Narration at the Threshold

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Among the possibilities of literature and any discourse we can find linearity, the teleological narrativity, marked by the impulse of "filling the empty spaces" as a safe method, but we can also find narratives of openness towards new connections and able to leave us in uncertainty. Colonialism is a discourse built upon the idea of the domain of the mapamundi where all the white spots become known spaces, accurately divided and with proper transit paths, its narrative constraints to what we can call the *wall* chronotope, a closemonological chronotope of certainty, homogeneity and static forms. Then a postcolonial narration must nourish from a different chronotope able to open to the narration of the otherness instead of the narration of the sameness. The proposal of a narration at the threshold aims to understand the encounter with the other as an experience of uncertainty that leaves an open space for authentic dialog that includes both significant words and silences. From this narration emerges the question of how to inhabit such space-time. A wide range of thinkers from what Boaventura de Sousa calls the epistemologies of the South, have pointed out to an alternative ethos that enables different localities and a way of de-colonizing discourses and narratives. Following Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, this paper portrays the narration of two different chronotopes -the wall and the threshold- as a way to contributing to the understanding of these epistemologies that open up never-ending paths.

Key words: chronotope, threshold, wall, epistemologies of the South, postcolonialism.

Introduction

In order to understand the proposal of a narration at the threshold from a de-colonial perspective first, we have to point out at what we understand for narrativity. To narrate means showing a moment in its particular space-temporality relation, so that in accordance with different formal and content factors it should be observed diverse chronotopes, either monological-closed or dialogical-open ones. By these means, narratology would be the study of diverse forms of chronotopes. That being said, we have to have some context and present the change of paradigm from which arises what we call the narration of openness. From this narration and its complexity, we can understand a narration at the threshold and its centripetal counterpart the wall in its linear narrativity.

The ideas presented in this paper derive from my recently finished work of investigation for my thesis dissertation *The puncture of art: Theory of openness for the hermeneutical subject* (the *hermeneutical subject* is the

carrier or the complexity paradigm and the maker of the theory of openness). When we talk about the *puncture of art* we are pointing out a space of difference and singularity among the space of homogenization that only produces sameness. These overpowering centripetal forces of sameness flatten all the textures of difference turning them into a part of a formula. In this panorama something that with its acuity makes a rupture allows to oversee a path of openness only visible through the lens of a complex paradigm; then narrating the openness is only possible under complex perspectives.

What do we need in order to narrate the openness and first of all, why do we care about openness? What is openness? Openness can be a very wide concept. If we don it draw some kind of boundaries it can be easily diluted into the sameness as in a closed sphere. Being that the case, I propose a *dialogical openness*, that finds itself between the unequivocal meaning of the monological word reduced to semantic and syntactic relations and the totally relativistic word of a solipsistic idiolect. Therefore this kind of openness is a relational one, and it's only comprehensible by allowing us to establish links and relations as fragments and details of a complex system.

Today we view dialogue as a locus of inclusion and plurality. The very possibility of dialogue arises in the context of multiple perspectives emerging from complex phenomena like multiculturalism and hypertextuality. However, all dialogue's textures have been taken away in order to become an instrument of power under the control of the appearance of the image; dialog has become an empty word without the risk, the commitment and the responsibility that an authentic dialog implies. In order to keep the textures alive and signifying we need the tension of booth centripetal and centrifugal forces; from this tension, this *narrative tension*, we are able to narrate the openness as a place that includes multiple polarities and textures and allows dialogical practices to make possible not only complex perspectives but also an *ethos*, as a way of inhabiting the world.

The way to undertake this narrative is from a paradigm of complexity witch proceeds from within itself, from a world in an unfinalizable construction by the *hermeneutical subject* who narrates himself the *Text* (Barthes, 2001) in movement, on the limit, in the paradox of a dilatory signifier, which requires interpretation; its unfinalizable force interpellates the subject. In contrast to this paradigm, we find the classical one, bidimensional or linear; this paradigm circumscribes to a given number of possibilities that pretend to ensure that we can see the world from outside, thanks to immutable, symmetrical and global laws and schemes. This bidimensional paradigm divides reality in a subject that knows the object which lies outside from him and is capable of apprehending its integrity as a world of the *Work*, static, immediate, classifiable, enunciable, manifest and literal.

