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# Interrupting the cognitive empire: keynote drama as cultural justice

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## ABSTRACT

The authors of this paper present a performative, practice-led interpretation of interrupting keynotes. They analyse keynotes in which a performance poet interrupts the white, female, professorial, northern scholar, with his own poetry as a poet of the global south. Using Benjamin's essay on Brecht's Epic theatre and interruption as a critical device, the authors will consider how oral scholarship might offer ways of disturbing the epistemological dominance of scholarly forms such as the keynote. By creating, through interruptions, a performative poetics as a practice-led decolonial scholarship, the authors explore the keynote as form, within an intercultural, artistic, hospicing and conflict transformational frame.

Vanyori vegwaro rino vanotipakurira mafungiro anotangira mukubata basa reanonzi ma keynotes. Vanopenengura ma keynotes avakaita, patinoona nyanduri achishandisa mutauro semafundiro aakaita kukurira mumatare nevakuru munyika yevatema. Apa achiita sokuganhura mumwe wake anotaridzika ari professor, ari wenyika dzevachena. Kutsigira benenguro iri, vanoshandisa zvinyorwa zva Benjamin uyo ainyora nezva Brecht. Mubasa iri vanyori vanozama kurapanura kutekeshera kwemafungiro akauya nevapambepfumi, vaine kariro yekuti marudzi ave nekunzwana kwakawedzera.

## KEYWORDS

Decolonial; intercultural drama; keynote lecture; poetics; hospitality

## Introduction

Writing a 'Manifesto for Good Living/ Buen Vivir' Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes from the perspective of the loosely affiliated people in movements for justice worldwide. In imagining a generalised subject position for this work, he states:

A few of us speak colonial languages; the large majority of us speak other languages. Since only a small number of us have voice, we resort to ventriloquists, whom we call rearguard intellectuals, because they go on doing what they have always done well: looking back. (Santos, 2018, p. 2)

It is no accident that the first article published in LAIC, when the journal was forged from the intellectual crucible of ideas of the late 1990s, was itself a fusion between black American scholars working on intercultural communication and the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer (Roy & Starosta, 2001). LAIC was inaugurated as an interruption. First, it sought to make philosophical room for poetics, politics and a great deal of practical, work-a-day intercultural communicative competence. Second, it wanted to bring critical, intercultural perspectives to block-buster

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forms of neoliberal English Language Teaching. Questions of race, gender and class have underlain the discussions around the critical, theoretical framings of both LAIC and IALIC since their inception. The first conferences, from which LAIC was born, were inaugurated at Leeds Metropolitan University, under the convenorship of Prof. Margaret Parry. Questions of race, gender and class remain difficult issues and they are issues of hospitality, and its limits in an academic field forged through intercultural dialogue as hospitality.

The movements in North American scholarship developing Intercultural Communication as a science and empiricism met those of the Council of Europe and Michael Byram's 1997 *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* as an educational endeavour (Byram, 1997). To these Margaret Parry brought literary studies, the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin, and anthropology. She convened three conferences offering the opportunity to engage with critical theory, deconstruction, and new empiricism in the much marginalised, precarious scholarship of those who teach languages in the academy, predominantly in the UK and in Europe.

The third and last of the conferences convened by Parry, before the inauguration of IALIC as an association, publication of LAIC's first issue, and Parry's retirement, took up the now perennial theme of border and boundary crossing. These themes have come to be understood through the lens of hospitality, drawing on Derrida and Carson in recent years (Carson, 1999; Derrida, 2005; Derrida & Fourmantelle, 2000; Phipps & Barnett, 2007). At the Cross Cultural Capabilities conference convened by Professor Margaret Parry, Alison's keynote (Phipps, 1999) made an intervention which in hindsight, opened out the field to poetics, politics, and postcolonialism controversially interrupting debates traditionally dominated by positivist approaches to functional language learning and intercultural communication. The keynote sought to breach the comfort zones of educational discourse and normative definitions of culture in language and intercultural studies. It sought to take a performative stance, drawing themes of liminality and *communitas* from Turner's work (1995) into the nascent field of language and intercultural communication. This keynote performed language as rhetorical criticism, drawing on the importance of a keynote as ceremony, ritual and occasion, where words are freighted and the keynote itself is an example of what Austin calls a 'speech act' (1975).

Whilst work in LAIC has indeed paid heed to aesthetic, poetic and culturally diverse dimensions in its oeuvre (Adejumobi, 2004; Badwan & Hall, 2020; Bradley et al., 2018; Collins, 2021; Dávila-Montes & Rathbun, 2020; Faneca et al., 2016; Fassetta, Imperiale et al., 2020; Matos & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020) and several scholars have focused on drama and performativity (Brodie, 2020; Frimberger, 2016a; Harvey et al., 2019; Thibault, 2020; Wilkinson, 2005), the oral, performative event of the keynote as locus for this work has not attracted sustained scholarly attention, neither as a paradigmatic nor as a normative form in and of itself.

