

**From Anthropophagy to the Anthropocene:  
On the challenges of doing research in language and society  
in Brazil and the Global South**



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# **From Anthropophagy to the Anthropocene: On the Challenges of Doing Research in Language and Society in Brazil and the Global South**

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## **1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses practices of creating hybridity, cultural mixture and dialogues with alterities that are typical of certain trends in studies of language in society in Brazil. As we argue below, the “anthropophagic” act of incorporating an identity of the other – or cannibalism, a cultural practice that was operative in various parts of the world, and especially in the Amerindian groups at the time of the European colonial conquest of the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Viveiros de Castro, 2011; Fausto, 2002; Vilaça, 2000; Levi Strauss, 1964) – is not only part of the indigenous cultural heritage of Latin American countries, but has also been assimilated by intellectual and artistic movements in Brazil. Perhaps it was the artistic movement known as Brazilian modernism, initiated in the 1920s, that popularized ‘anthropophagy’ as an artistic concept in Brazilian artistic production. One of the movement’s main exponents, poet Oswald de Andrade wrote extensively about anthropophagy. In the first issue of *Revista de Antropofagia (Journal of Anthropophagy)*, which Andrade himself edited, one finds the ‘Anthropophagic Manifesto’, a poem written in prose form by Andrade. In it, the Brazilian poet lays out, in a playful style, the general lines of the anthropophagic stance in poetry and the arts in general. The opening lines read:

Only anthropophagy unites us. Socially.  
Economically. Philosophically.

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The only law in the world. Masked  
expression of all individualisms, of all  
collectivism. Of all religions. Of all peace  
treaties.

-----  
Tupy or not tupy that is the question.

-----  
Against any catechesis. And against the  
mother of the Gracchos.

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I am only interested in that which is not  
mine. The law of man. The law of the  
anthropophagus.

(Andrade 1928 [2017]: 46)<sup>i</sup>

In his leading role in the Modernist movement in Brazil, Oswald de Andrade drew from critical works of his time – like Marx’s interpretations of economic structures, Freud’s delineation of the psyche and elaborations on totemism and taboo, and Levi Strauss’ studies on Amerindian cultures (see Islam, 2011) – and accorded a privileged position in his thinking to the “cosmologies” of the indigenous peoples in Brazil<sup>ii</sup>. Of fundamental importance for understanding how contemporary scholars in Brazil have related to minoritized groups is the mode of relating to alterity predicated in anthropophagy. Andrade says in the manifesto above that he is “only interested in that which is not [his]. The law of the anthropophagus.” The Tupinambás, one of the major indigenous groups in Brazil, appear in the place of ‘being’ in Andrade’s citation of Shakespeare: “Tupy or not tupy that is the question”. Thus, centuries of practices of creolization and interpretation of difference undertaken by the Tupinambás undergird Andrade’s *Anthropophagic Manifesto*.

Viveiros de Castro (2011) tells us that the Amerindian practices of cannibalism had little to do with physical necessity. Warrior cannibalism for the Tupinambás “projected a form

in which the *socius* was constructed through the relationship with the other” (p. 41). He adds that the incorporation of the other, defeated in a battle, “required an exit from oneself” (ibid.). If the Jesuit missionaries had a conception of alterity in which the other (i.e. the heathen Amerindian) had to convert themselves to an image of the “same” (i.e. the Christian pious subject), Amerindians by contrast wanted that the same, through physical or symbolic cannibalism, became the other. Inspired by this ancestral philosophy, Andrade (1950 [1978]: 141) argues in an essay about the cultural practice of cordiality in Brazil (as proposed by Buarque de Hollanda, 1936 [2012]) that

[w]e may call alterity the feeling of the other, that is, of seeing the other in oneself, of perceiving in oneself the disaster, the mortification or the joy of the other. This term then turns out to mean the opposite of what it does in Charles Baudelaire’s existential vocabulary – that is, the feeling of being other, different, isolated and oppositional.