The change of epistemological paradigm from a linear to a complex perspective also implies a change from the comparative to the analogical methodologies. We have pass from Bacon is *New Organon* that intended to organize from the most simple to the most complex in an exhaustive inventory of categories, characteristics and enumerations that discern towards perfect certainty, to Prigogine is *New Alliance* circumscribe to an analogical paradigm that centers in relating similarities, in finding links in an ever open approach and never complete and unreachable certainty. The distinction between approaching the world from the outside and from within it was made by Prigogine (2009) to emphasize the dynamic of a new science, which is aware of the impossibility of apprehending the world in its totality as external entities.

In order to display a new sense of sensibility to face homogeneity, meaning an aesthetic sensibility as a sense of selfhood and otherness, it is necessary to convey a new paradigm of complex thinking. Aside from the avatars of contemporary society as a complex phenomenon still struggling with linear paradigms, its teleological narratives and the search for identity in a dynamic and fluid reality, narrativity, as a point of view, enables unfolding the fold (Deleuze, 2008) as this baroque spirit of mixed, hybrid nature that constitutes our proposal of a *hermeneutical subject* capable of developing a *Theory of openness*. Thus theory within he can navigate the path, undertake the adventure and tensions of different forces and movements, as well as always be situated at the threshold and on the limit of a world taken from inside in order to let the paradox unfold.

What's the pertinence of talking about aesthetic sensibility in a so-called aestheticized world? What does that mean and how it concerns us? Aesthetification as gaze, as a point of view, is a condition of possibility for the social *imaginaerum*, of the heteronymous edification and construction, as well as the destruction and autonomous re-construction in the play of forms. The *hermeneutical subject* is capable of finding beauty where it has been declared dead, by the means of the revival of the values, ideas, words, and overall the language as particular experiences, by the narrative of it, not as *flatus vocis*, but as alive narrative games within the most deep and inextricable experience of language.

Opening to new epistemologies, drawing new narratives

From these perspective permeated by art, aesthetics, language, science..., but must of all inscribed in the paradigm of complexity, this paper looks for allowing this paradigm to establish relations with its social axis, a co-relation between the epistemology and the narratives that statify it or let it move and transform among the multiple voices and encounters.

In a society dominated by the prefix hyper-hypertextuality, hypermediathe hyper-aceleration becomes hyper-exhaustion (Byung-Chul Han, 2012), passivity as result of the pure positivity of a naked action lacking times and spaces of negativity that don it surrender to transparency. Within this context the methodological theories assumed by the hermeneutical subject must direct him to formulate the best approximation to a theory of openness that reveals the renewed form of the aesthetic sensibility; those methodological tools can be found -although they are not restricted to themin our point of view on Bakhtin is dialogism and Mauricio Beuchot's analogical hermeneutics (2000). Whereas the analogical hermeneutics, thanks to its circumspection and *chiaroscuro* vision, finds in dialogism the best ally for considering the contraries and the negative value. Even more, dialogism finds in analogical hermeneutics the best partner in the aim of returning sense to words and celebrating the "resurrection of meaning party" full of textures, voices, air, folds, prints and veils that require the commitment -responsibility, prudence and fidelity- of the hermeneutical subject towards his narrative, his point of view and therefore his relationship with himself and the otherness developing his capacity of aesthetic sensibility as sense of selfhood and otherness.

From the proposal of Bakhtin comes the dialogical openness with its ethic of responsibility -based in the exotopy-, its rupture towards the prosaics-as a philosophy of the ordinary-, the importance of the chronotope and the dionysiaccarnivalesque as forms of centrifugal and centripetal forces. From Beuchot's analogical hermeneutics comes the narration at the threshold as the main characteristic for narrating the openness. Being at the threshold resemblesbeing able to navigate through both metaphorical and metonymical discourses and amongst dogmatic and relativistic forces, and by assuming its liminality and hybridity undergoing a new path of creativity, prudent with the utterance, faithful to its complexity and responsible not for controlling what happen to us, but for our response to it.