A keyword search of 'keynote' pulls up thousands of actual keynote lectures, but an advanced search does not highlight any work in higher education studies critically engaging with this vital, intercultural form. The field of LAIC is rooted in the performance of hospitality between cultures, languages, repertoires and diverse contexts. The way a keynote might be delivered in a field such as this allows for this paper to offer a fresh perspective on both form and style. We ask how the philosophical framework of the field might be expressed in forms pertinent to a decolonising, decentering, radical, intercultural pedagogy, fit for purpose for hospitality such as is required in the twenty first century. Twenty years on from the publication of the first paper in LAIC this paper takes a critical decolonial view of performative and dramaturgical approaches to normative framings of intercultural communication and hospitality studies, through the form of the interrupted keynote.

It is important to note at the outset that the authors will work in the paper to show their interruptions of the established, traditional academic form of the keynote. This will be done stylistically and through autoethnographic description, but you as the reader, as in the traditions of participatory story-telling and Brechtian theatre, will be free to draw your own conclusions. This allows you, the reader, to gain something of the sensation of experiencing a different form, within the conventional journal article template, simulating through style what a live keynote audience experiences

during an interruption. There are critical issues at the heart of this endeavour, in LAIC, namely the hostility or hospitality offered to others, to those seeking refuge or those in any kind of migratory journey, from international student or academic at a conference to someone seeking asylum. Form is a crucial matter in this regard. As such we hope to prompt reflection on what new forms of hospitality might be possible within the academy and in fields pertinent to the subject of migration, interculturality, and beyond.

## Interrupting the cognitive empire

In *The End of Cognitive Reason: the coming of age of epistemologies of the south*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos demonstrates the extent to which critical thinking alone has failed in the task of transformation, characterising the present age as one in which, ‘the most morally repugnant forms of social inequality and social discrimination are becoming politically acceptable’ (2018, p. vii). He argues for an enhanced role for artists as intercultural translators, or for what we see as a poetics and aesthetics for cultural justice. For artists and intercultural translators to affect their social and cultural tasks there needs to be a breach in the normal orderings of the conventions of a field or a discipline such that a set of different potentialities can be witnessed, considered, and perhaps drawn in.

It is this theme of dramatised interruption, or breach in the cognitive empire that forms the focus of this joint paper. Whilst it is important to observe the developments of the field, it is equally important to consider what changes take place through the intervention of artistic and poetic forms within the genre of the academic keynote. Following on from this, it is important to consider what it might take for such a breach to be attempted and become a regular and evolving possibility. To do this we will reflect on our own keynoting work since the ‘hospitality crisis’ of 2015, in the wake of the refugee movements following the Syrian civil war, and our own intercultural communicative enactments of symbolic hospitality performed within this peculiar but ceremonially significant genre of the keynote (Turner, 1995).

Reflecting on the inaugural UNESCO Chair lecture of 2017 and the poetically infused performance leading up to the presentation of *The Imperative for Cultural Justice* at UNESCO on Human Rights Day 2020, the authors present an intercultural scholarship based on dramaturgical interruptions. They analyse the new materialist consequences of the use of the device of interruption, performatively, by presenting and analysing keynote lectures in which Tawona has interrupted the white, female, professorial, northern scholar in full flow, with his own poetry and forms as a scholar and poet of the global south. Using Walter Benjamin’s essay on Bertolt Brecht’s Epic theatre (1998) and his use of the interruption as a critical device; Santos’s work on the ‘deep experience of the senses’ (p. 165), and on ‘demonumentalizing written and archival knowledge’ (2018, p. 185) the authors consider the interrupted keynote autoethnographically. Taking a range of angles, they ask what it means to engage in a multisensorial dramaturgical method and to overtly privilege oral scholarship, in order to offer ways of disturbing the epistemological dominance of written intercultural scholarly forms. The keynote represents an oral form in which certain constructions and codification of knowledge and of knowledge rituals are conveyed. By creating a performative poetics as a practice-led decolonial scholarship, we explore ways through the present culture wars, within an intercultural, artistic, and conflict transformation frame.

### **The keynote: Description 1<sup>1</sup>**

*the argument is progressing. we’ve covered the thanks and acknowledgements, the connection to the important themes of the conference. we’ve identified the gaps in the literature which make this line of address legitimate. we’ve reviewed the theoretical and critical questions and frameworks. we’ve told a few gentle jokes, and now we are getting into the flow of things. the context of language learning for intercultural communication, the technician agendas dominating the marketisation of both scholarship and learning materials for language classrooms are on the table for dissection, as so often. my*

*own voice is sounding clear, and confident, as befits a keynote. i'm especially outlining ways in which scholarship and discrimination in language curricula have acted to exclude and to raise barriers. when all of a ... ..*

*sudden ...*

*a man ... .*

*stands up ... ..*

*he is wearing a hoody, rucksack on his back, and speaking loudly in a language no one in the audience appears to understand*