Not fully “different, isolated” individuals, Amerindians thus devised a subjective topology in which “the interior was nothing but movement towards the outside” (Viveiros de Castro, 2011: 46). For Andrade, this projection of the subject towards the other amounted to a form of sociality in which the self is part of a world with others, in solidarity with others: “devouring [the enemy] brings in itself the imminence of danger. And it produces the social solidarity that is defined as alterity” (Andrade, 1950 [1970]: 143). Interiorizing the other – or “seeing the other in oneself, [and] perceiving in oneself the disaster, mortification, or the joy of [being] the other” – is thus an abiding condition in Amerindian philosophy. And this condition permeates innumerable symbolic practices in Brazilian society. Hence, from the very outset, it is our first argument that not only Brazilian artistic modernism and anthropology have moved away from individualistic conceptions of the subject and towards an anthropophagic relation to

the other. Critical studies in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics have also engaged in this condition, albeit from a different stance.

As we will see below, scholars working in the academic field of sociolinguistics, especially those working in applied linguistics, have, since the 1980s, grappled with questions of precariousness, social/political vulnerability, and colonialism. While from a psychic point of view these forms of oppression affect both privileged and subaltern groups, the latter are the ones who suffer the worst (economic and psychic) effects of inequality (see Fanon, 1952; Pandolfo, 2010). This production of precariousness and its material effects – a question that has also concerned these strands of critical sociolinguistics and applied linguistics in Brazil – lead us to the second keyword in our chapter, namely the Anthropocene.

As Anna Tsing (2015) summarizes, the Anthropocene is a new concept; it was first proposed in geology to highlight the role of the human interference on the planet's environment and climate – thus, the current geological age is named Anthropocene as a reminder of both the human influence on the climate and of the disastrous and worrying effects of such interference. The term is at once disturbing and conflicting: “although some interpreters see the name as implying the triumph of humans, the opposite seems more accurate: without planning or intention, humans have made a mess of our planet” (Tsing, 2015: 19). In the face of the contemporary global ecological crisis, social scientists have thus inquired into alternative ontologies, such as the types of interactions between different species in their quest for survival amidst degradation (Tsing, 2015) or Amerindian philosophy, which in its attribution of perspectival knowledge to humans and non-humans provides different, non-utilitarian conceptions of the environment, seen as a sentient and cognitive being like us humans (Viveiros de Castro, 1998).

In this chapter, we see the question of survival as a point of connection between anthropophagy and the Anthropocene. As we said above, the effects of the global ecologic crisis

may be felt by all humans. Yet, the dispossessed people of globalization are the ones to suffer the worst effects of this crisis. Besides, in the contemporary realignment of the world towards reactionary populism, the underdog may end up being the ones to be blamed for ecological disasters. One piece of evidence in this direction comes from a speech by Paulo Guedes, the Brazilian minister of economy in the far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro, who represented the Brazilian president in the 2020 World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland. Trained in the Department of Economy at the University of Chicago in the 1970s, when the neoliberal intellectual framework was being seminally produced by such professors as Milton Freeman and Friedrich Hayek, Paulo Guedes is a self-declared enemy of the welfare state (see Harvey, 2005, and Cooper, 2014, for fine-grained accounts of neoliberalism). As a member of a right-wing populist government aligned with the contemporary post-truth politics of Donald Trump's populism, Guedes responded to critiques of the rising statistics of deforestation, land-grabbing, and illegal fires in the Brazilian Amazon by blaming the poor. Before an audience of world leaders, he said that the poor are the ones destroying the environment, and the reason is that they are in need of food. In his words: "Nature's worst enemy is poverty. People destroy the environment because they need to eat" (cited in Salomão & Coelho, 2020). Against criminal and scientific evidence that singles out land-grabbers and farmers as the ones who intentionally lit the forest on fire in the globally known disaster of 2019 (Silva, 2019), Guedes framed the starving poor as the perpetrators of the environmental collapse in the Amazon. It is important to note that Bolsonaro himself, without presenting any evidence, had blamed indigenous communities and NGOs for cutting down trees and setting fire to the forest, allegedly to ruin his image (Boadle and Stargardt, 2019).

For scientists and progressive people alike, Guedes and Bolsonaro were misrepresenting a reality that is not new. Bruno Latour (2018) points that the worst effects of the Anthropocene have been already felt by the residents of the former European colonies for a much longer period

of time. In his words, those who had chosen to “modernize” the world have only recently experienced the imminent risks of destruction of entire ecosystems, as we are witnessing now with rising sea levels, fires in tropical forests, storms and other effects of climate change. Yet this question of environmental disaster has always been looming large, according to Latour (2018: 21-22), “only for those who for four centuries had been subjected to the impact of the “great discoveries,” of empires, modernization, development, and finally globalization. They knew perfectly well what it meant to find oneself deprived of land. And they even knew quite well what it meant to be chased out of one’s land. They had no choice but to become experts on the question of how to survive conquest, extermination, land grabs.”

