals). With the rise of transnational corporations which dominate and organize the contemporary economic system, however, factories have migrated in search of cheap labor, and the nation-state is no longer an appropriate socioeconomic unit for analysis. In addition, the massive migration of ex-colonial populations to the industrial metropolises of Europe to fill the need for cheap labor has created new kinds of multiethnic and multiracial social formations similar to those in the U.S. (MOHANTY, 1991, 2).

In the ex-colonies, local governments promoted the implementation of liberal incentives as a form to ensure the travelling of American and European capitals towards their marginal territories. However, plunged into debt crises and economic recession, the countries from Latin America, East or South-East Asia experience a type of capitalist surplus that does not cease to be under pressure. As

a vicious cycle, the opening of the national markets and the lowering of the productive chain poses themselves repetitively as necessary strategies to avoid a sharp drop in profit rates. From that, came the constant implementation of policies of flexibilization, informalization and precarization of work conditions. The EPZs exemplifies this scenario, which usually presents a huge impact on segments that require low qualification, as those of garments and agricultural productions, all particularly common among dependent societies.

The new paradigms of the realm of work (neo-Fordism, Toyotism etc.) which articulate the flexibilization of labor processes with the reforms of working links ultimately reinforce the old regime of super-exploitation of work in the periphery and extending its mechanisms to the more developed regions of the planet. Once again, it is emphasized that these mechanisms might work simultaneously to an increase in work productivity, especially in those activities with intensive workforce, and yet widely grounded on living labor. (SANTANA, 2013, 118, my translation).

Therefore, in terms of workforce, the technological revolution of the last decades created a paradox situation. In part, it improves opportunities for better salaries related with the demand for qualified and intellectualized workers. However, since the responsibility upon education and other qualifying trainings usually relies on individual's conditions, the expected incorporation of knowledge into the workforce that should respond for an increase in income and better conditions of labor ends up reproducing inequalities already present in society. Thus, if on one hand, the more qualified workforce trained for specific markets receives good salaries and assumes the role of globalized consumers, on the other, the disenfranchised part of global population becomes even more vulnerable to super-exploitation practices.

These mutations have therefore created a working class that is more heterogeneous, more fragmented, and more complexified, divided between qualified and unqualified workers, formal and informal market, young and elders, men and women, stable and precarious, immigrants and nationals, white and black, etc., not to mention the divisions that derive from the differentiated inception of countries and their workers in the novel international labor division. (ANTUNES, 2000, p. 184, my translation).

In that sense, the globalized industries with mass production usually employ workers who are economically and socially vulnerable. Because of that,

according to contemporary readings of Marxist Dependency theorists, the technological structuration of capital does not end with the previous (and usually intensive) forms of exploitation. On the contrary, what we see since the 1980's is an increase and expansion of super-exploitation mechanisms in the periphery, and sometimes, even inside the very core economies (VALENCIA, 2016). In this context, the subaltern emerges as the super-exploited body, whose living existence is unrecognized to the point of being prevented from any mechanisms that could allow their entrance in the system of law or desire.

Moreover, a quick look in the history of capitalism is enough to realize that, not rarely, such marginalized bodies carried out gendered features⁷³. In that sense, every time that the productive systems had to pressure down their prices, the super-exploitation strategies (flexibilization, informalization, etc.) emerges hand in hand with another specific process: the feminization of labor. Consequently, between the vulnerable population, "women are most likely to be employed on temporary contracts and many women are found in the lowest tiers of the production chain as informal workers or home workers" (SOMO, 2011, 6). In addition, since the value of the workforce cannot be detached from the body that carries it, we can also infer that such feminization process came associated with a racialization logic. Hence, whether at the maquilas, or in the domestic or agricultural sectors, the position of poor and racialized women is turned into an immediate target for precarization practices.

World market factories relocate in search of cheap labor, and find a home in countries with unstable (or dependent) political regimes, low levels of unionization, and high unemployment. What is significant about this particular situation is that it is young third world women who over-whelmingly constitute the labor force. And it is these women who embody and personify the intersection of sexual, class, and racial ideologies. (MOHANTY, 1991, 28).

⁷³ "Women have a higher incidence than men among those who earn less than the legal minimum income, which suggests that among these, underemployment by income is more marked. In Chile, women constitute 67.1% of workers with less than 1 minimum wage per hour. Moreover, almost 14% of domestic workers receive less than the legal minimum wage per hour. In El Salvador, 29.8% of women workers have salaries per month below the minimum wage (24.1% of men) but this situation becomes frequently among domestic workers, since 93.8% receive wages below the national legal minimum (85.4% less than the minimum wage per hour.) In Costa Rica, 64% of domestic workers receive monthly salaries below the minimum, a situation that reaches 31% of salaried women" (CEPAL et al., 2013, 42-43, my translation).

According to a report produced by CEPAL [ECLAC] et al. (2013) on gender equality and work conditions in Latin America, the main categories that explain job discriminatory practices are those of gender, race, class, and age.

In terms of quantity and quality of employment, the job opportunities are segmented according to gender and also among women. Those with less years of schooling, those who belong to households of lower socioeconomic levels, those who are indigenous or of African descent, as well as young women, face a complex institutional framework that tends to reproduce inequality in its different aspects (CEPAL, et. al, 2013, 70, my translation)

In that sense, "if it were possible to design an international social pyramid in labor market, the young female workers racially recognized as non-white and immigrants, or rural migrants from the Global South, would be more likely to occupy the most precarious jobs"⁷⁴ (GALHERA; VEIGA, 2017, 155, my translation). As proved by the clandestine factories operating in Brazil and Argentina, the workers of the informal sector are often poor and colored citizens or immigrants. The illegal condition of that population assures the functioning of a modern type of slaving based on low wages, extended work journeys, and social imprisonment.

They [the immigrants] sign an agreement to stay a minimum period of time, usually three years, and promise not to talk to the police. In other cases no agreement is signed at all. After the arrival of the immigrants' (travel) documents are often taken away, preventing the workers from moving to another employer or from going back to their country of origin. (SOMO, 2011, 05).

Throughout this century, the main destinations of South American migrants looking for work were Argentina and Brazil. In Argentina, the immigrant workforce is mostly comprised of female bodies that, in general, belong "to the indigenous ethnic groups the Quechuas and the Aymaras and come from other South American countries, mainly Bolivia and Peru" (SOMO, 2011, 5). Although it is difficult to be precise, "some estimate that 20% of the Bolivian GDP is comprised of remittances sent by Bolivian garment workers from

⁷⁴ In the original: "se fosse possível desenhar uma pirâmide social internacional no mercado de trabalho, trabalhadoras jovens, marcadas racialmente como não-brancas e imigrantes ou migrantes rurais do Sul Global, teriam mais chances de ocupar os postos mais precarizados"

Argentina" (SOMO, 2011, 5). Such workers, however, are usually targets of informal and abusive work conditions. In Brazil, the context is the same, being frequently marked with occurrences denouncing slave labor against sweatshops. In August of 2011, the case involving sweatshops in São Paulo caused a stir:

In this case, the sweatshops provided clothing items exclusively for Zara. The conditions included curtailment of workers' freedom, employers retaining documents, trafficking of people (from Bolivia and Peru), illegal hiring, exhausting work hours, servitude by debt, and child labor. According to field surveys, Bolivian workers at sweatshops in São Paulo were paid approximately R\$ 705 monthly for daily 13 work hours, or R\$ 1.7 per clothing item. Such workers are majoritarily young men and women, illegal immigrants, racialized in lower statuses (GALHERA; VEIGA, 2017, 144-145).

As predicted, among these exploited workers in garment factories in Brazil, women usually assume the position of highest precarization. In favor of the thesis of the "feminization of poverty", Galhera and Veiga provide important numbers, demonstrating that, in Brazil, the "Bolivian women and migrant workers in the apparel production have, compared to their male counterparts and under the same context, a lower educational level (37% have some or no instruction) and lower compensation (the average salary is GBP 704.11) (GALHERA; VEIGA, 2019, 78)⁷⁵. Of course, this is not a new scenario, since historically the signifiers of citizenship and of illegal immigration have been played ambiguously in favor of the interests of economic agendas. Therefore, for centuries, "these state practices are anchored in the institutions of slavery, capitalist neocolonialism, and, more recently, monopoly, multinational capitalism" (MOHANTY, 1991, 23).

At the Mexican border, the ethnic and gendered aspects of the average worker in the maquilas is commonly related with an internal diaspora, instead of

⁷⁵In a study of 2010 about "the typical Bolivian migrant then economically active in the state of São Paulo", the profile indicates that "most were still single men (56.1% male and 60% single), although younger (twenty-nine years on average), worked approximately forty-three hours per week, and received a wage of BRL 1.776 (US\$559). There was a larger participation of women in this group (43.9% versus 41.16% generally); the average age was twenty-nine years old; it included child labor (we found three incidences of children from ten to thirteen years old); and the pay was much lower (BRL 837.04 or US\$263.46, even with the inclusion of divergent/high salaries). The education level of this group was lower, they worked more hours per week (43.37 hours), and included more unmarried people and more precarious workers, such as those engaged in self-employment (60.98% rather than 52.23% more generally), and unregistered immigrants (28.11% rather than 27.19%); fewer had steady jobs, such as those with formal contract (9.66% rather than 15.35%) or were employers (0.88% compared to 1.54%)" (GALHERA; VEIGA, 2019,77).

an external migrant dislocation. That is the case of rural young women that move "to the border in order to escape poverty and authoritarian patriarchy, which could be fathers, brothers, husbands, priests, or the State." (TAYLOR, 2010, 351). However, instead of a better life, most of those women encounter more exploitation, invisibility, and all types of gender-based harassment and violence. The huge number of young rural women that went to "Mexico's tax-free border cities" during the beginning of the 1990's, after NAFTA's establishment, led to high male unemployment and to a generalized fall in wages. Paradoxically, this situation placed social forces against those women, in a way that "both the multinational firms and the states concerned failed to protect these women from targeted, violent abuse" (TRUE, 2010, 49). Similar scenes have been reproduced since then, reaching other economic zones throughout the region.

For those reasons, women are more susceptible to occupying the subaltern position. After all, within the global value chains, "'third world'⁷⁶ female bodies become disposable subjects" (TAYLOR, 2010, 352-353). Furthermore, their vulnerability to violence is intensified by the lack of institutional mechanisms for all types of legal protection, from labor law to human rights.

Migrant women usually work in poor conditions with low social status, live in degrading housing situations, and lack basic legal protections and opportunities for redress. Domestic workers, for instance, are typically excluded from standard labour practices such as minimum wage, regular payment of wages, a weekly day off and paid leave. Employers evade domestic labour laws and governments rarely monitor their observance in the domestic sphere. Labour-sending countries for their part have an economic incentive to ignore their breach as they benefit from the high levels of remittances and may not wish to jeopardise their relations with relevant host countries (TRUE, 2010, 52).

⁷⁶ This term involves a difficult generalization, since it does not represent a coherent or even automatic unitary group. After all, there is no such thing as a "homogeneous configuration of third world women who form communities because they share a "gender" or a "race" or a "nation." (MOHANTY, 1991, 5). But, on the other hand, races, gender and nations are, most of all, social and historical categories, forged within power relations. In that sense, as Mohanty (1991) proposes, we could talk about third world women as a viable opposition alliance regarding a common context of struggles. Because of that, the author deals with such 'identity' as an imagined community: "Imagined" not because it is not "real" but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries, and "community" because in spite of internal hierarchies within third world contexts, it nevertheless suggests a significant, deep commitment to what Benedict Anderson, in referring to the idea of the nation, calls "horizontal comradeship" (MOHANTY, 1991, 4).

In summary, such position of oppression is associated with the small value that those workers represent to socioeconomic systems, considering their position under capitalist hyper-exploitation. To the eyes of the capital, as labor force, the super-exploited subjects can be prematurely replaced without further costs to the system, given the large reserve of workforce available; secondly, as consumers, those individuals have no recognized function, since their extremely low wages have frozen any participation at the sphere of circulation that could go beyond basic subsistence. In the domain of public representation, such bodies cannot enjoy recognized spaces of contestation, such as labor unions, national justice, and other associative practices. The gender variable also has its application in these cases, particularly in the garment industry, since it is responsible for combining two dimensions that were traditionally separated: “that of the factory”, which involves elements of control, time, and production, and that of the “home”, usually associated with care services and “leisure” (GALHERA; VEIGA, 2017, 148). If on one hand, the overlapping between these domains is interesting due to a possible reduction of expenses for both employees and employers, on the other, the extensive work journey that results from the combination of reproductive work and clothing production creates significant limits for collective actions between those workers.