*i freeze. everyone present freezes except the man. wary, disturbed eyes on the figure. the flow disturbed, broken in fact. the attention on the keynote presenter reduced to nothing. something is happening. someone has interrupted. etiquette has not been observed*

*there is no one to check you in*

*or check you out ...*

*most people aren't taking in the content of the words*

*the part of the brain that processes sudden change from expected flow is still working hard to catch up*

*no one to weigh your baggage*

*or touch you up*

*no body in booth*

*hands above head*

*feet behind line*

*the man walks from his seat in the auditorium slowly, still speaking*

*ko iwe*

*ndiwe ani*

*nhai iwe*

*wobvepi*

*ko nhai iwe*

*woendepi*

*some words are understood, some are not. he moves to face the audience*

*there is no unheard of herd of people*

*no holding pens*

*no paper cuts*

*no board no number*

*no pass no gate*

*there is no priority clearance*

*no catwalk for the privileged*

*he places the rucksack on the podium and goes through the motions, still speaking fluently*

*no eeh you and non eeh you*

*takes off his shoes*

*no dignity-stripping interview*

*takes off his belt*

*no very very verification*

*of identity*

*takes off his hat*

*no receptors no detectors*

*no specialised interceptors*

*takes off his jacket*

no thermal scanners  
scanning for super diseases

*the audience are relaxing, i am concentrating, nodding, and half smiling. it's all part of the act. i catch the eye of my host, who knew that there would be an interruption, and i nod almost imperceptibly. they are nodding too. the same half smile, knowing smile. the knowledge of revelation*

in fact there's only us

*he pauses. looks long at his captive audience*

only us and the trees  
and elephant grass  
for now  
in a manner of speaking  
in a matter of seconds  
we're across the frontier  
border crossing in Togo

*pause*

*'ladies and gentlemen ...', i say, delighted to have been able to interrupt with a surprise gift, '... please welcome my colleague and poet tawona sitholé'*

*and then there is applause. for tawona*

## **Brecht's Theatre and the interruption**

This moment, where The Keynote-Giver welcomes The Gatecrasher-Poet and legitimises his presence is pivotal. It ushers in a liminal moment. Without it, structure remains anti-structure (Turner, 1995) and chaos can reign. The audience will potentially be in unsafe hands. There is also transgression of the hosting conventions for a keynote and the listening conventions of an academic audience, alongside just the normal etiquette of when turn-taking can conventionally occur in a lecture form. Hecklers are not welcome in such rooms.

This moment takes as its deeper structure the devices Brecht pioneered as part of his Epic theatre (1957). In Brechtian theatre practices, the characters in a play are given roles, not names: The Prostitute, The Banker: The Good Person: The Soldier, for example. At given points in a Brecht play the character will step out from behind their theatrical mask and explain the actions of a character to the audience. This is one of Brecht's many techniques of 'Verfremdung' or 'distanciation' and it aims to bring learning directly into the performance. In Brecht's theatre this learning is didactic. It tells the audience what is happening and what characters are feeling to explain actions which, certainly in Brecht's view, his bourgeois audiences were more likely to condemn in characters than understand the material complexity of an action.

For our work, this deliberate breaking of the fourth wall of the lecture theatre, rather than the theatre itself, rests on Brechtian devices, but it is not enacting a didactic pedagogy. To this end, we refer to our different roles in the discussion using capitals: The Poet; The Keynote etc. In addition, our method of interruptions also borrows from roles which are part of the traditions of storytelling and gatherings in the global south. No one's feelings or motivations are explained, in fact the rules of liturgical and ritual action are in place in the work instead, where operations are not explained but are allowed to speak for themselves. How we feel as deliverers of a keynote is immaterial. Equally as directors and dramaturgs of the action. And the audience is not seen as a site for cognitive and didactic education. To act didactically at this point in the delivery, explaining the action, would be within the bounds of the tradition of what occurs in a keynote lecture, and in a lecture theatre. It is these traditions we are seeking to trouble with a different structure of

intercultural pedagogy and communication, and by addressing hospitality conventions in academic conferencing. We do not, therefore, explain.

In theatre as a mainstream western form of entertainment, to step out of character and teach the audience about what characters are thinking and feeling is to disturb the affective, dramatic flow of the action. This was Brecht's concern in setting his Epic form of theatre against the dramatic theatres of Aristotle and Shakespeare in particular. His view as a Marxist, was that the transcendental dimensions of theatre and its ritual elements allowed a chimaera of changelessness in action, for fate to pervade human consciousness, and allowed oppressive structures to remain intact.

Der Zuschauer des dramatischen Theaters sagt: Ja, das habe ich auch schon gefühlt. – So bin ich. – Das ist natürlich. – Das wird immer so sein. – Das Leid dieses Menschen erschüttert mich, weil es keinen Ausweg für ihn gibt. – Das ist große Kunst: da ist alles selbstverständlich. – Ich weine mit den Weinenden, ich lache mit den Lachenden.