Our proposal had led us to stand at the threshold with the openness necessary to start listening to other points of view, to other epistemologies, and here is where the proposal of Boaventura De Sousa comes in to place as a way of putting in a sociological context our theory and looking at how the different narrations take their full realization in the social dynamics. The proposal of De Sousa called the *Epistemologies of the South* is described by him as

"claim for new production processes, of valorization of valid knowledge, scientific and non-scientific, and of new relations among different kind of knowledge, from the practices of classes and groups that had suffered systematically destruction, oppression and discrimination caused by capitalism, colonialism and all the naturalizations of inequality in which they unfold; the exchange value, the individual property of the land, the sacrifice of the mother earth, racism, sexism, individualism, the material above the spiritual and all the other monocultives of the mind and society -economical, political and cultural- that intend to block the emancipator imagination and sacrifice the alternatives" (2011, p. 16, my own translation).

From the perspective of the paradigm of complexity, the monocultives of the mind and society represent the positivity of the centripetal forces, and it is its nature to put clear boundaries that dismisses the alternatives. Without rejecting the achievements of this monocultives and its methods, the complexity doesn't reduce or constrain itself to them. One of its contributions is to have the ability to adopt different points of view to criticize and ask for the preconceptions and what is being established as *given* and the so-call teleological grounds of their foundations, as the belief in progress.

In the claim that the understanding of the world is much broader than the Western understanding of the world because the diversity of the world is infinite, it comes into place the usefulness of occupying the term 'epistemology' to re-signify it (De Sousa, 2016, p. 20). The importance of bringing to the discussion "other-knowledge" and not only the well known occidental knowledge stands against what De Sousa calls an "epistemicide: the destruction of the knowledge and cultures of [...] populations, of their memories and ancestral links and their manner of relating to others and to nature" (2016, p. 18). The proposal from the theory of openness is not to place one epistemology over the other or to aspire to the purity and perfection, neither is based on the teleological ideas of progress, development, and degradation but in the transformation in dialog by the narrative tension, which however include the task of pointing out the remaining teleological ideas lying underneath as centripetal forces.

De Sousa outlines a fear among Europe and we shall add not only the United States as a world leader, but every state that following the same or a similar model had obtained some guaranties, economic stability, technological and scientific advances and recognition of the global community, of in some aspects to return to the XIX century where the fights for the Welfare State were still to be fought: "The social democracy, the keynesianism, the Welfare State are forms of avoiding imagining a postcapitalist future; these are forms of trying to offer a solution within capitalism" (De Sousa, 2011, p. 12). Despite these fear and the politics taking place to reassure that the guarantees obtained never be lost, stolen or redistributed by or among "alien individuals", some are beginning to ask seriously the question about how some, or their own countries achieved the Welfare State, which was the cost of it or at the expense of what or who do they achieved it.

At the platform of this questions lies the narrative of colonialism as "a system of naturalizing differences in such a way that the hierarchies that justify domination, oppression, and so on are considered the product of the inferiority of certain people" (De Sousa, 2016, p. 18) and that constitutes the reason for their domination. Colonialism is still alive, accompanied by imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, in racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, the excluded, silenced, marginalized, minorities... and the South of the De Sousa proposal stands as "a metaphor for the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on the global level, as well as for the resistance to overcoming or minimizing such suffering" (2016, p. 18). Neither the South or the colonialism restrict itself to the geographical South because as De Sousa points out, even in Europe there had been internal colonialism from the beginning, there had been many Europes, many modernities, and every North has a South. As a contra-discourse to the colonial narrative arises the post-colonial narrative, but contrary to what its name may suggest it is very important to outline the precision in regard to the term postcolonialism which "claims that colonialism did not end with the end of historical colonialism" (De Sousa, 2016, p. 18) and being that the case, the work of the epistemologies of the South and of every narrative within the paradigm of complexity would be a de-colonail one, meaning that its narrative is full of questions to the *given* discourse and open to multiple voices. From our perspective, the de-colonizing narrative enables the possibility of inhabiting plural space-times, baroque localities in the way of authentic dialog, by new connections and within uncertainty. The de-colonial narrativity embraces the possibility of meeting in an unknown space with respect and the openness necessary for an authentic dialog that the colonialism rejects.