Survival to the imminent or potential destruction of ecosystems, which the dispossessed of globalization already knew so well, is thus a key question in the research on the Anthropocene. In this sense, the Brazilian scholarship that we summarize below has, since the 1980s, been asking this significant contemporary question: How do people who are submitted to precariousness, violence, and political or environmental destruction manage to strive and flourish as individuals or communities? Even if these language scholars have not been preoccupied, strictly speaking, with the ontological turn (Kohn, 2015) and the climate catastrophe that currently accompany the anthropological attention to the Anthropocene, they have devoted themselves to communicative practices and forms of life of those who have suffered the worst impacts of colonialism, land exploitation, and “modernization”, as Latour spelled it out above.

We have chosen six different works – six epistemologies, if you prefer – that differently grapple with minoritized groups and hence with some lessons these groups have taught others about what is to live a life in which one has to endure inequality, precariousness, marginalization, violation, effacement, or violence. Note that these six authors – Marilda Cavalcanti, Inês Signorini, Luiz Paulo da Moita Lopes, Kanavillil Rajagopalan, Adriana

Carvalho Lopes, and Fernanda Miranda da Cruz – are far from being the only ones interested in engaging with an anthropophagic dialogue with subaltern others, and in learning with them about how to survive a postcolonial world. These scholars are themselves members of networks within and outside Brazil, so there is large family resemblance between the scholarship that we spell out below and other epistemic projects in the country and beyond. Nevertheless, we believe that the work of these authors is prototypical of the questions we are raising – about alterity and survival, or about anthropophagy and the Anthropocene. Besides, some of the main features in their epistemologies – for instance, their critical positionality as scholars in the Global south, their collective epistemic projects of responding to colonialism, as well as the lived realities of the subjects they have engaged with – are very much informed by a recent quest in language studies and the social sciences in general, viz. the problem of hope. Authors interested in the affect of hope (e.g. Bloch, 1986; Lear, 2006; Crapanzano, 2003; Lear, 2006; Mahmood, 2016; Borba, 2019), a propelling drive that springs from otherwise paralyzing or destructive scenarios, are interested in how subjects find survival within some previously configured forms of destruction, precariousness, uncertainty, or violation. We will tentatively define hope as the semio-linguistic ideological work by means of which people oppose violence, political destruction, or affective paralysis with a collective construction of survival – an affect that is collective, teachable, and future-oriented (Bloch, 1986). In this sense, we intend to narrate these epistemic projects in Brazilian sociolinguistics that ultimately were made possible because their actors have struggled to produce alternative ontologies in the institutional scenarios in which they worked and, especially, in the empirical scenarios where they lodged their analytic concerns.

## **2. Facing the coloniality of being in research**

In this section, we narrate four pioneering positionalities in the field of Brazilian studies in language, culture and society that critically responded to modernist and colonial ideologies in Linguistics. As we argued above, these four proposals index ways in which sociolinguistics and critical language studies in the Global South have responded to epistemic and economic colonialism by producing anthropophagic and critical scholarship. We will thus spell out Marilda Cavalcanti's transcultural stance on Brazilian multilingualism, Inês Signorini's linguistic deregulation, Kanavillil Rajagopalan's call for dialogue with lay opinions about language, and Luiz Paulo da Moita Lopes interdisciplinary stance in applied linguistics. In resisting to efforts of dismantling institutional scenarios for critical research on language, these theories are ultimately alternative ontologies that have contributed to the survival of decolonial thinking in the Brazilian field of sociolinguistics.

In the 1970s, during the military dictatorship (1964-1985), Linguistics was already an established discipline in Brazil and had a department of its own at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), a renowned research university. Yet the creation of a new department of Applied Linguistics, in the 1980's, was an object of much debate as modernist epistemologies about language had already been dominant at the university. Some positions against the creation of a new department were that reflections about language teaching – supposedly the only object of Applied Linguistics – were not as scientific as the ones being carried out about linguistic form and discourse, and also that Applied Linguistics should be an “application” of the scientific knowledge produced by linguists. In spite of these critiques, the Department of Applied Linguistics (DLA) – by relying on bureaucratic technicalities and by hiring critical talents – found a way to survive.