Der Zuschauer des epischen Theaters sagt: Das hätte ich nicht gedacht. – So darf man es nicht machen. – Das ist höchst auffällig, fast nicht zu glauben. – Das muß aufhören. – Das Leid dieses Menschen erschüttert mich, weil es doch einen Ausweg für ihn gäbe. – Ich lache mit den Weinenden, ich weine über den Lachenden. (S. 54f.)<sup>2</sup>

Our intercultural work with the form of the keynote – a performative but notoriously non-dramatic, genre of pedagogical communication – required the opposite of Brecht's framework if the fourth wall of the cognitive empire was to be breached. It is the chimaera of changelessness of the oppressive structures of the cognitive empire and its forms which we seek to trouble and unmask. Remaining in the groove of the mainstream cognitive, explanatory, abstracting paradigms that are delivered in a keynote would not allow the effects of the shock of interruption to the etiquette and taboos of the keynote as form and hospitality to be worked on by the audience. To paraphrase Brecht above:

The Audience Member in the cognitive empire's keynote says: 'yes, I have thought that already. That makes sense to me. That's rational. That's how the argument has to progress. The flow of argument does not shake me up because that is not how reason proceeds. This is knowledge because I can follow the argument. I can understand why some will cry and others will laugh.'

The Audience Member in the interrupted keynote says: 'this is out of order. This is not how we expect to feel when in a learning contract. This is a breach of etiquette. This doesn't make sense to me. I don't understand. I want my conference fee back. This is not an argument, it is drama. I want to exclude someone I must not exclude. I have felt fear. I now feel relief and awe at a performance. I want to laugh and cry at the same time.'

The offering of an interruption as part of an intercultural keynote, which is addressing core questions in migratory aesthetics of what constitute encounters and might alternatively constitute equitable encounters, is, we argue here, consistent with the models of participatory and autoethnographic pedagogies. Such pedagogies have come, rightly, to function in intercultural language education. The offering serves to theorise the practice of troubling knowledge and power dynamics at the heart of the high forms of the academy and to offer alternatives which rely on paradigms outwith or on the edges of the cognitive empire. It also offers an invitation to new forms of hospitality in the academy and therefore intervenes in the forms used for the construction and presentation of knowledge.

### Intercultural drama and Brecht

The work on the use of drama in intercultural communication is relatively light compared to the many articles published considering the critical function of competence and intercultural communication in language education. Critical work has focused in recent years on migratory contexts and the changes in dynamics and patterns of population movement; from tourism to international exchanges of students; residence abroad and the experiences of those seeking and offering refuge, according to the community conventions and according to the procedures of the state.

The definition of interculturality adopted by UNESCO focuses on the point of interaction:



Intercultural describes what occurs when members of two or more different cultural groups (of whatever size, at whatever level) interact or influence one another in some fashion, whether in person or through various mediated forms. Included in a broad definition of the term would be international political or economic interactions, when members from two or more countries interact or influence one another in some fashion.

<https://en.unesco.org/interculturaldialogue/core-concepts>

It is telling that the UNESCO definition is especially vague when it comes to the specifics, using ‘in some fashion’ as a place holder within a short definition-bestowing text. The work of researching and interpreting what ‘in some fashion’ may mean falls to the arts and humanities disciplines. These have the methods and methodological forms of inquiry which can be numinous; peculiar; singular; indicative. The repeated collocation of the adjective ‘intercultural’ with the noun ‘competence’ or ‘communication’, means that the discursive tropes in both the literature and policy focus in on the functional dimensions. Applied rather than generalist dimensions of scholarship have been mobilised to the task of enabling these ‘interactions’ or ‘influences’.

Work on an intercultural drama has been considered by Byram and Fleming (Byram & Fleming, 1998; Brodie, 2020; Frimberger, 2016b; Harvey et al., 2019; Thibault, 2020) In particular, it has been directed towards teacher education in or for further and higher education contexts. In her earlier work (Phipps, 2007) Alison has used the metaphor of rehearsal, developed from Schechner’s understanding of the expansion of strips of behaviour for fluent performance, offered as an alternative to metaphors of testing or competence. The generalised ‘slogonisation’ of the intercultural field, explored importantly by Schmenk et al. (2018) is infinitely applicable to the conceptual atrophy which has come to settle in the field of intercultural communication and through the accompanying indexical ‘keywordery’. It’s for a separate paper but a critical review of keywords in the field of LAIC and their indexability is ripe for analysis. One of the consequences of this slogonisation is the more marginal, less cited work which is brought by the arts and humanities to intercultural encounters.

‘In some fashion’ – a suitably artistic conceptualisation – intercultural encounters are primarily scenes of drama, memory, conflict or possibility. The *mise en scène* of the applied sciences and social sciences instead involve transcriptions, focus groups, interviews and observations. When data are ‘codified’, ‘captured’ and ‘cleaned’ the drama of the interactions gives way to scientific, proprietorial presentation. To be analyzable, the affect, artistry, awkwardness and ... .