The inability of the institutional structures to recognize such different position occupied by female bodies results in a lack of collective base capable to vocalize the interests and necessities of those women. Because of that, what we see is a multiplication of the stakeholders that “speak on behalf of the workers” (GALHERA; VEIGA, 2017, 169) throughout transnational arenas. Meanwhile, the poor colored women at the factories remain unable to respond to the modern interpellation that calls by names such as citizen, worker, consumer, or even women (if regarding the hegemonic ethos of the western and white feminism). In a way, to the subaltern women, even the signifier of ‘humanity’ cannot enable the binding function it should offer. After all, at the margins, it is no longer a set of signifiers that summons the subject to exist, but on the contrary, it is the very *object* that interrogates the subject in order to constrain the production of a loss.

Therefore, regarding the algebra of the dependent capitalism discourse, I propose the following reading: women workers, as the occupant of the other, can only exist as a barred figure, whose message is sent (or summoned to exist) by

objet (a) that interpellates from the position of truth. Considering such objectified means, that message comes always through non-meaningful words, as if it were the speech of a body that can only exist as symptom. The current phenomena of handwritten labels, in which an unknown, unnamed, and disembodied worker sends a clandestine call for help, seem to be a potent figure to illustrate how, in the case of the subaltern, the object prevails over the subject in terms of enunciation functions. As is known, since the last decades of the 20th century, when multinational corporations started to install their supply chain in EPZs from peripheral countries, stories of violations of labor rights, human trafficking, sexual abuse, and other forms of exploitation have come to make up a new list of labor vulnerabilities. In such context, once in a while, the cheap and often unprotected workforce tries to find ways to break their invisibility. It is always a furtive and clandestine event, like the "poetic act" described in the previous topic, whose nature is ephemeral but disruptive.

The messages written down by workers on the labels sewn on clothing follows such logic, according to which, ironically, the very consumable object, that has continually taken the place of the subject truth, turns out to be the very letter through which the rejected speech resists. In other words, unable to have a body (over)written by the hegemonic discourse, the subaltern finds an alternative vehicle to carry on their 'silenced' voice. Such carrier come to be the gadget, the commodity, which represents the only materiality that is summoned to exist by the master's position (S2). In this sense, if science invokes a linguistic life to a number of consumable objects, promoting with it the foreclosure of the subject, then later, we can say that such lost signifiers start to function as *caput mortuum*. As explained in the fourth chapter, Lacan uses the concept of *caput mortuum* to describe a resisting metaphor that emerges as a piece of the Real, and which does not cease to circle and to pressure the phantasmatic coherence of the symbolic.

The *caput mortuum* does not describe a symbolic signifier, but rather a leftover, a prohibiting letter expelled from the signifying chain, whose absence, however, works as the very *cause* of signification. In this sense, I argue that the subaltern excluded symbols assume a certain materiality "akin to that of the letter the minister swipes from the queen in the story of 'The Purloined Letter,'" in which "it is less what the letters say — and insofar as they are letters they do not say anything — than their matter" (FINK, 1995, 27-28). Thus, prevented from

having a "body that matters" according to the terms of the symbolic and narcissistic registers, the subaltern furtively steals the recognized materiality of the consumable object to create a clandestine speaking 'body'. Paradoxically, the female workers (that cannot have their needs represented through institutional means) have their messages emerging as a Real object: signifying nothing but working as an interruption. Therefore, the letter placed on those labels, not rarely written down in a language that neither the author nor the recipients can understand, carries no specific meaning. In fact, it has no addressed sender or recipient, no name or voice, yet it has agency: the letter causes anguish and opens the Other's jouissance to the death drives, that is, it reveals the suffering, the hiatus that had to be masqueraded for the neoliberal ideology to operate its phantasmatic imaginary misrecognitions.

Expelled from the capitalist promise of an *all-satisfaction*, the rural young women that work in the maquilas, the poor black women that serve in unregulated domestic activities, or the female migrants that have their bodies imprisoned in informal factories cannot have their desires represented by a master's signifier. In these cases, the Althusserian police-officer cannot grasp an interjection capable to call such subjects, since their exploited bodies slip through interpellation systems of class, race, and gender, without finding a name to hold on to or to give their intersectionality position a sense of consistency. They are neither workers, nor women, nor indigenous, nor black, but something in-between, some name that the hegemonic discourse cannot pronounce or understand. In other words, forced to experience the signifier (S1) function as a loss, the poor and colored women of peripheral economies cannot have their body overwritten by hegemonic language, which explains, in the economy of discourse, the gap between the constative and performative manifestations described by Spivak.

However, my argumentation points to the fact that, from the ex-sistence at the Real register, those women signifieds can embrace other abilities of agency, then related to a performativity as symptom. Therefore, as described in the example of the handwritten labels, the barred jouissance of the super-exploited workers opens a hole in the master's authority. Such hiatus, however, can be played by both: the capitalist, in order to create multiple and floating proxies without ever offering infrastructure conditions for institutional (mis)recognitions; or by the subaltern, that finds in such hiatus a breach through which to 'speak' -

even though using a different type of language. Lacan called this other language *lalangue*. Such neologism was used to describe the language produced at the sphere of the *jouissance*, i.e., as it appears in the border between the Real and the symbolic. In that sense, in the domain of *objet a*, the letter is separate from the signifier, since it is isolated from the relational aspect of the chain, marking a sort of turning point over the primacy of linguistic structures.

As Lacan states, the *lalangue* says more than language, or at least, it embraces knowledges that cannot be linguistically communicated. In part, it happens because *lalangue* is made of misunderstandings that affect, more than read, bodies and thoughts. As such, *lalangue* designates a sort of sound, that letter "previous to the master signifier, that which analysis seems to release and unleash"⁷⁷ (MILLER, 1996, 69, my translation). Therefore, opposing his first thesis about the interdiction of the *jouissance* in speech, Lacan proposes a type of *jouissance* letter.

Lacan's classical thesis, which as a high school student I had copied, was the following: "Jouissance is debarred for those which speak as such." This sentence is found in the *Ecrits*, page 821. Thus Lacan evoked that maybe *jouissance* could only be spoken between lines. And what has Lacan offered us for the last two or three years? Something that would be, on the contrary, the *jouissance* of the very word (MILLER, 1996, 70, my translation).

Thus, if symptom is a *jouissance* organized as a knot of signifiers (MILLER, 1996), then the subaltern as Real can finally find a way to enunciate their difference. In the case of the hyper-exploited surplus of the subaltern, whose pleasure and desire have to be foreclosed in favor of the Other's misrecognition, the clandestine labels come as a form to communicate such unpleasure and paradoxical satisfaction. Thus, when the buyers of those products have a random access to such undesirable messages, their identity of desiring subjects, masquerade as consumers, are immediately and stealthily interrupted. For a moment, the fantasy of development is forced to confront the antagonisms and traumas left behind by the law of symbolization. This figures the moment when an object created to produce desire, and to replace the untied castration, ends up, instead, offering anguish. This is an example of what I have been approaching as

⁷⁷ In the original: "anterior ao significante mestre, aquela que a análise parece liberar e desencadear" (MILLER, 1996, 69)

the working of paradox as the linguistic trope for foreclosed signifieds. In these terms, the consumable gadget, created by capitalism to unleash the fantasy of enjoyment, paradoxically become the emissary of the violent and disruptive performance of the Real.

With such form of communication, the subaltern approaches a paradoxical scene of interpellation. Instead of a Call mobilized by a cop, God, a father, or any other authorized figure, it presents an anonymous and disturbing summoning that does not request a narcissistic move, but on the contrary, it triggers a des-identificatorian effect. Though this reversed interpellation, the individual is not summoned to speak its 'own' name, but to lose it. That is how the S1 as a product of the dependent capitalism discourse can work similar to the analyst's discourse. Despite their different means, in both cases, the production of signifiers can open a path to singularity; that is, to open the manifestation of that core of difference that cannot be recognized in the Other.

Because of that, when we ask what would be the impacts of such form of resistance, the answer comes along with the operations of death. In other words, when the failure of the naming father is caught by a breach, a nonsensical metaphor or a surrealistic act, as described above, then we can see points of analogy between them and the analyst operation that Lacan called *la traversée du fantasme*. In the next topic, let us take a moment to understand better the political links that can emerge from what seems to be a kind of aesthetic logic of the Real and the death mechanism implied in the process of crossing fantasy.

6.3. *La traversée du fantasme*: Death and Poiesis

*I fear that while we still have grammar, we have not yet killed God*⁷⁸
(BEY, 1986, 167)

When debating the notion of aesthetic, Strong (2012) proposes a broader and interesting view of it, according to which such field describes a critical *ethos*,

⁷⁸ Phrase taken from a Hakin Bey's text, when he makes a reference to Nietzsche's idea. The full paragraph: "Of all the responses to Saussure's linguistics, two have special interest here: the first, "antilinguistics," can be traced — in the modern period — from Rimbaud's departure for Abyssinia; to Nietzsche's "I fear that while we still have grammar we have not yet killed God" (BEY, 1986, 167).

a sort of position that enables the subject to engage in practices of creativity. As such, aesthetics translates the potential of opening thoughts to “multiple strategies of subjectivation”. The aesthetic subject, by consequence, appears as a domain where the rules of symbolic recognition do not enjoy prevalence over other types of subjectivities. For Shapiro (2012), the aesthetic practice of creativity meets the psychiatric method precisely on that point where both claim to instigate new forms of self-fashioning, taking it as a contingent process instead of an attempt to reveal an essentialist idea of substance.

Under a similar horizon, Jacques Rancière reads such creative destination as part of the "aesthetic experience" whose main function is to dislocate the actual modes of social identity.

Aesthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination it presupposes disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations. What it produces is not rhetorical persuasion about what must be done. Nor is it framing of a collective body. It is a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are ‘equipped’ to adapt to it. It is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible. As such, it allows for new modes of political construction of common objects and new possibilities of collective enunciation. However, this political effect occurs under the condition of an original disjunction, an original effect, which is the suspension of any direct relationship between cause and effect. (RANCIÈRE, 2011, 72–73).

In a way, it seems that, for those authors, the notion of aesthetics is generally related with forms of communication no longer strictly attached to linguistic, positive, and abstract references. Instead, aesthetics summons an embodied or feeling-based type of experience (SHAPIRO, 2012). This perspective turn makes an important move towards those facets of human experiences that remain unseen by hegemonic performances of recognition. Therefore, in Strong’s analysis we find an invitation to understand aesthetics⁷⁹ as a paradigm that marks our relationship with the domain of incomprehensibility, i.e. with those elements that cannot be read by our linguistic skills. To approach such arena, Strong brought the Kantian notion of noumenon.

⁷⁹ By aesthetics, Strong (2012, 13) does not mean only what we usually call 'art', “but that, as with art, an aesthetic relation occurs with the acknowledgment of the presence of the incomprehensible and the consequent recognition that what one says about it is necessarily in and only in one’s own voice”.

The matter is made all the more complex when we examine Kant's definition of an aesthetic idea: it is "the representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it, which consequently no language fully attains or can make intelligible". The aesthetic idea thus can come about only because there is a realm for which we do not have words, that remains not unknown but unknowable. An aesthetic idea is, thus, impossible without the realm of the noumenal. That which "no language . . . fully attains" is constitutive of the aesthetic idea (STRONG, 2012, 32).

According to this reading of Strong, the idea of aesthetic emerges intrinsically related with moments when linguistic laws failure on their quilting abilities, then opening a path for other modes of subjectivation. Taken as a point of access into an arena of symbolic unintelligibility, the notion of aesthetics presents itself as an interesting instrument for us to think about the subjectivation process from the perspective of the Real - in Lacanian terms. Hence, similarly, we could ask if Strong's proposal on aesthetics could also be applied as a way to understand the accessing points of the Lacanian Real, since it also embraces a realm of what cannot be attained by language. However, in order to advance such investigation, we must first ask: is it possible to create a dialogue between the Kantian notion of noumenon mobilized by Strong, and the Lacanian concept of the Real? Can both be framed as similar types of unknowable? If possible, what does this dialogue tell us about the relationship between aesthetic experiences and the return of the Real?