The scholarship produced by Marilda Cavalcanti, a scholar who arrived in the DLA in the 1980's, is iconic of the types of anthropophagic ontologies that have emerged in Brazilian

Applied Linguistics. In line with Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagy in culture and the arts, Cavalcanti engaged with forms of scholarship-making that may be seen as tokens of *translation of knowledge* that were typical of Amerindians. As commented on above, ethnologists have emphasized that the practice of anthropophagy in Amerindian societies was embedded in a philosophical vision that the other was a radical alterity that one should incorporate, literally by eating the other's flesh.

At the same time that she kept conversing with theories and scholars from the North, Cavalcanti produced novel forms of understanding the place of sociolinguistics in a country that, to a large extent, has envisioned itself as monolingual, white, and non-racist. In 1986, she published a paper, "About Applied Linguistics", which defined the area not by restricting its scope like Saussure did in Linguistics, but by expanding it towards transdisciplinary understandings of language in Brazilian society (Cavalcanti, 1986).

Along the years, in collaboration with her students, Cavalcanti devised a broader approach to studying language and cultural diversity, and proposed a view of language practices as kaleidoscopes, i.e. language games that are multifaceted and always in reconfiguration (see Cavalcanti and Cesar, 2007). Her approach foregrounded the contradictions and flaws in monolingual imaginations that have informed Brazilian language politics: from the invisibilization of the role of African languages in Brazilian Portuguese, passing through the genocide and linguisticide of indigeneous populations, to the prohibition of bilingual schools in the history of Brazilian education and contemporary monoglot policies and ideologies (see Cavalcanti and Maher, 2018). Against this view, she drew a picture of a complex and multilingual country, in which Portuguese – in spite of its figuration as the only official language in the country – cannot be taken as a monolith.

Next, we move to Ines Signorini's (2002) theorization about 'linguistic deregulation', another nodal point in the challenge to modernist language ideologies in Brazil. Signorini states

from the very outset that her theory of deregulation is an understanding of language diversity and variation “uncompromised with the political and ideological project of construction/consolidation or ‘defense’ of a national language” (2002: 93) She thus avoids embedding deregulation in such constructs as “national or native language”, for these are Eurocentric objetifications that presuppose the coincidence between “a language – a people – a nation”; by contrast, deregulation refers to the diversity and indeterminacy of linguistic practices.

If stasis and conscious rationality are major assumptions of modern ideologies of language (Derrida, 1977; Bauman & Briggs, 2003), linguistic deregulation highlights movement and decentered rationality in the “multiple axis and non-linearities” that constitute language practices. Signorini borrows Deleuze and Guattari’s (1975) metaphors that languages are “schizophrenic mixtures” and that their speakers are all “foreigners,” polylinguaging in their “own language” to explain that linguistic orders are not “rationally structured” and that both monolingualism as norm and multilingualism as parallel monolingualisms are problematic views. Anticipating the contemporary translanguaging research, Signorini defined polylinguaging as “the diverse types of alternance, mixture, and fusions of languages and varieties” (2002: 97-98) that continuously take place across the borders and zones of contact.

The third form of theorization that resisted colonialism in Brazil was Kanavillil Rajagopalan’s call for dialogue with laypeople’s rationalizations about language. In 2002, he wrote about a debate that sparked in Brazil over a controversial bill of law, presented by federal deputy Aldo Rebelo, “aimed at curbing the use of foreignisms by the use of law” (p. 115; see also Rajagopalan, 2003; Silva and Rajagopalan, 2004). Rebelo’s patriotic bill considered that “any and every use of foreign words, with the special cases mentioned in this law” were “detrimental to Brazil’s cultural heritage”.

In his discussion of the circulation of the bill, Rajagopalan drew close attention to what

both lay people had to say about it and how professional linguistics responded to them. His diagnosis was that linguists by and large were not called on to participate in the discussion. As Carlos Alberto Faraco noted in an opinion article for *Folha de S. Paulo*: “forty years after its introduction as a discipline in Brazilian universities, linguistics continues to remain invisible and inaudible to the society as a whole” (Faraco, 2001, cited in Rajagopalan, 2002: 128). In general, linguists pointed to the ignorance of what scientists know about languages, and that the lay debate was based on myths *rather* than *facts* about language. In other words, for Rajagopalan (2002), arrogance and inability to frame the debate as political rather than technical characterized the stance of linguists about language standardization. While many linguists wrote on and spoke about the issue, Rajagopalan (2002: 133) pointed that “even when [linguists] have had the opportunity to voice their concerns, their arguments have typically tended to take the line that it is they who know what language is all about and therefore it is high time that they were listened to more often.”