*he pauses. looks long at his captive audience*

only us and the trees  
and elephant grass

for now

in a manner of speaking  
in a matter of seconds

we’re across the frontier  
border crossing in Togo

*pause*

*this time i don’t say ‘ladies and gentlemen.’ the poet is slowly packing his bag. not awaiting applause or introduction. the pause hangs. a dramatic one. he begins to walk away, looking wryly over his shoulder towards the keynote speaker*

*i look hard in his direction. not reverting into role and then call after him*

It wasn’t elephant grass  
Was it?

*he stops in his tracks. rucksack swinging on his back. he adjusts his baseball cap*



Surely it was flax

*he pauses not looking in my direction. attention is on both of our figures from the audience*

And the ground was stony  
and my feet bare  
close to the broken road.

*i can feel the audience watching through the corner of my eye but my fierce challenge to the interrupter means my eyes are focused strongly on his back willing him to stop*

I was just  
walking  
across a road  
into a field  
and there were  
friends  
with me

*on the word 'friends' i feel him turn back and that thread of tension which is part of the way we hold each other in the drama of a moment on a stage as performers slackens just enough for the quaver of nerves in my voice to settle*

and our  
skin was on fire  
because the day  
was pregnant with  
gifts coming  
close to their time.

You knew we stood  
on hallowed ground.  
As did I.

*i'm getting into my stride, moving slides and images to accompany the text. this was well rehearsed with tech and in a 'dress rehearsal' previously*

The natural ditch between  
a road and a field  
is a place where  
magic and mischief  
have always been made.

*the philosopher makes way for the artist, says Benjamin (1998) and the artist for the philosopher, reflecting on the workings of Brecht's Epic theatre and the necessary dialectic it engenders for unmasking the conditions of society*

There were admonishments,  
but they were laughing  
not fearful.

*the page in my hand which has been shaking a little is steadying. there is a note of laughter in my own voice and i'm using my body a little. the slight awkwardness of my use of props and a script contrasting deliberately with the fluidity of the poet's first performance. but it is still nonetheless, an answer given in the form of a poem*

There were remonstrations  
but they only served  
to strengthen the resolve  
and the sense of safety.

I saw no elephants in the grass  
no snakes or angels either.

But the flax was growing  
the twine which would  
weave enchantments,  
opening this improbable ground  
beneath our bare feet  
to be another  
unstoppable conduit  
for the stories between us  
about to be born.

(Phipps, 2014)

To pick up the threads, after this interruption: When data are ‘codified’, ‘captured’, and ‘cleaned’ the drama of the interactions gives way to scientific, proprietorial presentation. To be analyzable, the affect, artistry, awkwardness and ... conflict must be present and presentable in the discourse, in the text, or producible as text under the regime of the cognitive empire. This is a feature of the creation of academic distinction and of a ‘cultural field’ which Bourdieu critiqued in both *The Field of Cultural Production* and *Homo Academicus* (1988, 1993).

### *The Philosopher is interrupted by The Artist*

There is a quality of listening that does not belong in a lecture, not even a keynote lecture. You can cut the air with a knife. No one is checking phones or email; all eyes are focused on this quintessentially dramatic moment. Peter Brook, in his seminal work *The Empty Stage* (1968) opens by stating:

I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching, and that is all that it takes for an act of theatre to be engaged. (p. 11)

Whilst this definition and the opening out of theatre studies into intercultural performance studies (Barba & Savarese, 1991; Schechner, 1985, 1988) has been considerably refined and contested this definition continues to evoke the primary moment when a drama is engaged through performance. This depends, of course, on the quality of attention a performance can – when executed well – engender. It is this quality of attention that our dramaturgical work with the intercultural keynote form engages. It is the means by which we engender the intentional multisensorial meeting and crossing of the boundaries of cultural forms and which we see reflected in Santos’s work on the importance of the deep experience of the senses (2018).

Modern science has conceived of the senses as necessary evils, indispensable but treacherous vehicles to be sorted out or unmasked by reason. The world is thought of and possessed by the intellect, for only the intellect provides convincing proof of the world’s existence. (p. 166)

Our work with the keynote, informed by Brechtian pedagogy rests in particular for its theorising on Walter Benjamin’s essay on Brechtian theatre (1966, 1998). However, here we aim not so much to unmask the senses with reason but to unmask the chimaera of cognitive reason with the senses when experiencing an interruption.

In his essay on Brecht, the philosopher and critic of totalitarianism, Walter Benjamin (1966, 1998) offers some important points of analysis as to what Brecht’s theatre produces in an audience and why this is necessary for the political dangers of authoritarianism to be seen for what they are.