Accompanying Eyer's debate on Kantian and Lacanian topologies, I propose to initiate this debate by realizing that the link between those authors, although possible, is neither automatic nor devoid of limits. In Eyer's words:

Kant's insistence that things-in-themselves were necessarily existent and yet unknowable to human reason serves as a useful analogue to the ways in which Lacan sought to understand the Real, as much as for its differences as for its similarities; the Real, as we've established, is not so much something absolutely outside the subject's knowledge as it is an internal condition of the emergence of the subject of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as such. (EYERS, 2012, 64).

In the wake of Eyer's proposition, the analogy between Kantian and Lacanian approaches would only be possible if we do not refrain from looking to

their fundamental points of disagreement. Most of their differences, Evers states, rely on the ways through which each author situates the idea of a dividing line. Therefore, whereas for Kant the notion of 'limit' is essentially focused on the delimitations of an epistemological field, for Lacan, in turn, it assumes an ontological concern that situates the question of internality/externality at the level of subjectivation. In other words, "between the signifier and the Real, the problem is not only epistemological, but ontological." (DUNKER, 2019, 106).

[...] here it is important not to confuse the argument: it is not because the signifier is the condition of accessibility, the basic materiality, coming from Lacan's Kantian scheme, that "speaking", "thinking" or "writing" the Real and the enjoyment, can only occur from the signifier. As good as it may be, this is an epistemological argument, which deals with the possibility of knowing, not about the possibilities of existence (or consistency, or ex-sistence). (DUNKER, 2019, 101).

Ultimately, this means that the lack of accessibility to the language, which marks the Real's constitution in its logic dimension, should not imply a debate on classical metaphysical figures of universality and necessity, being and non-being. On the other hand, this position does not prescribe a *deontologization* of the debate, but rather it proposes an ontological condition of negativity that emerges as a critique of the metaphysics of identity (DUNKER, 2019). Hence, the Lacanian theorization does not assume that "what is 'inside language' is opposed to what is 'outside language' in an analogous way to what belongs to reason and what is out of reason, what belongs to being (logos) and what is outside it" (DUNKER, 2019, 97). Thus, for Lacan, between the "inside and outside" of language there is no space for thinking in terms of being, on one side, and nothing, on the other.

Actually, following Badiou on his reading of Lacan, Dunker assumes that the conceptualization around the unconscious opens a particular access to ontology in Lacan since it dislocates the traditional metaphysical opposition between "being and non-being" (2019, 92). At the limit, the Lacanian Real posits a critique of the metaphysical understanding of unity, since it does not carry a division between "two substances (*ousia*, substance or essence)" (DUNKER, 2019, 102). In its place, the Real tells us about "non-being in a double way: not-being-one (to less than-one) and not being Other (non-one-that do not)" (DUNKER, 2019, 102). As a result, while the unreachable condition of the 'empty

space' of Kant's theorization involves epistemological effects that separate finite and infinity figures, in Lacan, the emptiness of the Real conforms a condition of un-being that lies between "two figures of infinity"⁸⁰. Ontologically, the implication of such positionality is to avoid any attempt to define the Real "as a unit or as a multiplicity" (DUNKER, 2019, 103-104).

Of particular interest is the language Lacan employs to designate this internal, and yet somehow external, limit; the limit is posed as a 'residue', a leftover from the process of narcissism, and one senses that little more can be said about it beyond its persistence in the life of the subject. This is distinct from Kant's 'empty space' of intelligible being; but a spatial metaphoric is nonetheless crucial to Lacan's argument here: the subject advances towards the Real as something external and encounters it nonetheless as an internal limit, a limit that, further, seems to imply a beyond that cannot, as a result of castration, be reached. (EYERS, 2012, 65).

In summary, what it is important to grasp from this debate is that we cannot think Lacan's topography through an epistemological equation that, by approximating intelligibility to reason, ends up assuming an ontological universality of the being (if s/he thinks or speaks, then s/he necessarily is). "Against this", states Dunker, "we must remember Lacan's Hegelianism when affirming that the real is rational and the rational is real, thus, there is a speculative identity between the exterior and the interior" (2019, 97). With this, we can avoid, on one hand, to be caught by the idea that there is no space for being outside the "word", and on the other, to assume the wrong idea that psychoanalysis can be reduced to a criticism of empiricism. As Dunker (2019) explains, the ethics of the psychoanalyst does not prioritize speeches by suspending any reference that could offer consistency outside the operation of signifiers. Actually, "it is absolutely not a question of suspending the reference, but of realizing that Lacan introduces a negative reference: the zero, emptiness, lack, nothingness" (DUNKER, 2019, 97).

⁸⁰ According to Dunker, "the Lacanian novelty is more in the separation between the multiple and the un-being than in the critique of the unity of being. This happens because the theory of jouissance is a setting of score with two figures of infinity, infinity deduced and understood in the finite, between zero and one for example, and infinity able to create a new form of time. This second figure of real infinity is referred to by the thesis of "y a de l'un" (Hálgoum)" (DUNKER, 2019, 103).

Thus, as described above, this Lacanian idea of emptiness is different from Kant's. In that sense, considering Strong's mobilization of aesthetics in Kant, we could say that something "similar" could be made with Lacan, but only if we assume that, in this case, aesthetic does not access a space of emptiness, as epistemological transcendence, but it accesses a space of lack, as ontological negativity. For Eysers, taken as a mark of an impossible knowledge, the Kantian notion of boundary⁸¹ allows us to establish a connection between that and the spatiality of Lacan's three registers. However, as I see it, such direct dialogue only works if we think the Real in terms of its logic or topography dimensions. On the other hand, as I am problematizing here, if we face the Real's connection with time, then the fundamental question of ontology as separated from metaphysics cannot be mistaken. It does not mean, as I mentioned, that aesthetics as a creative practice cannot work as a point of access to understand alternative forms of recognition that come from the Real's operation. What this debate highlights is that, if we intend to be fair to the Lacanian critique of the unity of being, then such idea of aesthetics should not fall into "the metaphysical tendencies of the contemporary Lacanism" that unequivocally approaches a "real out of time, positive and indifferent to significant coincidence" (DUNKER, 2019, 97).

According to Dunker, in order to avoid neglecting the historicity that subscribes Lacan's theory, it is important to realize that the notion of Real carries two senses of temporality, one that is "logical and structural", as part of a signifying chain, and another that is "historical and dialectical", as subscribed by the move "which never ceases to not write itself." (DUNKER, 2019, 95). This *paradox of time*, says Dunker, is a central feature of the Lacanian concept of the Real and accounts for the association of Lacan's thesis with ontology as a critique to metaphysics. Hence, if the Real is prevented from returning into the symbolic as a logical repetition, it does not mean that it cannot appear as a constant movement of contingency, division, and singularity in the terrain of history.

⁸¹ To advance this debate, it is important to realize a conceptual divergence inside the very Kantian system, which Eysers points out through the distinction between the concepts of 'limit' and 'boundary'. Both ideas play important roles in Kant's theory; however, "a limit for Kant applies to mathematical or scientific knowledge, where something has yet to be counted or understood; a boundary, by contrast, marks the limits of metaphysical knowledge, knowledge 'on the boundary of the knowable and the unknowable'" (EYERS, 2012, 66).

Because of that, regarding my previous debate on the resistance of female workers, I propose a reading of their clandestine messages as ontological negativity. As such, while manifested as impossibility at the register of logic, at the level of historical temporality, those messages can be grasped as a disruptive contingency. Assuming such standpoint, we can start to investigate the Real resistance in relation to mechanisms of delusional metaphor, poetic-act, trauma irruptions, and so on, without the risks of reinscribing aesthetics into the enlightenment project that searches for a transcendental sense of being. With this in mind, my statement is that, when faced by the aesthetic ethos of subaltern experiences, the lost signifier of the discourse of the dependent capitalist manifests its Real emptiness.

According to Dunker, one way to express the encounter between the symbolic and the Real's intrusion would be this idea of a "metaphysical inversion" (DUNKER, 2019). For him, the excess of enjoyment and the lack of signifiers points towards "a variable ontology, due to its primary negative characteristic" (DUNKER, 2019, 101). Applying this to our study, it means that a better way to understand the symptom coming from the Real, as subaltern manifestation, does not involve a multiplication of perspectives, as an epistemological call for speeches capable to read the excluded substance. Instead, the Real's enjoyment, that inverted and paradoxical satisfaction of the subaltern, provokes us to recognize that there are subjects whose ex-sistence forces the very negativity of being into the scene of interpellation.

Such negativity can be read as a non-identitarian feature of enjoyment, which goes hand in hand with Lacan's critique of a subject's metaphysics based on essentialism. According to Dunker (2019), the introduction of a negative reference (an emptiness that operates as a cause) is at the core of Lacan's ontology as separated from metaphysics. Thus, the dislocation of the idea of *necessity* is the main result that comes from such insertion, whose negativity disallows the ontological universality of the being ("the being necessarily is"), and at the same time, it allows "ontological aphorisms such as: 'the woman does not exist', 'there is no sexual relation' and 'the Other does not exist'". (DUNKER, 2019, 98). Paraphrasing Dunker (2009), Lacan's ontology does not imply a question about the multiplicity or the unity of the being, but it holds that "A" being does not exist, since it is not-all.

Therefore, following Safatle and Badiou, Dunker (2019, 91) argues that in Lacan we can find a sort of "negative ontology, not an absence of ontology". In other words, Lacan's critique of metaphysics does not imply a disregard for ontology all along. Thus, "by derogating the necessity of being in its identity and essence, this does not imply affirming the impossibility of being" (DUNKER, 2019, 91). On the contrary, the theme of ontology is at the center of Lacan's contributions to politics.

It is important not to confuse the critique of Aristotle's metaphysics with a refusal of ontology. The program of "emptying the being" presumes an ontology, even if it is not the Eleatic ontology. Lacan speaks of the being of the subject, of the unfathomable decision of being (the decision of neurosis), the being of enjoyment, the being of man (which cannot be understood without his madness), the being of language (which makes it man), the passions of being, not to speak of the grammar of oppositions between not being and not thinking (which characterizes the psychoanalytic act). Not to mention the "ontological moment of anxiety". There are many things presumed in the expression "consistency of being". Its inverse may imply its non-necessity (contingency), its lack of unity (division), its non-identity (multiplicity) its loss or absence (alienation) and finally its non-particularity or universality (singular). (DUNKER, 2019, 96).

Such ontological appearance, as argued, can be accessed if we leave the traditional performances of the symbolic in favor of an aesthetic disposition towards negativity. In fact, instead of aesthetics, I prefer the term *poiesis*, since it highlights what seems to be the central aspect here: a philosophical *ethos* associated with creativity. Therefore, similar to Strong's proposal, I take *poiesis* as a disposition that allow us to access the strategies employed by the Real to make itself "present" at the symbolic, or better, to make its absence felt by the domain of intelligible sociability. According to Strong's argument, the aesthetic performance usually assumes "the general qualities of a *Darstellung*" (2012, 39), which embraces an idea of representation related with depiction, that is, as a performative act often linked to non-linguistic schemes.

In short, it is all about an ability to represent as performing, thus a type of social appearance that fundamentally involves agency. For Spivak, this is exactly the form of self-fashioning that is denied to the Subaltern when s/he faces any attempt to speak within the hegemonic symbolic order. For that reason, the interesting point here is to realize how the Real, as the register of the muted and reject elements, can return from its ex-sistence mobilizing a type of agency that

Spivak thought to belong only to symbolized structures. The poietic practice is essentially performative since it presents the capacity to dislocate an embodied subject "to become open to thinking from the 'standpoint of the other'" (STRONG, 2012, 35).

As Waggoner describes, aesthetic performances offer "instruments for dissimulating and disfiguring the self rather than assimilating the other" (2005, p. 130). To put it differently, we could say that, when the subaltern speaks, s/he requires our participation as aesthetic listeners that should abandon any search for blind spots or silences in the symbolic discourse. The idea would be to let the subaltern message arrive not as symbolic interpellation but as poietic interventions. Such interventions approach the subject as it reveals and promotes scenes of contingency, division, alienation, and singularity.