Rajagopalan pleaded that “we as linguists did some soul-searching and asked ourselves whether, in our single-minded effort to theorize about language in total disregard for what the lay people think and believe about it, we have not isolated ourselves from them and rendered ourselves largely inconsequential” (2002: 115). In a move that was very similar to the language ideology turn, Rajagopalan pointed to a crucial layer of semiosis that linguists tend to ignore in their concern with describing the purified fragment of their science – *la langue* – while leaving aside the everyday terrain of speech and the meta-commentaries about it – or *la parole*. In other words, Rajagopalan demonstrated that linguists ignored the metapragmatic layer of language – where language ideologies, or rationalizations about language imbued with political interests, abound (Silverstein, 1993).

The fourth pioneering position that we would like to discuss here is well summarized in Luiz Paulo da Moita Lopes’ (2006) edited volume entitled *Por uma linguística aplicada*

*indisciplinar*, or *Towards an Indisciplinary Applied Linguistics*. His notion of indiscipline is embedded in the *mestizaje* of perspectival views of language in human affairs that are produced not only in linguistics or applied linguistics departments, but in any consequential epistemic enterprise. In addition to being *mestiza*, an indisciplinary Applied Linguistics is also ideological or politically informed. Moita Lopes (2006) thus critiques the supposed neutrality of scientific views by approximating scientific indiscipline with a concern that the knowledge produced in linguistic investigations should be consequential for “those who live in the margin: the poor, residents of favelas, blacks, indigenous peoples, homoerotic men and women, women and men who undergo hardships etc.” (Moita Lopes, 2006: 86).

Thus, in our view, Moita Lopes’ (2006) indisciplinary stance iconizes the ways in which critical sociolinguists and applied linguists in Brazil have challenged themselves in the wake of the Anthropocene – a moment in which scientists, as Anna Tsing (2015) wisely sums up, are trying to make sense of “the possibility of life in capitalist ruins” (p. iii). These ruins are certainly very ostensible in a country like Brazil, where colonial arrangements have exploited nature and human life to an extent that life becomes extremely harsh for the most vulnerable: indigenous peoples who have been historically decimated and expropriated; residents of favelas, who have been stigmatized; Afro-Brazilians, who have been criminalized by racist institutions; disabled people, who have been excluded from social and institutional insertion.

### **3. Beyond the coloniality of being in research**

Now we will focus on two ontologies in Brazilian Applied Linguistics that have investigated alternative arrangements of life, opening fissures in the field of language research. These transdisciplinary modes of doing research on language remind us that “our world is rather contingent than necessary,” as Sewell (1997: 37) summarized the main revelation of anthropology. Adriana Carvalho Lopes (2011) and Fernanda Miranda da Cruz (2018) have

produced research that not only portrays less widely known ways of being in the world, but also engages with marginalized groups.

In crossing different borders, Lopes got involved with the cultural manifestation of funk music in Rio de Janeiro, learned its meanings, fought for its social legitimacy, and is still part of a network of social relations that involves solidarity and affect between academic researchers, progressive politicians, and activists from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

Lopes' research is first reported in her book, *Funk-se quem quiser: no batidão negro da cidade carioca* (Lopes, 2011). As she narrates it, *funk carioca*, or Rio de Janeiro funk, is a music genre, a communicative practice, and a cultural manifestation born in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The Rio de Janeiro funk culture emerged out of the African diaspora as it spread globally through the forms of U.S. funk, soul and hip-hop, Angola's kuduro, Colombia's reggaeton, etc. Yet it became a distinct musical genre from the mix of the beat of Miami Bass, a subgenre of hip-hop, with other beats originated/created in different favelas. It became, from the 1990's onwards, one of the main vehicles of cultural expression of the youths in the favelas as lyrics would point out different aspects of their everyday life, such as residing in places where the State and the "world of crime" dispute authority, and also the dynamics of black identity, and of love and sexuality in the communities.