Its basic form is that of the forceful impact on one another of separate, sharply distinct situations in the play. The songs, the captions, the gestural conventions differentiate the scenes. As a result, intervals occur which tend to destroy illusion. These intervals paralyse the audience’s readiness for empathy. Their purpose is to enable the spectator to adopt a critical attitude (towards the represented behaviour of the play’s characters and towards the way in which this behaviour is represented). (Benjamin, 1998, p. 21)

Benjamin notes the ways in which Brecht's theatre allows for a break with empathy and a need for astonishment, in order to reveal what is otherwise hidden. In our interruptions we've identified the moment of interruption as a moment when empathy is not so much disrupted as engaged. The Lecturer and the Lecturer's knowledge regimes are rendered unstable, vulnerable, the authority of cognitive reason fragile – other worlds are shown to indeed be possible. The interruption allows the gestures usually present in the keynote to proliferate giving many more opportunities for points of encounter, across the senses, than those available through the cognitive empire regimes.

Modern science has never treated the senses on an equal basis; it has always privileged sight and hearing, having trained them for cognitive extractivism, thus turning them into abyssal sight and abyssal hearing, respectively. Because extractivism is always guided by what it aims to extract, the abyssal eye was trained to see only what it wants to see, and the abyssal ear was likewise trained to hear only what it wants to hear. What cannot be heard or seen is not deemed relevant. (Santos, 2018, p. 166)

At a point where the familiar space of a keynote form for an academic public engenders a relatively relaxed attitude for the audience, suddenly there is work to be undertaken across the senses – surprise, astonishment, fear, puzzlement, translation, that slight metallic taste of adrenalin in the mouth. In the performance we are holding this dramatic moment almost to breaking point. We force the audience to work out what is happening, slowly, from what has just been heard or seen so far. In the manner of detection, and through heightened awareness produced by dramatic surprise, the audience begin to process rapidly, cognitively, and multisensorially, what has been a surprise assault on the even, smooth functioning of the cognitive empire.

As Turner elucidated in his work on structure, anti-structure, and also on 'communitas' the moment when a breach in the normal runnings occurs is a point of danger (1995). The work of producing this breach and sense of danger also galvanises a community into a common bond, sometimes as carnival, sometimes as ritual in the face of this danger. In an interrupted keynote The Keynote Speaker is stripped of attention and power over the cognitive flow of argument and attention, and another figure, The Interrupter, draws the attention to themselves, and temporarily usurps power. It is now an overused phrase, but this is indeed a liminal moment and one in which new possibilities and potentialities can be incorporated, in which the capaciousness of a form can be extended. Citing Goffman, Turner maintains that:

The process of 'levelling' and 'stripping' [...] often appear to flood their subjects with affect. Instinctual energies are surely liberated by these processes [...] not epiphenomena of some kind of herd instinct but [...] products of 'men [*sic*] in their wholeness attending'. Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myth, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. (p. 128)

Just as Benjamin identifies the making strange or 'distanciating' (in German: 'Verfremdung') conditions of Brecht's drama so too in the interruption a cognitive form is flooded with affect. There is an interplay between making strange then making familiar in which there is also a telescoping of time and action. From making scholarly time stand still through the course of the poetic interruption 'time might undergo an elongation such that the audience and performers' awareness of time intensifies before it relaxes again, (Benjamin, 1998, p. 18).

Inserting an interruption into a scholarly ritual form which is highly codified so as not to be interrupted means that, like Benjamin's description of the Epic Theatre, the keynote has to proceed in fits and starts.

Our interruption is not aiming to reveal the structural workings of the theatre but of the keynote as a form par excellence of the cognitive empire. The illusion of the primacy of cognition for sense-making, the engagement of multisensorial experiences and proliferation of gestures make for a richer intercultural context than one which is evoked and described rather than being made in front of the audience.

## The keynote, again: biting point and The Interrupter

The interruption is planned but its point of sparking and becoming visible is a whole other matter and it rests on the judgement – honed, professional, respecting of audience, self and The Keynote Speaker – for its manifestation. It is also crucially a matter of timing.

*the argument is progressing. the deputy vice chancellor has covered the thanks and acknowledgements, the connection to the important themes of the occasion, before introducing the next speaker. in turn, the chair of the uk national commission for unesco has taken to the microphone and augmented the importance of the chair and the occasion, before introducing the holder of the unesco rila chair. in turn, alison has stepped to the mic as naturally as someone with 20 plus years of public speaking. she is weaving the intellectual threads that clothe the upholstery of the chair she has been invited to hold. she has reached the point where she talks of the gift economy, as an antidote to the necropolitics described by my fellow continental achille mbembe. to the audience this is another intellectual offering, but in the parallel procedure, this is my cue*

*this is momentous, the occasion, the special significant and important guests, this auditorium, this institution, this moment, this apposite moment. this moment that reminds me of my youth*

*'lift your knee slowly until you feel like the car is about to move, and when you feel this, you hold that position ... ' the words of my driving instructor to my sixteen-year-old self are refreshed in my mind*

*this is my biting point*

*any time i can stand up and bring all this to a dramatic shattering of a delicate thing. This requires that same finesse. this requires the utmost care and polished stage craft  
so i hold*

*the drama*

*and then i let go*

*i hear my voice and my colleague's voice, grinding in a brief moment as mine disrupts, interrupts proceedings*