In that way, we are summoned to question how those interpellations happen. Regarding the relation between aesthetics and the Real, Kristeva (1982, 10) states that the agency coming from the latter is manifested as "that order, that glance, that voice, that gesture, which enact the law for my frightened body, constitute and bring about an effect and not yet a sign" (KRISTEVA, 1982, 10). Using Lacan's terminology, Naeem Inayatullah calls the identification of such signless moments as a strategy of "orbiting the Real", which translates the idea of searching for effects instead of causes.

The possibility of such a discourse is based on the psychoanalytic idea that there can be an ethically satisfactory (though not necessarily 'satisfying') position to be achieved in encircling the real, the lack, the *béance* as such. Although the real in itself cannot be touched there are two strategies in confronting its structural causality. The first one is to defensively by-pass it — as traditional ethical discourse does — while the second is to encircle it (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 130).

This last strategy, related with the practice of encircling, proposes to see the recognition of the lack as something close to what Žižek has called "the ethics of the real", which involves the symbolic contact with "the past dislocation, the past trauma" (STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 130). In that sense, through an empty gesture the Real can finally make its "non-integrated horror" be felt in the symbolic order, preserving the traumatic traces of "all historical traumas, dreams and catastrophes which the ruling ideology...would prefer to obliterate" (Žižek, 1991b, 273 *apud* STAVRAKAKIS, 1999, 130). In a sense, this is the ontological

figure of negativity making itself felt through the corruption of the traditional three properties of identity: "reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry" (DUNKER, 2019, 102).

Regarding this, I assume that poiesis, as a logic that can be associated with the Real's functioning, can work to activate modes of "(de)subjectivation" that disrupt or deceive the operation of *masters signifiers*, summoning the overwritten bodies to be produced differently. In this case, the binding signifiers produced by the hegemonic ideology, such as democracy, citizenship, consumption, and so on, are called by the Real's effects to experience its traumatic core that challenges the master's authority over fantasy. The opening of the *masters signifier* (point of capiton) would involve something similar to what Butler calls '*desubjectivation* process', or what Spivak describes as an unlearning pedagogy (learning from below), which involves a confrontation with our death drives. Therefore, what those processes reveal in common is the trace of destabilization of self-representations as an expected effect of the encounter with negativity, both as external alterity or inner ambiguity.

In that sense, considering that S2 occupies the place of the master in the dependent capitalism discourse, we could say that, every time the subaltern 'speaks' as Real, s/he reveals the 'un-being' condition as a means to confront such master's authority. That is why the clandestine messages of the subaltern can dislocate the knowledge in service of a neoliberal agenda committed to masquerading the internal deadlock of the peripheral subject. That is, the political effect of breaking fantasy is the inevitable contestation of the master's function of disguise, which serves to masquerade the impossible desire. Such covering promoted by the master is mainly achieved by the objectivation of the symbolic hole, which means that "one invents an external impediment to it [the impossible desire] that functions as an excuse for it not being realized" (NEWMAN, 2004, 7). In other words, the master's position, as we know, invokes the subject to create 'objet a' as an external impossibility that hides "the fact that the desired for self-realization of the subject is ultimately impossible" (NEWMAN, 2004, 8).

Thus, the slave invents the master in the place of his own impossible desire, as an externalized prohibition of it. This is so the slave can effectively say to himself: I could realize my desire if only it were not for the master who stands in the way of it. What this really disguises is the internal deadlock of desire itself – it allows the slave

to function 'as if' this deadlock did not exist, precisely by blaming it on an external barrier. In this way, the master comes to represent the slave's own impossible jouissance - the 'theft' of the slave's enjoyment, which was a satisfaction that he never had in the first place. (NEWMAN, 2004, 7-8)

In the case of the capitalist discourse, the illusion comes inverted, since it takes the form of a promise of total jouissance. In other words, the impossible satisfaction is disguised by the production of objects created to assure the certainty of pleasure. Within this context, the counterpoint to such discourse functioning would probably come from some sort of mechanism that led the neoliberal ideology to confront its own impossibilities. It has to force knowledge (S2) to finally face "what is so disturbing to its own idealizations" (NEWMAN, 2004, 12). These disturbing idealizations involve the contact with their reversed effect, the peripheral discourse, that produces subjects that are not only disguised of their impossibilities, but some of them are actually barred from any attempt to subjectify or objectify the desire in the Other.

Bringing this debate closer to political studies, Stavrakakis (1999, 120) argues that the recognition of the impossible real is at the base of democratic regimes, that differently from "utopian or quasi-utopian discourse", it does not deny the unifying function of its own "constitutive impossibility". Democracy, as Stavrakakis reads it, "provides a concrete example of what we would call a post-fantasmatic or less-fantasmatic politics" (1999, 120). The opening of fantasy is an important point for that perspective, since it links recognition with a process central to Lacan's psychoanalytic practice: *la traversée du fantasme*. Such term sums up a set of challenges investments against the master's authority, mostly achieved through the intervention of another discourse: the discourse of the Analyst.

Briefly, the role of analysis is, as Bracher shows, to allow the subject to own his or her alienation and desire, by confronting him with his own unconscious fantasy - producing a gap between the subject and ego ideal - and to accept that the Other, which supports this fantasy structure, is itself deficient, lacking and ungrounded (see Bracher, Lacan 68-73). This would be what Lacan calls *la traversée du fantasme* - crossing or traversing the fantasy. (NEWMAN, 2004, 11).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in part, the mathema of peripheral capitalism embraces a similar quadrant (left corner) to that of the Lacanian

analyst's discourse. That is why, when thinking about the politics of resistance coming from the subaltern position, it assumes the analyst logic of dislocation, not only applied to the self, but also to the fantasy of language. The difference, as I am proposing, is that, instead of the analyst, the dependent capitalist discourse mobilizes an aesthetic performance to trigger the contestation of the master. In other words, as proposed above, the poietic logic behind the Real's interventions operates as a therapeutic analyst whose questions opens our repression to reveal that, "if *meaning* is elusive, perhaps it is because consciousness itself, and therefore language, is *fractal*" and as such it can then "overcome representation and mediation, not because it is innate, but *because it is chaos*." (BEY, 1985, 168, original emphasis).

As announced by Hakim Bey (1985, 168), that type of analysant effect coming from the Real finally suggests the existence of other systems of communication capable not only to disturb but to create meaning and social relations. In that, slips of tongue, nonsense, "sound poetry, gesture, cut-up, beast languages, etc.", are included, all moving through language and arbitrarily redrawing it. For Bey, to accept the chaos of linguistics is a necessary step to understand how "language can create freedom out of semantic tyranny's confusion and decay" (BEY, 1985, 169). As well put by Alcott, "the impetus to always be the speaker and speak in all situations must be seen for what it is: a desire for mastery and domination" (1991, 24). Then, the interruption of such desire would be one of the principle directions towards a political engagement with the crossing of fantasies.

Traversing the fantasy in the political sense, then, would mean recognizing this irreducible void in the social - the void that jeopardizes and dislocates any political symbolization. It would mean acknowledging the contingency and undecidability of politics, and that transformative and emancipative political projects can never hope to transform the whole of society - there will always be something that eludes them. (NEWMAN, 2004, 13).

The argument presented above follows the un-learning strategy debated by Spivak, since both seem to require an engagement with identity as loss. In his reading of Spivak, Kapoor asserts: "Serious and meaningful learning from the subaltern requires an anterior step: learning to learn. I have to clear the way for both me and the subaltern before I can learn from her/him" (2004, 641). What is at

stake here is the fact that only by suspending the certainties that guarantee our identity as a coherent, universal, and transparent core, it would become possible for us to dismantle the privilege mechanisms involved in symbolic practices.

Those reflections become even more interesting when they are applied to a scenario characterized by "a crisis in the paternal law that underwrites the social order" (FOSTER, 1996, 156). In such context, as I argue to be the case of the contemporary subalternity in Latin America, the logic behind poetic performances assumes a specific direction, which is no longer associated with the sublimation of the abject real but with an opening to its traumatic features.

Whether or not one agrees with this account, Kristeva does intimate a cultural shift toward the present. "In a world in which the Other has collapsed," she states enigmatically, the task of the artist is no longer to sublimate the abject, to elevate it, but to plumb the abject, to fathom "the bottomless 'primacy' constituted by primal repression." (FOSTER, 1996, 156).

This "desublimatory im-pulse" upon the abject, as Foster states, is similar to the strategies brought by surrealism on the 20th century. According to Jaanus's reading of Lacan (1996, 230), despite the fact that the Real cannot be said at all (since there are no words through which it can be written), there are moments when some literary language can surround it. These are moments when art makes the opposite of "harmony", that is, when instead of presenting a fictionality that "allows the insertion of beauty" against the unconscious trauma, the aesthetic performance creates the contact with that very anxiety, revealing it. Therefore, exceeding literature, we could say that there is a sort of language crossing the subaltern resistance that follows the "laws of beauty" but in a disrupted way. Something close to the idea of *lalangue* mentioned in the previous topic and presented as a language produced at the sphere of *jouissance*. From such position, that type of language inhabits the frontier between horror and pleasure.

When the subject contends a break with the Law of the big Other that regulates the defile of the signifier, the subject is reconfronted by the force of the real that resounds in the question. Confronting the gaps and inconsistencies in the law, engaging its failures in ways that push the subject toward the conclusion that the big Other doesn't know, or even doesn't exist, has the effect of animating an unsuspected richness of the signifier, alive not merely along the less traveled by-roads of signification but even in the play of nonsense. The repressed of *das Ding* returns in the poetics of the impossible and the absurd. It is in this way, I submit, that we should interpret Lacan's twin claims that "speech is able to recover the debt that it engenders" and that

“jouissance must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire.” (BOOTHBY, 2019, 21).

Debating this absurd and impossible poetics, Jela Krečič and Slavoj Žižek explain that “not only can something ugly be true and good but ugliness can also be an immanent aesthetic notion; in other words, an object can be ugly and an aesthetic object, an object of art” (2016, 60). The idea of a traumatic appeal in reality, “the twisted braid of affects and thoughts” (KRISTEVA, 1982, 1), is in direct dialogue with Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, briefly mentioned by Foster on the quote above. For her, the abject is neither a subject nor an object, but something suspended in-between. “The abject has only one quality of the object — that of being opposed to I”, so in that sense, as she states, if the object “settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning”, the abject, in turn, “is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses” (KRISTEVA, 1982, 1-2).

In dialogue with my proposition of the subaltern as a position that ‘speaks’ through the Real core of jouissance, Kristeva's theory endures the idea of abjection in relation with the desire of the other. In other words, in her view, the desire coming from the unknown reaches us as a “sudden emergence of uncanniness”, that is, as a meaninglessness wave that crushes established certainties (KRISTEVA, 1982, 2). Thus, accompanying Krečič and Žižek's reflection (2016, 71), “this abjectal excess can also appear in the guise of an indivisible re-remainder of the Real which resists the process of idealization/symboliza-tion”. The handwritten label described in the previous topic, the dead bodies of refugee infants lying down on the beach, the abused and sterilized body of female workers, all of them are examples of this poetic performance that subscribe the manifestation of the scary, disgusting, ugly, and other modes of abjection. In these terms, such abject cartography inhabits, on one hand, a logical and topographical impossibility at the same time that it assume a dialectical and contingent ex-sistence brought by the negative ontology of the Real.

The abject is definitely external to the subject, but it is also more radically external to the very space within which the subject can distinguish itself from reality out there. Maybe we can apply here

Lacan's neologism "extimate": the abject is so thoroughly internal to the subject that this very overintimacy makes it external, uncanny, inadmissible. For this reason, the status of the abject with regard to the pleasure principle is profoundly ambiguous. It is repulsive, provoking horror and disgust, but at the same time it exerts an irresistible fascination and attracts our gaze to its very horror (Krečič; Žižek, 2016, 69-70).

From such place, the abject mobilizes the body through symptoms, causing nausea, spasms, perspiration. In Kristeva's words, that is the "mute protest of the symptom", a violent language that "is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects" (1982, 3). So, as suggested by the movement of crossing, the traumatic events work as intrusions of the Real that shatter the illusory aspect of reality at the same time that it opens the path for creative mobilization of meaning.