Because funk presented these cultural themes, it became a main target of social prejudice. As a reaction, a diverse group of intellectuals started to describe funk – and mainly the *bailes funk*, parties organized in the favelas, which became a main space of cultural socialization of the youths – in ways that differed from criminalizing middle class, mediatic, and police accounts.

More than just analyzing the characteristics of this cultural movement, Lopes had a deep involvement with the *funkeiros* and *funkeiras*, the people from funk culture, that would have far deep social consequences. In the preface to her book, MC Leonardo, a funk activist, comments

on the problematic relationship that researchers usually have with the people from the social group that they research due to a lack of political commitment with them. However, MC Leonardo recognized Lopes' research as challenging these assumptions. He acknowledges her role in creating the *Associação dos Profissionais e Amigos do Funk* (Association of Friends and Professionals of Funk) that was later responsible for passing a bill in the State of Rio de Janeiro. The law that would then recognize funk as a cultural manifestation that should be respected, and that any discussion related to it should be done in the scope of cultural rather than security policies aiming to fight crime.

Thus, MC Leonardo also acknowledges that his encounter with Adriana Lopes resulted in actions that aspired to social change. Registering this encounter in a book, an important material artefact, amounts to producing memory and a tool for future social struggles (MC Leonardo, 2011). In this sense, his discourse not only testifies the crossing of their trajectories, but also designs an ongoing shared project of social change, which is an actual exercise, through interrelationality, of fighting political destruction and building hope.

In conditions of vulnerability such as those in the favelas of Rio, knowing how to build alliances or actual affective bonds may be part of demanding rights and producing visibility. Besides, this knowledge production may be a form of surviving and building paths that may become resources for members of a community in their everyday production of hope. MC Leonardo's discourse is part of the complex threads that constitute the tapestry of specific peripheric ways of thinking and being – ontologies produced out of anthropophagic contact with different others. In these contexts, people not only enact survival, but also form other arrangements of life.

In her research with children diagnosed with autism, Cruz (2018) questions the place of language and communicability in our frames of interpretation of social realities by trying to understand the role of bodies in space in the process of doing research. Her research indexes

the possibilities for us to be in another mode of existence, where our modern conceptions of doing research with/about/in between languages can be put into discussion.

Constructed as a clinical category and as a sociocultural phenomenon, autism challenges our understandings about the ways in which subjects constitute intersubjective relationships, empathetic connections, will and intention, moral values and agency, as well as epistemological constructions (Solomon, 2010). The main reason for that is related to the fact that discourses about autism were built from the point of view and the experiences of people who were socialized in the narratives and worldviews mediated by the modern ideologies about what is to interact, what is to communicate, what is to live a life and what is to be human that cannot be simply retraced in the autistic experiences.

Either in medical or other social discourses, definitions of autism have always been mediated by categories of thought that are both pre-existent and usually external to the worlds of autistic people. In her autoethnographic report, Fernanda Miranda da Cruz challenges these mediations, telling her process of insertion and of doing research in *Pandorga* – an uncommon word for kite – an institution that aims to promote the conviviality of autistic children in São Leopoldo, a city in the South of Brazil (Cruz, 2018).

During the investigation, she started to understand that our excess of verbal language, categories, and description are the main obstacles for comprehending the experience of what is to be an autistic person. She could perceive, then, that it was necessary to consider their modes of existence without filling with communication what would be seen as their silences, and that it was necessary to leave behind any characterization of them “in negative” (as we will explain below) that would erase (again) their specific ways of being in the world.

Along the months that she spent in Pandorga, Cruz perceived that beyond the movements registered in the camera – the precise transcriptions of synchronic movements, corporal alignments and coordinations that would frame and explain the connections of bodies,

spaces and materials – there was “her body.” She also understood that what this specific body would understand and capture as a “presence” was different from what her research had been able to observe, describe, theorize, and explain.

As an example, she portrays her contact with Augusto, a child that used to be described, in her terms, only “in negative”: he would not talk, he would not look, he would not ask, he would not be “transcribable.” Yet Augusto had patterns of movement; his infant body would connect with space in ways that adults would not connect; he would have a mode of being in the world that was singular. Cruz tells us that in her last day in the field, she and a friend, when leaving, waved to the people of *Pandorga*. Then, the unexpected happened: for the first time in months, Augusto made a gesture that connected him with that collective. He waved back to the researcher.