De Sousa summarizes the epistemologies of the South context in four primary points. The first one stipulates the weakness of the answers in front of the big and strong questions. The answers that have been given to social injustice and inequality are constrained within the same restrictive and oppressive capitalist discourse, as an example, De Sousa points at the concept of development which implies the existence of underdeveloped societies which construction should aim towards the first world experiences underestimating the value of their experiences of the world. The second point refers to the contradiction between the urgency of the required changes and the transformation of mentalities and ways of socialization that are needed to make this change happen. The dissociation between these two aspects constrains the spectrum of effective action, especially when other factors come into place, like the political, economic and communicational networks. The third point relates to what he calls "loss of substantives" in the face of adjectives. These means that the contra-discourses, in which the epistemologies of the South are one of them, are using or re-using

the same substantives used by the conventional theory as field for the debate, reapropiating them with different meanings established by a subsequent adjective, for example, a contra hegemonic use of the concept development would be democratic, sustainable, alternative development and to that we can add a series of adjectives like participative, radical, deliberative, collective, intercultural, subaltern, insurgent as conditions not only of reapropiation but as alternatives to the different context. The fourth situation regards the phantasmal relation between theory and practice. What happens when the historical subject, the agent of change and alternatives comes from a very distant context, away from the colonial languages and concepts, is it even possible to translate? The minority groups become phantasmagorical when their voices have to be instituted by the dominant discourse in a mistranslation.

In a linear paradigm trap in the positive race of progress as domain over the irrational and underdeveloped, De Sousa would claim for nonextractive methodologies, wondering at what extent will they "[...] be accepted in the future as the only legitimate way of advancing mutually enriching knowledge [...]" (De Sousa, 2016, p. 28). We can find these methodologies in a kind of dialog that enables the respect for the different ways of knowledge and experiences of the world without trying to submit them to a universal model, at the same time that allows if pertinent, with prudence and we should say acuity, open up to hybrid conceptions that led us to new solutions, questions about our preconceptions and unimagined possibilities beyond the wall of the colonizing discourse. The claim for this de-colonizing space of dialog and open narration founds in our proposal of a theory of openness as briefly explained above, an ally to put the theory not only in the study of the edifications but also in the threshold of movement and change, there is where it takes place the performativity of language and the possibility of transformation and imagination in the encounter with the otherness.

The chronotopes of the wall and the threshold

As a general notion, we understand the chronotope as the diverse forms of experiencing the world in a space-temporality. In order to narrate the openness, we need a specific kind of chronotope capable of talking about the richness in ways of experiencing the world. Taking Bart Keunen is distinction between teleological-monologic chronotopes and dialogical ones a correlation is found between the first one and the linear paradigm and another lies between the second and the complex paradigm. Elements of the monological, like the alternation between equilibrium and conflict, can be present in the dialogical ones but are not constrained to it. We can it see or put in one template all the rhetorical possible *topoi* or chronotopes, however, we can establish the idea of dialogical-analogical chronotopes like the *threshold* that enable us to place ourselves in the way of openness.

To better understand the kind of openness that we are talking about lets imagine our selves before the threshold of a door, in one panorama the threshold disappears and we find ourselves in front of a vast nothingness, without limits we dissolve into the vacuity erasing any possibility of response; in another panorama we dismiss the presence of the threshold by advocating ourselves to the preexisting centers that mark the tracks of transit; finally in a third panorama we recognize the presence of the threshold by the light that escapes from the other side of the door. The first scenario resembles a relativistic posture in which the solipsism impede the subject from becoming one by communicating with the otherness in the other side of the threshold, without that common ground they can it communicate; in terms of Bakhtin the I-for-myself doesn't get the I-for-the other, an exotopic point of view and neither is capable of recognizing an other-for-me. The second scenario portrays a dogmatic posture in which we find ourselves as static subjects who divided from our true nature enclose ourselves within walls that protect the finished identity that we had constructed, saving it implies neglecting the presences on the other side and even considering them dangerous in their liminality, hybridity and des-centered forms, here the threshold only exists in its mere functionality as a place between two points. The third panorama, the only one that recognizes the threshold and the presence on the other side is what we can call, following Mauricio Beuchot is proposal, the analogical posture, here not only do we have access to the monological ways of narration of the dogmatic posture, but it also opens up to the various expressions of experiences that dialogical chronotopes can portray without losing ourselves in extreme relativism.