Beyond the example of female workers at Latin America, other manifestations of that symptomatic performance of the Real could be mentioned, such as the refugees' tragedy over the Mediterranean sea, with their drowning bodies found lifeless in the European costs, or the murdered bodies of female workers founded buried in the Mexican desert — both examples operating as a kind of necro remainder of an exploited life. Or even, the bodies of humans, animals, and nature extensions submerged in mud by the breaking of hydroelectric dams in Brazil, whose images, broadly televised and spread over the Internet, enter modern homes revealing the inaudible message of horror coming from the covered costs of a negligent management of development. All those eruptions of the foreclosed subjects indicate that, as posed by Krečič and Žižek, the ultimate object of abjection "is bare life itself, life deprived of the protective barrier" (2016, 66).

In summary, trapped in the Real, the foreclosed difference that marks subalternity can be accessed by the symbolic through the operation of a traumatic and abject performance that invokes an aesthetic subject to the scene of interpellation. Through the interpellation of this meaningless dimension of life, the subaltern finally reaches recognition, although it does that through death, that is, it achieves recognition by causing its reverse: a dis-identification move. As such, the subaltern position works as the analyst, forcing an ironic and paradoxical *traversée du fantasme*. Frequently, the literal death of the subaltern returns as

abject messages that force an interruption in the hegemonic self. That is, through the contact with an abject language, *lalangue*, the ruling "I" is led to recognize the other at the expense of his/her own (metaphorical) death, the death of the ego — "It is it no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled" (KRISTEVA, 1982, 4).

The encounter of the abject arouses fear, not so much fear of a particular actual object (snakes, spiders, height), but a much more basic fear of the breakdown of what separates us from external reality; what we fear in an open wound or a dead body is not its ugliness but the blurring of the line between inside and outside. (KREČIĆ; ŽIŽEK, 2016, 70).

Therefore, it is this abject aspect of the subaltern language that triggers a poietic nature to it, in the sense that it "reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things" (KRISTEVA, 1982, 4). This kind of inverted interpellation challenges the master's products by revealing its failed attempt to offer narcissistic stable structures. Because of that, the subaltern resistance, as I have been arguing, consists exactly of its existence as impossibility, on one hand, and as negative driving, on the other. As un-being, the appearance of the subaltern can disrupt the very lines that establish the metaphysics of identity. The death drive proposes a path contrary to the unity of the being, and because of that, it interrupts the masters functioning that produces a phantasmatic sense of consistency.

In political terms, if hegemonic discourse works through the symbolic organization of fantasies that teaches us how to desire a harmonious reality, then, the subaltern, as symptom, promotes a disruption of this safety ideological measure that works against the Real's invasion. Because of that, along with the confrontation of fantasy, another disruption can emerge: the 'abjection of the self'. This involves a rearrangement of desires — something that Spivak had already prescribed, but without explaining its precise functioning.

If it be true that the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject, one can understand that it is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject. The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all

abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded. (KRISTEVA, 1982, 5).

From the place of an impossible pleasure, the subaltern initiates a move towards something similar to what Derrida called the "quite-other", i.e. in the direction of the other that inhabits the phantasmatic sense of self. Thus, the important point here is to dislocate the tendency to engage with difference through the commitment with a conscious, sovereign, and self-centered position of the subject. To let yourself be interpellated by the subaltern position is the first step for a rearrangement of the relations established with the Other, including the patterns of recognition. Hence, in the next topic, I propose a derivative reflection on the political effects of such moments of indeterminacy.

6.4. The master does not exist: re-discussing recognition

In the previous topic, we raised an ontological debate around the effects activated by the confrontation of the gaps presents in the symbolic law. As presented in Boothby's quotation, the manifestation of the Real can lead the subject to the conclusion that "the big Other doesn't know, or even doesn't exist" (Boothby, 2019, 21). The novelty of such statement does not rely on an idea of non-existence as an antithetical condition of non-being, but rather it points to an ontological condition of un-being which is conjugated with an epistemological context of impossibility. Therefore, deductively, "if the real is demonstrated, if it does not belong to nature, if it is not empirically knowable, it does not allow for it to be defined as a unit nor as a multiplicity" (DUNKER, 2019, 104). For that reason, according to Dunker, it "is highly naive, if not inconsequential, to say that a psychoanalysis that faces the problem of the Real and the One, is not in any way questioning the classical ontological figures of universality and necessity" (DUNKER, 2019, 104).

The relevant aspect of that conclusion is that it ensures the terrain upon which Lacan's critical metaphysics encounters (and becomes attached to) politics. After all, the ontological proposal of a condition of un-being sheds light on the question of identity through an intrinsic relation with political disputes for representation and recognition. If there is no substance, then the gain or loss of identity depends basically on who manages the symbolic law, or more precisely,

on the groups capable to manage it in order to establish who has the prerogative to recognize. In the case of subaltern resistance, which I have been approaching as a form of social manifestation of the *traversée du fantasme*, what is being challenged is precisely that prerogative as a property of hegemonic groups and their mechanisms of recognition.

Under the capitalist system, and the modern organization around nation-states, the logic of recognition has been linked with legal and institutionalized practices of interpellation. Such processes are fundamentally based on the function of "naming the social forms of desire", in a way that, if on one hand it can give visibility to social groups, on the other, this nomination status establishes a vocabulary of pre-given identities that works through generalization and equivalence (SAFATLE, 2015). Thus, the point about such institutionalized grammar is that it only recognizes the subjectivities that can be regulated under its established and predictable set of differences (SAFATLE, 2015).

To use Deleuze's words, such logic of representation works through "two major orders: the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences." (DELEUZE, 1994, 1). These are subjects of law, and as such "law determines only the resemblance of the subjects ruled by it, along with their equivalence to terms which it designates" (DELEUZE, 1994, 2). In that context, the unpredictable difference, which cannot find an equivalent within the symbolic system, appears as a resistant force against the general attempt at representation. In that sense, such singular aspect of being carries an indispensable political ability, which has shown to be fundamentally related with processes of deactivation of names.

As shown, from the condition of foreclosure, the subaltern occupies a place of difference whose economy cannot be libidinally recognized by the capitalist. As proposed in the last chapter, following the capitalist logic, the context of super-exploitation of work requires a subject expelled from capital interpellation. That is, the super-exploited worker cannot exist as an overwritten body or a desiring subject, since they do not compose spheres of circulation. Of course, the cause of desire (objet a) cannot be reduced to the practice of consumption. On the other hand, since the capitalist discourse, as proposed by Lacan, sustains itself on the masquerading of the object's deadlock by the fantasy of enjoyment, then not being able to enjoy capital circulation provokes a rupture

in the production of alienated subjectivities. The subaltern is not included in the neoliberal ideology, at least not as a subject whose castration has to be unlocked by the promise of all-jouissance. The subaltern enters the scene of neoliberal interpellation as being the very deadlock to be disguised.

The main effect of not having the jouissance recognized is the vanishment from the position of desiring subject. In the eyes of the capital, those bodies are manageable precarity, in a way that they are not called to exist as anything else than a piece of cheap machinery. In political terms, we could say that, if on one hand being objectified blocks the subaltern capability to be recognized by hegemonic signifiers that allow subjectivation, on the other hand, not having their desire named makes such position a potent source for political dislocations. This is the death drive effect as exposed in the topic above. So, the question to be posed here is: regarding such experience of subjective indeterminacy, what would be the political implications to our politics of recognition?

At this point, many answers could emerge, and actually, some of them have already been addressed throughout this dissertation. Such theoretical plurality comes from the fact that, although through different paths, much of Lacan's, Derrida's, and Foucault's legacies, among others, share this ability to move contemporary debates into an opening of political arena for productive manifestation of indeterminacy. However, particularly at this moment, I want to call attention to a theoretical line that reads such indeterminacy as a bridge for a reconfiguration of the hegemonic logics of recognition. To use Safatle's terms, such lineage would be related with the proposition of an "antipredicative type of recognition", which, paradoxically, detaches political struggles from institutionalized demands for representation.

This non-representational model of politics is directly associated with the disruption actions from the Real, which has the ability to bring contingency into the process of symbolic production of commonsense. As described by Newman,

[...] Despite the implicit link between social and political practices and the institutional structures that give rise to them, there are still moments of rupture and dislocation in which the indeterminacy of these structures is exposed and in which their dominance is called into question. This moment of rupture might be seen in terms of a fundamental political Event, which is contingent, indeterminate and whose effects are undecidable. (NEWMAN, 2004, 13).

Therefore, the mainly normative horizon that subscribes those moments of indeterminacy rely on the capacity of creating a space for re-articulations of political meanings, while it briefly suspends social hierarchies. Similar to Butler's approach on misrecognition, Newman calls attention to the productive aspect of the lack and its symptoms, at the same time that he highlights the impossible stabilization of any horizon of meaning, during or after social contestation: "the key point here, however, is that there is no utopian goal for politics - or at least there is not one that can ever be reached" (NEWMAN, 2004, 14). This impossible teleological temporality results from the fact that such kind of intervention is necessarily contingent and unstable, which does not mean that it cannot offer a fertile terrain for the emergence of social bonds. Social consistencies can emerge, although always as contingency. In this sense, at the same time that the openness to the other as impossibility produces the death drive of the 'I', it also clears up the space for signifying associations without a master signifier. Or as Newman (2004) suggests, what we see is heterogeneous struggles organized around master signifiers that are, actually, empty.

It seems that, for Newman, it would be possible to think about a form of collective 'conscious' formation that dismisses a master, i.e. a social bond that does not require a crystallized and homogenous narcissistic process. This is undoubtedly a different reading of Lacan, since he has been traditionally related with, and criticized for, phallogocentric politics attached to the mastering function of paternal metaphors. However, in Newman's proposal, "we might characterize Lacanian an-anarchic action as action without a Master - in other words, action that no longer invokes the Master, instead remaining open to the indeterminacy of the political situation." (NEWMAN, 2004, 15). Such proposition, on the other hand, depends on a type of involvement with the Real's event that does not reinscribe new meanings within the discourse of the Master. That is, the master contestation is only sustained if the agents does not succumb to the temptation to stabilize identities, remaining then open to alliances between "different identities and groups that would otherwise have little in common" (NEWMAN, 2004, 15).

Addressing the subaltern mobilization from that perspective authorizes a reading of it as including a type of social gathering that is not based on resemblance practices. This does not mean that the participants of political events experience a vacuum of identities, but only that they can drive collective action

from several coexisting identifications, where none is strictly attached to one single signifier. Maybe we could even put this idea to dialogue with what Butler, in her debate of Jessica Benjamin's ideas, proposes as being a context of "an apparently inconsistent identifications in a state of creative tension" (2000, 276). Following that idea, recognizing difference relies fundamentally on the decentred aspect of the self, which attacks the original dyadic relations dislocating both "I" and Other from each other's core.

As Butler explains, "if relations are primarily dyadic, then I remain at the center of the Other's desire, and narcissism is, by definition, satisfied. But if desire works through relays that are not always easy to trace, then who I am for the Other will be, by definition, at risk of displacement" (2000, 284)". As we can see, there is here an open breach through which we can read Lacan's theory in a way that does not entail recognition as reconciliation. In Newman's proposal, for example, the aim for detaching Lacan's work from the horizon of a Hegelian dialectical reconciliation becomes clear. Thus, the political claim is not attached to an overcoming of the opposition between the authority of the master and its dependence on the recognition by the slave. In other words, Newman's reading of Lacan points towards a different direction from that which proposes a moment "wherein both the master and slave recognize themselves in each other" (2004, 6).

For Newman, due to the fundamental element of misrecognition that surrounds the process of self-recognition, the formation of self-consciousness involves "misperceiving the other's desire, rather than recognizing oneself in it" (NEWMAN, 2004, 7). Consequently, the master's desire does not involve a desire for oneself, but for something else, that is, the impossible recognition itself. The inevitable link between desire and its abyss positionates the move of 'overcoming' close to the mechanisms of death-drives. Otherwise, if death does not come to reveal the impossibility of one's desire, then we watch the objectivation of it, through fantasy. But death, as an active mechanism of subject formation, breaks with the dialectical reconciliation since rather than mutual recognition it establishes a dis-identification move. In that sense, Newman proposes the possibility of a different analytical mobilization of psychoanalytic concepts, one that foresees a kind of "crossing of the master" as the ultimate goal.