This small gesture probably impacted the world where he and the people surrounding him inhabit. Cruz stated that his goodbye was a sensitive experience she still carries with her in her academic writings and her research in the universe of autism, as well as in her personal engagements with dance and as a reminder of the place of the bodies in research. The “goodbye” of Augusto, in this sense, produced an interrelation between worlds. It also produced an affect that in its way gestured to an undefinable hope, a kind of hope that is not based on what can be said, but on what can be done, when in “state of presence”. In this sense, this affect indexes different ontological possibilities of being, and simultaneously opens up a possibility of being otherwise.

#### **4. Doing science in cohabitation**

We started this reflection by revisiting anthropophagy, especially as it indexes the memories of indigenous practices of incorporating the other and thus establishing a solidary,

non-utilitarian relation with alterity. We then connected this dialogue with indigenous, subaltern epistemologies that are entangled with a significant question in the debates about the Anthropocene: how do people who are submitted to environmental collapse, precariousness, violence, or political destruction manage to strive and to flourish as individuals or communities? This connection, we argued, is made visible mainly through the trope of survival: indigenous philosophical concepts such as anthropophagy and perspectival knowledge are today all the more relevant for the quest of alternative ways of relating to the environment in the Anthropocene.

We then reflected upon these tropes of survival and hope in two different moments of Brazilian scholarship on language and society. First, we looked at four pioneering epistemic projects in the history of producing other forms of science in the field of language in society in Brazil. The scholarship produced by Cavalcanti, Signorini, Rajagopalan, and Moita Lopes broadened the scope of language studies in the country and opened up spaces for critical thinking in this field. Second, we highlighted how two young female scholars are projecting the field forward by occupying this space and constructing new modes of producing knowledge in sociolinguistics. The scholarship produced by Adriana Lopes and Fernanda da Cruz at once politically engages with the realities of others and “cannibalizes” communicative practices of their interlocutors, thereby promoting interrelationalities among people with distinct social trajectories and cognitive conditions.

In line with other efforts in Brazilian academia and beyond, these epistemic projects play an important role in reframing systems of knowledge in the field of language, but also participate in particular political struggles for social change (e.g., Adriana Lopes’ participation in the production of a bill of law, and the reception of her work among the *funkeiros* and *funkeiras*), and complexify the political debate over processes of inequality, marginalization, and colonialism in Brazil (e.g. Rajagopalan’s and Signorini’s debates about linguistic ideologies

in Brazil; Cavalcanti's and Moita Lopes' discussions of diversity in the country). These scholars thus point to ways of making studies of language and society move forward in Brazil by prefiguring possible critical forms of producing knowledge. As scholars living in a very diverse and unequal country, their efforts in knowledge making translate into tactics of collectively imagining survival and hope. In this sense, doing research in the Anthropocene becomes an exercise of solidarity across social differences, borders and histories – a form of solidarity that is made up of affective lines, as all these six pieces of scholarship at stake demonstrate. In this process of common weaving, hope is a practical project, where one aspires with others to slowly change meanings in life.

For Maldonado-Torres (2017: 22), decoloniality is a philosophy that, in opposing itself to coloniality, promotes human interrelationality and aims at challenging hierarchies of difference that dehumanize individuals and communities. If coloniality is the basis of the world, where we actually live with its actual “racial, sexist, homo and trans-phobic conservative liberal and neoliberal politics” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017: 1), one form of facing it is by engaging with the potentialities of the unknown (as Cruz' engagement with the alterity of Augusto indexes) and by building spaces where love and understanding can emerge.

More than just building strong theoretical reflections and getting engaged politically with communities, the challenge of survival and building hope in the Anthropocene is a challenge of cohabitation, of recognizing that we all share the “same shape-changing destiny” (Latour, 2014), which demands building collective strategies. The Brazilian scholarship we have presented in this chapter is a token of this collective strategic action. To invoke Haraway's (2016) book title, surviving and building hope in the Anthropocene will also demand “staying with the trouble” and facing it.

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<sup>i</sup> We ourselves translated the cited excerpts of works published in Portuguese whose translation into English were not available.

<sup>ii</sup> As we will make clear ahead, our placing of quotation marks on the word cosmologies has to do with the fact that, in critical reinterpretations of Western metaphysics like that of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Amerindian people have, over the centuries and before European contact, produced a philosophy – one that provides systematic categorizations and explanations of the world and its beings.