Bakhtin describes the chronotope of the threshold as an experience of doubt, fear of crossing, of change and of strong implication. Without dismissing the importance of the other chronotopes like the provincial city, the encounter, the salon and the gothic castle, (we shall have another space for thinking about them in their own particularities, relations among them and the close or open narrations that they portray) the importance of pointing out the threshold as the analogical one is that enables us to show the contrast between the other two postures by its presence or its absence, the significance of the experience of the threshold is its defining impact on the identity of the ones that encounter theirselfs in it. Being at the threshold means changing by the presence of the otherness and the exotopy that comes whit it. The implication of recognizing the chiaroscuro, that there is something knowable and something hiding from my point of view carries the responsibility that Bakhtin points out in his ethics, the I-for-myself responds for its point of view by acknowledging that it can only be possible by the exotopy that comes from the experience of the other; in this vision the forces of the autonomy are only possible by a heteronomy and viceversa, a personal myth only exist through a collective one, and this

one persists or perishes by the reinforcement of the individual, centripetal and centrifugal forces give shape to our human existence by tension supported by our narrative. Dissolving this narrative tension reinforces either a dogmatic or a relativistic point of view in which the homogenization conducts to a void, or to the domain of one force over the other.

Now we shall explain the importance of the tension present in the openness from the wall to the threshold. In the face of the rooted fear to the undetermined and uncertain emerge the desire of control, order, and domain as the foundation for the construction of something certain and immovable. In that ground of dividing order it is erected the *wall*, in one side the known and in the other, the unknown guarded the own within the limits and dismissed the alien. The global North, says De Sousa, has been instituted on "an abyssal line. A line that is so important that it has remained invisible. It makes an invisible distinction sustaining all the distinctions we make between legal and illegal, and between scientific, theological and philosophical knowledge." (2016, p. 20), so what lies on the other side remains invisible. This abyssal line is the *wall* within all the Norths as hegemonic discourses build their narratives.

The chronotope of the *wall* is monological as the centripetal forces determine a single possible order, a monophony marked by the *final point* of the *given* and without a place for the imagination. Its anthem is for utility, nothing hesitant or wandering should be in it. Constrain to a limited number of possible shapes or figures these chronotope aligns to the *bidimensional paradigm*.

In opposition to the image of the *wall* that we could imagine, -gravid, thick, impenetrable, strong, thundering- that responds to the idea of an imposing fort, underneath lies the transparency as the core value of this form of positivity. The accelerated race towards positivity, towards the domain of a uniform and homogeneous form, had lead to a glass edification that allows the control of what happens inside by leaving everything to the sight, everything is exposed. In literature, we can find two examples of this glass paradise in Dostoievsky's *Notes from the underground* (1864) and in Zamyatin's *We*(1921). The only way out of the *wall* is to the conquest, the conquest of the otherness by the sameness as an extension of the *wall*. But in order to preserve the sameness a sacrifice must be done, the prize for the conquest and annihilation is the freedom of imagination, the possibility of imagining a life beyond the *wall*, without the certainty of its protection, a life of uncertainty and possibilities.

That life is the one of the *threshold chronotope*, a space of *openness* to the living and unfinished word, always in process. The *threshold* is inescapable, we are always in the *threshold* of something, crossing from one to another,

and never the same one twice; this reveals a complexity of the ever-changing world. Here not only do we have the positivity of acknowledging the *threshold* but the negativity of not been given all, of the openness of the possibility of the unexpected, the radical otherness, the irrational, the unknown, the diversity of textures and the sense of adventure that allow us to imagine different possible worlds.