Thinking of the debate on radical politics today, Newman challenges the conservative position usually input to Lacan's theoretical implications. So,

considering Lacan's statement on "revolutionary aspirations", which, according to him, "have only one possibility: always to end up in the discourse of the master" (Lacan, 1994, 64, *apud* Stavrakakis, 1999, 12), Newman proposes a particular reading that does not posit an a-political stance to Lacan, but on the contrary, takes from that an anarchist predisposition. In that direction, "one may suggest that this statement may be taken as a warning to radical politics about the dangers of reaffirming the structures of power and authority as a consequence of a revolution" (NEWMAN, 2004, 6). If we follow Newman's reading of Lacan, it would be possible to think that the subaltern position acting through its reversal return as Real contributes to the breaking of the master, sustaining a kind of post-narcissistic or post-castrational reading of Lacan.

However, it is important to state that such a break with the master should not imply the production of an autonomous and free subject, as the enlightenment project would desire. Rather, it works as the exact opposite: a reminder of the vulnerability that comes from the impossible condition of a self-conscious subjectivity. It becomes clear, thus, that the initial dialogue with Kant's cartography of lines shows its limitations here. So, where, for Kant, the boundary authorizes a debate on universality versus particularity, for Lacan, it opens the path for a debate on singularity. From a similar position, Safatle (2015) speaks in terms of an anti-predicative logic of recognition, that is, a process of intersubjective relation that does not require a demand for differentiation at the political sphere.

To speak of "anti-predicative recognition" would only make sense if we could assert the need that something from the subject is not conveyed in its predicates but to remain as undetermined power and indistinction force. As if the diving into the dynamics of recognition did not go through increasing the number of predicates to which the subject reports, but that, in fact, it went through the understanding that a subject is defined by bearing that which resists to the very process of predication (SAFATLE, 2015, 107, my translation).

At a first glance, it seems paradoxical to propose a path for recognition through a space that resists predication. After all, how can the subaltern difference interact with a political sphere that is taken as a "zone of indifference"? To begin with, following Safatle's proposal, such logic of recognition does not claim a universal status in terms of a generalization of liberal individuality. In other words, an anti-predicative recognition does not defend a political arena as a

domain of universality grounded on juridical regulation of idealized particularities to be put under a resembling test. According to Safatle, the liberal ideology assumes the idea that "social demands become political when private interests appear as an expression of universal rights that have not yet been applied to disadvantaged groups" (2015, 106, my translation). As consequence, within such ideology, "far from asserting themselves in an "anti-predicative" manner, we have, instead, a predication of subjects through the determination provided by positive rights legally established and which, until then, were denied to them" (2015, 106, my translation).

In that sense, the author is calling attention to the way that political regulation of difference through legal systems requires an essentialist metaphysics that establishes recognition as a process of subject's adequation into a universalized vocabulary authorized by institutions. This is all about those that can resemble the generalized ideal and those that cannot. The anti-predicative recognition, in Safatle's words, necessarily involves a distinct take on political struggles. Through these lenses, in practical terms, political mobilizations are not oriented to the institutionalization of rights, or any other form of "law oriented" recognition. Similar to Agamben's proposition, this argument prescribes an atrophy of law from its function of social regulation. However, this does not suggest something close to the liberal imperative of "minimum State", which establishes that "de-institutionalization would mean to leave society free to create forms of life, but closing its eyes to experiences of oppression and economic vulnerability" (SAFATLE, 2015, 111). Taking a different direction, Safatle suggests a "strong regulation of economic relations and a weak regulation of social relations" as being interesting paths for politics that takes "equality" from a radical scene of (in)difference (2015, 111).

It can be said that the problems of redistribution must be deeply regulated within the legal system, so that the processes of recognition can develop in a zone of indifference in which the law becomes inoperative (SAFATLE, 2015, 111, my translation).

In that way, separating the political arena from the claims for legal-institutional recognition highlights an important attack on bourgeoisie ideology. Particularly upon its philosophical base, which links subjectivity with a

"universalization and idealization of the material experience of the liberal individual" (SAFATLE, 2015, 108). Consequently, what Safatle calls as a "zone of political indifference" seems to be related with the contestation of the political terrain as necessarily dependent on recognition processes under the logic of a modern master, being it the Law, the Father, the State, and so on. It is indifferent not because it dismisses difference, but because it disregards the need for figures authorized to recognize those differences. As I see it, the resistance to predication does not imply a lack of elements of differentiation, as a scene of uniform subjects. On the contrary, it proposes a sense of "equalization" from the shared condition of radical difference that turns any attempt to predicate it into failure (or a fantasy). If my reading is right, then we can say that master figures are taken as deauthorized at the sphere of political regulations of difference — which should not happen in the economic and cultural domains, where the redistribution projects must be regulated⁸².

Therefore, such an idea of taking politics as an arena of un-differentiate subjects gains depth if associated with Lacanian ontology, as presented in the topic above. When approached through that perspective, the lack of differentiation does not suggest a context of inclusiveness, at least not a liberal inclusiveness, since it points to the very impossibility of any experience of the One or the Multiple. So notice, this is not about a defense of a mere "dispersion, multiplicity or plurality" of the political field. Actually, following Dunker, we could even say that, similar to psychoanalysis, "the" political does not exist in the same way that multitude does not, either. After all, politics is a terrain of singularity. This walks in parallel with Lacan's ontological proposition about the inexistence of "the" women, or "the" other. As is known, such statements do not mean that both women and the other do not have an empirical existence. What it proposes is that, as signifiers, these figures cannot enjoy an existence as unity, and by deduction, neither as multiplicity. They can only assume a singular condition of existence.

As I see it, this is the moment where Lacan's theory invites us to approach scenes of ontological differentiation against fixed epistemology. From this

⁸² It is important to notice that Safatle's proposal does not imply a disregard of the strategic function of demarcation of difference, as that promoted by marginalized groups at political scenes. Such social marks of difference are indispensable for a collective and political mobilization of vulnerability. However, this is a strategic use of it, hence a transitory mobilization of identities, in clear dialogue with notions of "essentialism strategic", as the one posed by Spivak.

perspective, when interpellated by the subaltern, our sense of politics is called to assume an ontological turn. It should no longer presuppose a universal condition of identity, whose 'failure' generates particular differences that then work as a base for a libidinal economy relying on a "desire for recognition". Politics, then, must embrace the singular condition of difference. In that, inversely, what results from a 'failure' context is actually identities, which can only be mobilized as contingent strategies within historical performances. As presented in the previous chapter, such political scene dialogues with the concept of difference as it appears in the register of the Real. For that reason, the idea of recognition is distinct from its mobilization at the imaginary sphere, when it takes the form of dualistic resemblance operations. Taken as Real incommensurability, difference becomes attached to a negative ontology that can be only mobilized beyond its narcissistic features and its crystalized temporality.

Therefore, at the same time that the idea of impossibility that subscribes the un-being condition contests the ontological notion of unity ("consistency of being"), it also opens a productive encounter between Lacanian theory of intersubjectivity and the concept of singularity. In the next and final moment of this dissertation, the conclusion, I come back to such relationship that will help to set up my final remarks. For now, it is important to point out how this notion of singularity comes, from Deleuze, through a central articulation with the concept of repetition, proposing an inherent link between it and a temporality close to the historical arena of the event. As a result, the equalization in the political arena should not involve a universalization and idealization of a particular (as the individual experience of the bourgeois class) or even social struggle for multiculturalism agendas. Instead, it should embrace a repetition of the singular, that is, a repeating but contingent manifestation of difference-in-itself.

Therefore, as stated at the begin of this topic, this is how the intervention of indeterminacy (as irreducible difference) into politics produces a process of des-authorization of master's representation, and a contestation of liberal desires for institutionalized recognition. Particularly, the effects of the subaltern manifestation upon the libidinal economy are interesting since it challenges two important pillars of capitalism: the desire for recognition, which sustain the union between political struggles and legal-institutionalized claims, and the 'right' to jouissance, which sustains the society of consumption. Without an economy

oriented to the continuous regulation of *jouissance*, contemporary capitalism would not be able to nurture the "infinite plasticity of the production of possibilities of choice in the universe of consumption" (SAFATLE, 2008, 20, my translation).

That is why "drives and desires" are not taken as individualistic variables, but as fundamental mechanisms of socialization that, once internalized, "can orient practical and moral reasonings" (SAFATLE, 2008, 17, my translation). Then, my final point is that all phenomena capable of rearranging desires have an important impact on the social arena, regarding both material and ideological forms of organization. If subalternity attacks the libidinal economy of capitalism, revealing in a traumatic way their inability to keep the promise of enjoyment, then it can also engender a contingent dislocation on libidinal exploitation. In other words, the creation of a cleavage in the consumption imperative ("enjoy!") could lead to dislocations of the modes of subjectivity under capitalist discourse.

Finally, to finish this problematization around the circuit of psychic effects that the phallus does not control, we have to consider the subaltern relation to other systems of interpellation. After all, is the subaltern insulated in the power mechanisms of elite narratives? Or could we assume that subaltern desire, while barred in the colonial discourse, can otherwise be organized by a naming function of another discourse? Are there other names, maybe anti-hegemonic names, that may play the role of tying the registers together? In order to answer these questions, we have to consider that there is no single discourse capable of involving all subjectivities at once, and therefore, every subject has a particular set of ideologies, under which it is formed. In these terms, if we follow a Lacanian perspective, the path for answering those questions is open to investigation.

It is important to remember that "Lacan proposes that the psychotic desire is a desire not symbolized by the paternal metaphor and therefore not referenced by the phallus. But this does not prevent thinking about a desire that is beyond the Father and that finds its reference in other names-of-the-Father" (BATTISTA, 2017, 132). If we accept such inference, then we can say that the pluralization of the *naming father*, the contestation of the structure of master's nomination (at the level of discourse) and the interruption and deformation of *objet a* (at the level of a libidinal economy) are all possible paths for resistances within/against the hegemonic system. Each of these operations involves a type of "fight for

recognition", as a claim for a clandestine entrance in language, which involves performances not strictly articulated with linguistic skills. But what about the moments when the subaltern bodies are not under the prerogative of recognition of the hegemonic discourse? That is, what about the moments where the subaltern seeks to speak with his/hers peers and not with the hegemonic Other?

6.5. Beyond hegemonic knot: letters between sisters

In order to wrap up our reflection on the modes of interpellation that reach subaltern positions, it is necessary to face the fact that subjects are neither attached to a single discourse, nor insulated within hegemonic narratives. On the contrary, their bodies move through a grid of discourses, in a way that each network articulates and directs different possibilities of overwritings. To assume that the oppressed can only exist as *ex-sistence* within the ruling discourse is to fall into the same error of silencing prescribed by the hegemonic logic, which traps political power as a property of elite narratives. Thus, besides the resistance coming from such foreclosed existence, the subaltern also embraces positions in relation to another "big Others", that is, in relation to non-hegemonic systems of interpellation. But where are these alternative systems located?

In a sense, when approaching Lacan's theory of the four discourses, we do not find references to this map of discursive cartographies. However, as I aim to propose, it can be put to dialogue with the debate about private and public dimensions of subjection process. From that, an important question can be raised: does the division between public and private spheres make any sense for our discussion about Lacanian discourse operations? If the subaltern manifests a foreclosed position in the hegemonic mathema, then would it mean an absolute disappearance from political scenes of symbolic operations? Is it condemned to return as Real, or are they also engaged with performances that does not require any source of hegemonic recognition? And what would be the audience for such performances?

In Scott's reading of political power, we can verify an association between public transcripts and elite narratives, which frequently presents hegemonic aspirations. In his words, "the safest and most public form of political discourse is that which takes as its basis the flattering self-image of elites" (SCOTT, 1990, 18).

By contrast, the social relations of subordinate groups, which are constantly trying to dodge such barriers, usually ends up involving some kind of infrapolitics, which embraces “a wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name”. This means that, even when not directly related with hegemonic domination, subaltern practices can be taken as powered investments, since they also operate political games. However, such game is usually played in different arenas, which are particularly characterized by speeches and practices that were rejected from the public terrain of hegemonic ideology.

If formal political organization is the realm of elites (for example, lawyers, politicians, revolutionaries, political bosses), of written records (for example, resolutions, declarations, news stories, petitions, lawsuits), and of public action, infrapolitics is, by contrast, the realm of informal leadership and nonelites, of conversation and oral discourse, and of surreptitious resistance. The logic of infrapolitics is to leave few traces in the wake of its passage. (SCOTT, 1990, 200).