*then my accomplice in keynoting, alison, makes way*

*so i proceed*

*to speak poetry into this unlikely moment in space. the rupture is dramatically evident, in the faces of various expressions of shock. in the discomfort that is silence. i catch the eye of my co-disruptor, my co-conspirator*

*i take my time*

*timely and caringly towards the end of my poem, playfully holding hostage my knowing accomplice, the audience, the organisers, the occasion, and holding my speech and pauses, movement and pauses, action and stillness. then i slowly start to walk away, to say i'm done, and the original speaker resumes her power on this altered stage. neither audience nor keynote speakers nor the keynote form itself are what they were at the start. it is now her duty to return all hostages to a sense of safety, a sense of relief*

*there needs now to be an assurance that this is part of the proceedings. having breached the cognitive empire, everyone needs to be assisted back into sense-making from the new fragments. i notice all starting to adjust to this new situation, the organisers who had a vague idea this was going to happen but not how or when, followed by some whose predisposition made them accept this quicker than others did. and finally, the rest of the audience join in. i am no longer an anomaly, nor unwelcome even*

*i am introduced*

*by my colleague, keynote speaker, fellow poet and co-conspirator*

*keynote speakers are not normally introducers ... and certainly not introducing in the middle of things attending to right and necessary dramaturgical design but not in the right place*

*and then there is applause; a muddled applause, powered by relief mostly, and a little bit of acceptance the keynote interruption has just happened*

*we return to the keynote, the interrupted keynote. the argument progresses with a sharper and altered sense of listening. the interruption is about observation of protocol, and observation of what is actually happening*

### Observing the biting point

What is actually happening is that the audience are ripped out of their listening comfort as an unexpected voice cuts through the air. There is immediate confusion, contempt, disgust, and even fear. We know this from the responses we receive from audience members after the event, as observations are shared with us about the experience of the interruption. People wonder is this a heckler or is this a security threat? There is a genuine fear for Alison's safety, and fear for the general safety of all involved. This interruption is not something to be done without due diligence. The fear for safety and security can in turn pose a safety risk for the interrupter, especially when they are 'foreign' ... especially when they don't speak RP, especially when they are not white ... especially when the aesthetic is not one which sets up sophistication at the level we are needing to pull this off. These are the highest stakes. There are contexts where we would not entertain such a gesture of interruption and we would assess the risk as too high, in contexts such as the US where there is open carry. In one instance where we staged an interruption in a keynote, I – Tawona – was read as 'just another overseas student at a PC terminal in a hallway' and as 'the tech guy'. This is of course what is consciously and importantly in play in this dramatisation in real time of social expectations and even prejudice, even where an audience might claim intercultural sensitivity. And we are keen to bring everyone face to face with the incompleteness of being, and for a moment to transcend the standard intellectual and cognitive expectations of complete argument, through artistry which is also intellectually applied.

What is also happening is the opposite of observing protocol and procedure. This act is an apparent breach of all the thoughtful and hospitality work of organising an event such as this. In fact, planning is essential in delivering the best possible experience for all who are gathered. In this intellectually stimulating space, the audience are open to their expectations being exceeded, but not to be dashed in such a manner. Rebuilding these expectations in real time is then the task within the interruption. In other words, having broken the contract, and a hospitality taboo, with the audience, a new contract must be forged that is better, and that changes relationships into the future, including with any segments of the keynote to come.

### Inside the interruption

The air is thick with discomfort of the biting point hold. Like an electric lightning strike the drama has shocked The Audience and disempowered The Host. The altered stage hosts the performers. The interruption is in fully charged mode such that it touches something of what Turner has described as ceremonial, revealing figures as liminal entities in process across transitions in social and cultural orderings.

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguousness and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (Turner, 1995, p. 95)

In the sharp moment of the interruption as it is being performed, The Unsuspecting Audience experience it as many things – uncomfortable, rude, contemptuous, and even dangerous. But it is much more than that. It is a well-attended series of anxieties knowingly induced by a well-devised act of intellectual mischief carefully put together by two actors who have the qualities necessary for this to be even a possibility. It is philosophy performed interculturally and multilingually. The two are scholars – one is a White Global North Professor, the other a Black Global South Indigenous

Artist. Both are situationally alert. The two are poets – each with their own distinct journey in poetry. Both are responsively agile. But there is something more, something intangible. Both are drama practitioners and have a honed stagecraft and sensibility. Both have a shared life experience of the poetic, the in-between space moored by knowledge and logic, professionalism and decorum, but affected by something else. Something harder to describe or define. What they have practiced hard and come to discover in a space of devising and improvising has repeatedly been the unlikely, the unexpected and as such has proceeded as do intercultural methodologies. The interruption rests on trust between this intercultural duo, present in the roles here, or where this is undertaken by a team of interrupters.