This chronotope breaks up with the preconceive structures of the *bidimensional paradigm* by adding movement, changing the point of view to a *complexity paradigm* which includes irrationality or cognition as a broader concept and experiences different epistemologies, there we can include the mystery of the non-said or the silently said. From the *threshold* we are capable of asking questions to the *given* of the *wall*, to its omnipresence -why are you there, are you even real, which is the discourse that erected you and above which ones did it do it?-. In this chronotope full of incognitos, the experience is so intense that infringe a wound, a puncture as we were outlining at the beginning with the acuity that making a rupture allow us to recognize the otherness, the difference, by throwing some clearance to our point of view; just as Barthes exposed in the *Camera Lucida*, *Reflections on photography* the *punctum* disturb whit its acuity all the common places that constitute the formulas of the *studiums*.

In the *threshold* the voice is presented as multivocal, there are multiple discourses folding and unfolding in and never-ending narration of inflections and inclusions. The *wall* has only one dogmatic voice, a final point, some comas and exclamations signs, but the threshold wonders what if...? if only..., as if... and that opens up to the question marks, the ellipsis and a dilatory final point.

To discover the *threshold* is experimenting the life as the result of the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces, and even when we never stop building *walls*, we are also capable of tearing them apart. With the centripetal forces we can compose and with the centrifugal we can shake, transgress and change. To think about the possible worlds is to open up to a narration and identity of an open ending, as Bakhtin called it. The centrifugal movement is capable even of disfiguring us, making it difficult to recognize ourselves; the uncertainty of an ever opened ending keep us alive but also awake, alert. Not only is important to know how to compose -give symmetry, to build, but to shake, to be shaken by the *punctum*, by the *epilepsy of the creation*.

Conclusion: paradoxes at the threshold

When a force overcomes another, the tension dissolves into sameness, an overpowering force that doesn't allow multivocality because it compromises the monovocality of the reigning discourse. The *wall* shelters but also separates the same from the different and without a tension, without a *threshold* that otherness disappears; it doesn't foresee or even wonders about the presence on the other side. As said before, the chronotope of the *threshold* is full of question marks while the chronotope of the *wall* pretends to only have comas, exclamation marks and final points, those which Bakhtin refuses to acknowledge as part of dialogism, because "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future." (PDP, p. 166). There isn't a final point, the narration is unfinalizable.

This unfinalizability doesn't mean a continuous and unstoppable profusion within anything being relevant. Revolution is change, and there is one revolution after the other, but in order to have a revolution the narrative tension must come out in place and let us hear the silenced voices, let alive the heteroglossia along with the multivocality of silence and words and enable utopias and dystopias like Bakhtin's, Beuchot's, Zamiatyn's, De Sousa's and even ours with the theory of openness, to be theoretically generative as part of a baroque *ethos*, a way of inhabiting the chiaroscuro, a way of facing complexity. This would be the theory that enables the signification.

Our narrative might lead us to a revolution but if this consists in a hyperexhaustion product of the acceleration and hyperactivity I wonder if there would be enough energy to pull through a revolution. Narrating the openness from these perspectives allow us to put the value judgments aside in order to focus our attention in how the narrative tension with its centripetal and centrifugal forces give shape to what we understand as culture and civilization, the human emerging from the heteronymous and autonomous forces narrates a collective myth and an individual one, searching through the chaos, building some order, swinging back and forth in the search of some kind of equilibrium, from the *given* to the *created*. The created is only possible by the given and the given is disrupted and changes because of the created.

The dynamics of the narrative tension are not either a good or a bad thing. They're how the human nature folds and unfolds. If the dominant state is confusion it cannot be any communication, it has to be some clearness, with this approximation, the *hermeneutical subject* can perceive, interpret and narrate the complexity that opens up only from the threshold in a dialogical and analogical way.

To know the limitation of knowledge can begin by acknowledging the threshold, if we are more willing to face the uncertainty of this chronotope we could be more willing to accept the incompleteness of knowledge, the existence of "empty spaces" and to value instances previously undermine like the

importance of the embodiment, the orality and the intuition as forms of movement. A complex paradigm does not dismiss the scientific method, the predominant ideologies, the narrations from the *wall*, but is never going to be complete, irrefutably conclusive or limited to one discourse, one locality, and certain data. It arises from the tension, and from that it should look for relations, between the said and the unsaid, in the *chiaroscuro*. Complexity can't be reduced to transparency, we can't see the end of it, but we can meet at the threshold and dialog about the possibilities of transformation whit what is *given*.

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