Following this theoretical line, we could say that, in part, subaltern's subjectivation also involves processes that move along the axes of what Scott has called “hidden transcript”. For him, that category describes the moments when politics is designed by “those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript” (1990, 4). The difference between this type of transcript and the public one lies mainly in the audience it involves and in the constraints imposed by power, in a way that the hidden mechanisms are usually concentrated on a particular social site and encompass a set of practices that go beyond speech acts (SCOTT, 1990). Such distinction, however, does not tell us about a solid wall, since “the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate” (SCOTT, 1990, 14). Therefore, it is precisely at the moments when such line is ruptured that we have the “most explosive realm of politics” (SCOTT, 1990, 19).

Between the public and the hidden transcript, we can also find hybrid positions, that is, dislocations along that division line that create a “third realm of subordinate group politics” (SCOTT, 1990, 18). According to Scott, those that occupy the in-between positions are mostly engaged with “politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors” (1990, 18). Such description places

us quite close to the debate on subalternity promoted on the previous pages. That is why I claim that the poietic nature of that disguised politics of the subaltern has a double-facet, one with effects upon the ruling and public symbolic order, and another directed towards an audience that is not hegemonic but the marginalized peers.

Following Scott, ignoring this type of resistance would imply a blindness upon those moments that are neither an "open rebellion" nor the "hidden transcript itself", and when it does not involve subjects as elites or as antithetical groups (SCOTT, 1990, 19). That seems to be the case of the collective practices that take place among the poor women of color, to whom the elite symbolic, as well as other recognized spaces of power contestation are not available. As Hurtado describes,

Working-class women of Color come from cultures whose languages have been barred from public discourse, as well as from the written discourse, of society at large. Many people of Color speak varieties of English (e.g., Black English) not understood by most white people. Nonetheless, people of Color often excel in verbal performance among their own peers. They embrace speech as one medium for expression. Older women are especially valued as storytellers with the responsibility to preserve the history of the group from generation to generation. Patricia Hill Collins argues that a rich tradition of Black feminist thought exists, much of it produced orally by ordinary Black women in their roles as mothers, teachers, musicians, and preachers. This oral tradition celebrates the open and spontaneous exchange of ideas. The conversation of women of Color can be bawdy, rowdy, and irreverent, and in expressing opinions freely, women of Color exercise a form of power. (HURTADO, 1989, 848).

The non-hegemonic traditions point out to the fact that, beyond its interruption effects as Real's manifestations, the subaltern body also inhabits discourse structures that are not under absolute control of the elite mainspring. This does not mean that such realm of non-hegemonic discourses is free from the impediments posed by the dominant group, but it shows that such arenas "[are] less effectively patrolled than, say, the realm of production" (SCOTT, 1990, 157). Therefore, if the overlapping between labor and domestic spheres prevent female workers from speaking through institutionalized domains of associative contestation (trapping their appearance in a return as Real), on the other hand, those women frequently fill non-hegemonic arenas with their own creative manifestation of associate power.

Neighborhood associations, women's gathering, cooperatives, mothers' movement, circles of storytellers, and other nets of assistance exemplify the ways through which those super-exploited women create mechanisms for recognizing themselves as part of a community, without making this metonymic move an essentialist take on identities. Within this scene, the gestures, gaze, handwritten notes, dead and abused bodies, that were taken as anonymous and traumatic letters within the public domains, become different letters between their peers, who can assume a positive encounter with the anguish generate by it. Inside this shared context, the repeated position of incommensurable vulnerability triggers the realization of their own singularity, in the sense of a "rebellious drive energies of the [R]eal that elude both symbolic and imaginary closure." (RUTI, 2010, 1121).

In that sense, the interpellation scene promoted by a call from the "sisters", instead of a paternal figure, proposes a libidinal economy of solidarity although it does not necessarily imply a condition of closed communality. At that theater, the oedipal desire to be seen/recognized by the Father and its derivative eagerness to speak are replaced by a desire to listen, as a path to be heard as well. This listening performance, however, is more directed towards sounds than signification. Because of that, between those women, the other's code is not concerned with being cryptic or opaque, since the very attempt of epistemological translation is not an end to be achieved. In other words, this is not about fixating meanings but to let yourself be resonated by the *lalangue* coming from the other.

Considering this, if the agenda on justice and dignity intend to be engaged with the subaltern, beyond its appearances as Real, then it is also imperative for us to learn how to learn the other's codes - as Spivak has already suggested. It means to assume different types of libidinal directions. That is why any possible engagement of dialogue with those non-hegemonic structures of interpellation requires a dislocation of the established mechanisms of recognition, in order to carve out a space for alternative performances of speech and, most of all, of listening.

6.6. Conclusion

With this chapter, I finally close the route of argumentation that sustains this dissertation. Functioning as a sort of applied analysis, this final moment was

drawn to demonstrate how the operations of the Real provide alternative forms to grasp resistance experiences. The reading of the case of female workers in Latin America comes in that direction, pointing towards political dynamics that surpass the limits of a coherent, self-identical, and unified consciousness. In fact, what we see is a resistance Subject that can engage disruptive effects without even holding an intentional or directive project. Because of that, studying such phenomena implies a need to abandon the liberal idea of free will or autonomy, as well as the concept of resistance derived from it. In its place emerges the need for a theoretical disposition towards the pluralization of subjectivation processes. Lacan's concept of the Real enters the argument cycle precisely at that point: as a conceptual and methodic source for the construction of such theoretical disposition.

Thus, throughout these pages, I have been committed to reading political struggles as an arena crossed by dimensions of the unconscious, abjected acts, and transitory messages. With this in mind, this chapter sought to apply the articulation between Lacanian and postcolonial lenses as a way to improve our understanding about how the subaltern contests the hegemonic lines of identities, even when s/he cannot speak accordingly. In that sense, the debate developed here reinforces the idea of power as a productive force but calling attention to the fact that what that power produces is not necessarily a dyadic condition between being and non-being, unity and multiplicity. Instead, my debate on subaltern resistance proposes that power also produces an un-being position, i.e. that power can engender the inverse of consistency, which implies an ontological and political consideration about contingency, division, alienation, and singularity.

Accordingly, those were the categories involved in my ontological take on the poor and racialized women experiences in Latin America. Drawing in that, I assume that such female workers occupy the subaltern position since they participate in capitalist interpellation but without the ability to assume its symbolic and imaginary effects. By consequence, their experiences immersed in contingency and singularity exemplify how some effects of power can be better grasped through ideas such as the Lacanian Real, and its derivative operations such as the crossing of fantasy. Therefore, focusing on this last operation, I highlight the centrality of some sort of creative communication coming from subjectivities usually considered silenced. That was the case of the messages left

by super-exploited workers on labels sewn on clothing, in which the letter functions more as symptomatic matter than a meaning.

Finally, the analysis of that case demonstrates how the same message, which under an epistemological effort of signification would lead to a sense of unknowability, can actually translate creative performances if approached as a symptom. Therefore, taken as a symptomatic result coming from the discourse of the dependent capitalism, the subaltern position reveals the error on the knotting of the three rings (imaginary, symbolic, and the real), at the same time that it suggests a more productive binding between them: a form of sewing that opens the deadlocks of the discourse, crossing its morbid feature until reaching a certain recognition of what cannot be recognized in the symbolic.

7. Final Remarks

This dissertation sought to propose a theoretical supplementation to Spivak's diagnosis of the subaltern. As mentioned in the introduction, in terms of argument, I chose to combine political theorizations on the subaltern with a Lacanian metadiagnosis as a way to direct our interpretations toward non-symbolic aspects of life manifestations in modernity/coloniality. With this, my aim was to contribute with Spivak's reading about the subaltern imprisonment in the paradoxical double bind produced by language. Thus, in order to find ways to recognize the subaltern ex-sistence, I resorted to the psychoanalysis diagnostic ethos to borrow a methodological disposition that could allow me to reconstruct the subaltern as singularity, that is, as difference that keeps being demanded by a process of subject production in the domains of language, desire, and work.

As I debated in the Introduction of this work, drawing on an anthropological reading of *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Lacan proposed a metadiagnosis of modernity based on "an ontological circuit formed by a loss of experience and its return as an experience of loss" (DUNKER, 2011, 121, my translation). The double move of that circuit qualified Lacanian's metadiagnosis to approach both the experiences of determination and indeterminacy. Therefore, it became particularly relevant to my study, which tried to grasp subalternity as a symptom of modern/colonial discourse. Actually, at this point, the term *sinthome* would better represent my mobilization of indeterminacy, since it opens an interesting conversation between Lacanian psychoanalysis and social theory. That neologism was coined by Lacan to designate the recognition of a failure in the knotting of the three rings (imaginary, symbolic, and the real).

For that reason, the *sinthome* invites us to face those things that cannot be inscribed in symbolic networks but whose return implicates a necessary and creative turn on the modern modes of recognition. Therefore, the notion of symptom and its neologic derivation, mentioned above, were extensively resumed in the last two chapters as a way to draw attention to the failure of the knotting rings of capitalist discourse. Such a failure was associated with a decline in the functioning of the paternal metaphor, which is responsible for the loss of experience as a diagnosis of late modernity. When applied to postcolonial

societies with dependent economies, that lack also returns as an experience of loss, to which I link the position of subalternity.

In that diagnosis, the subaltern finds him/herself prevented from having access to the binding function of hegemonic discourse, which, at a intersubjective level, translates an inability to join metonymic performances— i.e., an inability to recognize oneself (and to be recognized by others) as part of a totality. Thus, taken as *sinthome*, the subaltern expresses the suffering of those that cannot join the (phantasmagoric) sense of consistency produced by hegemonic ideology. In the case of dependent capitalism, it means not being inscribed in the route of signification of neoliberalism and its authorized institutions. In social terms, it could involve feelings of anguish, inadequacy, and emptiness that come from the subject 'expulsion' from the socio-symbolic arena, whose base for action requires a disposition for 'class' identifications. For that reason, such loss of experience returns as experiences of loss for those in the most disenfranchised positions within the system. It is another way to say that, for some groups, the experiences of indeterminacy, which at the symbolic appears as excess of determination, reappears at the Real as some sort of bodily encounter (with the loss).

That passage from the symbolic towards the Real was at the base of my theoretical articulations, which in part, walked towards this point, where experiences of loss (mostly diagnosed in terms of incompleteness, silence, or other sorts of disabilities at the epistemological sphere) can finally be approached as productive experiences at the ontological level, even though related with a negative reference. With this move, the grammar structured between Lacanian, dependentist, and postcolonial perspectives fulfills its purpose, which was to serve as an interpretative base for a metadiagnosis centered in “conditions potentially favorable to the production of productive experiences of indeterminacy” (DUNKER, 2011, 122). As Dunker suggests, the “decline of paternal imago” does not have to be diagnosed through the dyadic logic of modernity, which reacts to indeterminacy through symmetrical turns, that is, with more (unproductive) determination or with appeals to multiplicity (DUNKER, 2011).

In Dunker's view, it would be possible to think an alternative response to experiences of loss if the western metadiagnosis (clinical, critical, discursive, etc.) incorporating a non-symmetrical twist into its logic of recognition. For us, it means that a critical diagnosis of modernity/coloniality should not remain based

on a unified ontology around which orbitate epistemological disputes that try either to replace or to amplify the centers of representation. According to Dunker, the modern narcissistic circuit consists in a theoretical attitude of posing epistemological performances as its gravity center, from which our narratives judge other cultures according to how close or far they are from a given set of representational skills. In those schemes, the lines that separate 'human' from 'non-human' (or 'we' from 'them', 'rational' from 'irrational' and etc.) are anchored in an epistemological praxis compromised with an act of differentiating cultures, i.e., that is committed to localizing difference in the order of representational modes of thought.

This sort of obsession with epistemology filled the metadiagnosis of modernity with a narrow view of what life forms could mean beyond its representational consideration. Moreover, it articulated western knowledge to processes of des-subjection, through which the other can only be known if it turns into an object. For Viveiros de Castro, a Brazilian anthropologist, the indigenous theory of perspectivism teaches western modernity exactly the opposite: that the act of knowing something or someone could involve a move of personification, as opposed to objectification, which means "to take the point of view of what is to be known" (2015, 50). It means that all sorts of objects, events, elements could be turned into subjects, or better said, all of them have a subject perspective. Such a turn is associated with Dunker's debate about a necessary dislocation of the alterity center from an epistemological to an ontological base. Through that, it is the ontological condition of bodily experiences that embraces difference, since the epistemological condition of subjectivity is taken as "universal".

For that reason, if not under a vigilant reflexivity, the questioning about other people's ability to speak could easily turn into a narcissistic trap. Using Viveiros de Castro's words, when strictly attached to questions of epistemological performance, our diagnosis tends to produce investigations that can only add "an insult to the same injury" (2015, 21). Therefore, to the eyes of that author, a critical disposition towards difference would involve a type of anti-narcissistic turn in the metadiagnosis of modernity (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015). Drawing in such proposal, Dunker asserts that any attempt to reconstruct forms of

life without missing their productive indeterminacy has to be engaged with an opening of the very meaning that *life forms* could have.

In order to do so, Dunker seeks to construct a dialogue with the anthropological contributions of Viveiros de Castro, who, as mentioned, became known by his theory on the "Amerindian perspectivism". Along this dissertation, I did not take the same direction, although I agree with the potential of Viveiros' thesis for a renewal of modern/colonial diagnosis against its universal dispositions. Instead, I took an indirect but analogous path, through which I chased such anti-narcissistic logic through a debate on singularity.

That is, in order to avoid the excess of epistemological references of western modernity, I led my diagnosis to a reconstruction of the subaltern as Real, a concept whose ontological status shares some interpretative potentialities with the idea of singularity, as developed by Deleuze and Guattari. Therefore, now, in these final remarks, I draw some attention to such a turn, since it seems to be a fertile terrain for further theoretical and analytical unfoldings. Particularly in the last chapter, I already started to construct what seems to be a more productive encounter between Lacan and Deleuze/Guattari through the concept of the Real. After all, in both theoretical perspectives, we find a willingness to articulate difference as a mechanism for de-authorizing representation, considering its dimensions of irreducibility.

Later, in Deleuze/Guattari's works, that notion of difference is associated with the idea of singularity, which translates a uniqueness that cannot be exchanged or substituted for another. In that sense, the singular is opposed to mechanisms of resemblance and equivalence that characterize the language of generality. According to Deleuze, if the term is irreplaceable, then it cannot be generalized but only repeated, so much so that "generality, as generality of the particular, thus stands opposed to repetition as universality of the singular" (DELEUZE, 1994, 1). In Lacan, as Ruti states, "singularity expresses the individual's nonnegotiable distinctiveness, eccentricity, or idiosyncrasy at the same time as it prevents both symbolic and imaginary closure" (2010, 1113). That is, reading singularity with Lacan means to assume that, during the process of subjectivation, there is a dimension that remains beyond any attempt of generalization, equivalence, or replacement.

In that sense, the Real, similar to the Deleuzian/Guattarian singularity, contests any presupposition of universal substance or essence as a guide for the debate on being. Consequently, despite their different avenues, those theorists end up leading our analysis to approaching political experience as a terrain of ontological negativity and contingency. It means that, for them, the political experience is neither stable, universal, nor consistent. Not too far from that view, the register of the Real denounces a process of subjectivation that belongs to a constant state of becoming. The demand for repetition attached to this register prevents the subject from ever finding a conclusion, i.e., it states a subject that is always fragmented, incomplete, being surrounded by dimensions of emptiness and non-consistency. So, either as a split-subject (or split-object) repeatedly⁸³ dragged towards its loss, or as a singularity that resists any form of generality, the ontology employed is analogous: one that privileges change and transformation over cohesion and stability.

Hence, the historical temporality that subscribes the register of the Real is translated by a constant return of difference, which at the limit, turns all resemblance operations into fantasy. In what seems to be an influence from Lévi-Strauss, the Lacanian notion of the Real prescribes a scene where "resemblance does not exist in itself; it is only a particular case of difference, one in which difference tends toward zero" (Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques IV*, 32 *apud* Viveiros de Castro, 2015, 49). With this in mind, although Lacan's position concerning individuation and desiring production is quite different from that developed by Deleuze and Guattari, we cannot deny that in all of them there is no presupposition of an "I" that produces but is a product that becomes produced", which means that ego, subject, and body formations are all together synthesized (JAGODZINSKI, 2014, 80).

⁸³ According to Jagodzinski, "the concept of repetition seems underdeveloped in Lacan as opposed to Deleuze, who in *Difference and Repetition* (1994) discusses four forms of repetition: He reviews Hume's notion of repetition as habit; Freud's repetition as a compulsion to repeat, but goes on to include Bergson's repetition when it comes to memory and the most important Nietzsche's eternal return. The last is especially important in this essay when it comes to 'art' given that the only repetition where there is difference does a creative becoming take place" (JAGODZINSKI, 2014, 84).

Regarding this, an interesting debate on posthuman reflections emerges in the Lacanian horizon⁸⁴ (JAGODZINSKI, 2014). In that sense, my aim by bringing those authors together is to demonstrate how, similar to Deleuze and Guattari's inferences, Lacan's own use of difference as 'singularity' can also lead us to approach other dimensions of life forms, detaching it from the universal take on ontology presented in western modern metadiagnosis. Taken from this perspective, the Real difference might point to differentiations that mark the level of bodily experiences, drawing attention to a clandestine (and no representable) dimension of life (*zoë*).

At the risk of oversimplifying, one might say that subjectivity, from a Lacanian perspective, is aligned with the symbolic, personality with the imaginary, and singularity with the real. The "subject" comes into existence through symbolic law and prohibition. "Personality" can never entirely transcend the narcissistic fantasies of wholeness, integration, and extraordinariness that buttress the subject's imaginary relationship to the world. "Singularity," in turn, relates to the rebellious drive energies of the [R]eal that elude both symbolic and imaginary closure; it opens to layers of being that exceed all social or intersubjective categories and classifications.' (RUTI, 2010, 1121).

Therefore, according to Ruti, from the position of impossibility, singularity translates the "inhuman (not fully socialized) element" that dislocates both dimensions of subjectivity and personality (RUTI, 2010, 1121). For that reason, investigating singularity invites an enlargement of our metadiagnosis to manifestations of life forms that cannot be recognized through symbolic or imaginary terms. In Jagodzinski's view (2014), this reading developed by Mari Ruti becomes interesting to the extent that it tries to rethink Lacan's metadiagnosis through the notion of an "ethical jouissance". Such idea translates a certain non-phallic jouissance that emerges from his debate on Seminar XX about feminine enjoyment. In that sense, Ruti's analysis takes distance from "Žižek and company, including Badiou", at the same time that it creates a space for a dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari (JAGODZINSKI, 2014, 85).

This shift by Ruti is towards Lacan's latter writings, beginning with Seminar XX to Seminar XXIII (1975-76), when he develops the notion of the *sinthome* to complicate his earlier theorizations of the symptom. [...] The sinthome is closely related to singularity as now an

⁸⁴ The posthuman is taken "as opposed to a posthumanist stance", which according to Jagodzinski involves a theoretical position that remains attached to a self-identity approach on the subject.

artistic ‘quirk’ or ‘style’ has some affinities with Deleuze|Guattari’s theorizations on schizophrenia (JAGODZINSKI, 2014, 90).

Regarding my early discussion, this dissertation sought to present a grammar capable to reconstruct the subaltern position as life forms crossed by both determination and indeterminacy. Focusing on this last point, I resumed the Lacanian term of *sinthome* that, as posed by the quotation above, is closely related with singularity. Therefore, my efforts to reconstruct the subaltern as singularity went through its presentation as a life form of modernity/coloniality articulated with a libidinal force that “survives any division”. As such, the subaltern stands for some sort of “immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life” (LACAN 1964/1981, 197–198, *apud*, JAGODZINSKI, 2014, 87). Because of that, following Ruti's argument, my interpretation takes the subaltern as a position that splits, bends, and stresses the boundaries used by western metadiagnosis to separate language from the world, or voice from silence, human from non-human.

If we accept that the subaltern position harbors those elements that resist resemblance and keep reappearing as contingency, then it is possible to infer that subalternity expresses a mode of life that invites our logics of recognition to make that anti-narcissistic turn that I was mentioning before. That is, by approaching difference at the level of desire, my analysis of the subaltern proposed that, beyond the symbolic, the subject experience is also produced at bodily dimensions. With this, we are challenged to enlarge our interpretative lines to grasp difference (the Real's difference) as having an ontological status of their own. Borrowing Viveiros de Castro's words, we could say that the subaltern invites our political imagination to take humanity not as "logical possibility but ontological potentiality" (2015, 46).

At the limit, the grammar proposed in this dissertation followed such invitation, and thus, it tried to improve our ability to recognize the 'human' aspect of the subaltern, that is, to recognize its ability to speak and embrace causality. However, regarding the subaltern speech, the maxim guiding this study pointed much more towards a willingness to search for another image of speech than another image of the subaltern. In other words, I sought to use the Lacanian debate on a subject of desire (*objet a*) in order to realize how such dimension can also harbor those subject potentialities generally related with the symbolic register

(such as speech and agency). For that, it is required to stretch the line of subject position until it covers what was taken as a disempowered object position to representational thought. The subaltern, as a subject of a Real *jouissance*, translates such sort of diagnostic turn, through which what was taken as logical impossibility returns as ontological potentiality.

That is why, as I see it, we can think about a contribution coming from the type of theoretical mobilization proposed in this dissertation that is posed in terms of a politics of diagnosis (or a politics of reading). Paraphrasing Viveiros (2015), a critical engagement with the subaltern should not claim a rationality for them that they never ask to be recognized and whose only function would be to give us back an image of ourselves. Dialoguing with that, I hope to have presented a form to approach the subaltern that is not restricted to negotiating representational modes capable to enable its recognition within the terms of hegemonic socio-symbolic network. With this, I am not saying that hegemonic structures of discourse should not embrace transformations in order to improve a more ethical encounter with difference at the symbolic register. However, what the subaltern teaches us is that instead of disputing representations, we should dispute the prerogative of recognition.

Thus, my idea was to contest the very position of subject (as a recognizable and recognizer spot) as a property of a particular order, showing how the subaltern as object (a) produces an image of subjectivity (or of speech) that cannot be recognized by epistemological performances of western modernity. Again, an anti-narcissistic move does not dispute the terms that authorize subjectivity but takes it as a universality of the singular. On the other hand, it draws attention to difference as a productive element of the order of ontology. That tells us about bodies experiencing the symbolic arenas differently, as I sought to show in the previous chapters that described how all individuals join the operations of the Borromean knot, but a failure in the knotting rings (*sinthome*) ends up creating different libidinal experiences. That failure composes the subaltern singularity, as a sort of life that survives symbolic division and thus returns as bodily experiences. For that reason, to reconstruct such sort of life form requires a comparison between the ways other bodies experiences the world as "affective multiplicity" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, 87).

Finally, the creative potentiality that inhabits the subaltern experiences of indeterminacy emerges as a twisted misunderstanding, which does not involve representational but libidinal hiatus. This "eternal return" of difference suggests an inherent condition of failure to all practices of recognition and/or translations. However, such inherent error is also a creative source for transformations, as presented by Butler's discussion on misrecognition. As debated in the third chapter, if read through a metadiagnosis centered in representational performances, then the subaltern appears as a position unable to have access to those political breaches of contestation. On the other hand, if taken as subject of the Real, the subaltern engenders 'speeches' with no linguistic but bodily misunderstandings, that is, unexpected affections, misrecognized feelings that can also promote dislocations in existing references.

In that sense, we could conclude that when the subaltern speaks from a position of representational emptiness, yet ontological variation, the return becomes a twist, a revolutionary spin, that in the place of a mirror offers some sort of kaleidoscope through which we see our narcissistic lines, the lines that sustain our sense of self, of humanity, of nation, of reason, being ultimately displaced. Resuming the words used by Marli Fantini to analyze a romance of Guimarães Rosa, the incommunicability between two margins can find some sort of redemption when the word assumes its own clandestine routes: "waters of the word, through whose fluidity it is allowed to cross the brutality of the real and to be inscribed in the margins of the symbolic" (FANTINI, 2003, p.171, my translation).

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