The interruption, for all its voltage and tension, is, paradoxically, about care, of the host, audience, others present, and of the performers, of the self and each other. It is about the care of knowledge and ideas, enquiry, and communication. The Host needs care, in order that their hard efforts of planning this event are not jeopardised. The Audience need care in order that the contract between them and The Host-Organiser is protected. Others present, such as Security and Janitorial Staff, need care so they are not put under undue alarm. The Performers need self-care for the individual roles played, and care of each other for the holding that is required of this risky act. Scholarship needs care, for it is the premise of the entire occasion. While all the above is true, it is also true that most, if not all, of the above, have to be breached or at least unsettled for the interruption to work most effectively. And there is an acute level of care needed at the biting point. This is akin to the lifts performed in dance, where years of training, strength, and stretch are required to be in a position to safely lift or perform a pyramid with other dancers. With grace and ease and beauty as well as the obvious attendant danger.

### **Dramatis Personae and style conventions**

Through this paper we have shifted back and forth between names for our roles:

- Keynote
- Speaker
- Listener
- Artist
- Gatecrasher-poet
- Keynote-giver
- Philosopher
- Interrupter
- Phipps
- Sitholé
- Tawona
- Alison
- Interloper
- Colleague,
- Accomplice
- Co-Conspirator
- White Global North Professor
- Black Global South Indigenous Artist
- Poet
- Performer
- Lecturer
- Heckler
- White Female Professor

This is deliberate, designed in the flow of a paper to interrupt the third person or first-person pronoun conventions for academic discourse. We have done this as a way of reflecting the proliferation of roles and gestures which the interrupted keynote brings into beginning and unmasking. One moment I am a poet, the next a colleague, the next a keynote, the next a breaker of taboos. In addition, we have signalled a change in register and interruption by moving into lower case from conventional style and punctuation to follow the poetic style adopted in Tawona's publications and to let this form of presentation from within oral traditions be given a stylistic form in this paper. If we are to make room within the academy and for knowledge in intercultural dialogue that is indeed dialogic, and not the straining to hear an echo, then we must change our conventions in style here too. We are not arguing that this is what the conventions should be but absolutely that we need to continue explorations beyond the italicising of foreign words (which Alison has adopted uncritically in past publications) and change.

In her work on international relations and conflict transformation in the Gaza Strip, Carolin Goerzig points importantly to the fundamental need for there to be more than one role available for dialogue to be possible (2010). Where the 'other' is only seen as 'enemy' there is no traction possible for talks or negotiations but when roles proliferate there is a chance of intercultural dialogue, of the kind of empathy through which an 'enemy' might also be perceived or engaged as a 'parent' or friend too. This dynamic is also in play in our discussion and use of multiple role descriptors and the proliferation of gestures Benjamin speaks of as necessary for the functioning of Epic theatre. 'For the more often we interrupt someone in process of action, the more gestures we obtain' (1998, p. 20). For intercultural communication to proceed towards transformation of the cognitive and multisensorial conflicts which come when something different or other is entertained there need to be interruptions. These interruptions need to give a pause for thought or for the suspension of thought, for the processing of multiplicity, for the testing against many roles – familiar or unfamiliar, which offer themselves. In short, interruption is critical for intercultural dialogue to grow.

If this is the material condition of interculturality, then the material condition of intercultural scholarship as form must also reflect these conditions. These conditions are also part and parcel of the intercultural realities with which we encounter the phenomena on a daily basis as human beings. Interruption requires a shift of role, the engagement of other cultural ways of proceeding. The child walking in on the zoom call; the fire alarm in the lecture theatre; the ticket collector on a train; the stranger asking for directions; the arrival of refugees in a community; the end of the academic year and return of students to homes both foreign and domestic – all these are interruptions to the day to day routines and a scholarship of interculturality requires a theory and, for our purposes, a theorised practice of interruption for the material base of interculturality to be evoked, decolonised, and remade.

### *The dialectics of the keynote as intercultural form*

In writing and engaging with the poetics of the genre of the intercultural keynote we do not wish in any way to suggest that the normal modes of delivering a keynote should necessarily change. There is a crucial and critical role for listening to the presentation of work undertaken by scholars within the field, which is formed according to disciplinary presentational norms. Without this there can be no foundations, stability, or flight. Without the hard, rigorous work of critical and normative scholarship there can be no opportunity for interruption, in other words, we contend that it is not the task of every scholar in a keynote space, to be interrupting that space. Equally, it can be argued that certain distinctive characteristics or affordances are required for such a somewhat cheeky, playfully insubordinate way of manipulating the sanctified keynote form, to land, and begin to open up new streams of thought. This is a characteristic which we claim within the critical drama tradition of Brecht and others, who would cite highly traditional works – those of Shakespeare, that of The Bible – as the most important texts for their thinking and attention. We also claim it as a key



mode of performance within oral traditions of communal storytelling or meeting. A guerrilla tactic the interruption may be, but we try and bring an agility which is highly respectful, to the space.

Following on from one enactment of the keynote as a poetic, performance the observation was made that the work and speech form demonstrated an extraordinary respect for the keynote as a form. As an oral form in an academy which ‘monumentalises’ text in the form of ‘written and archival knowledge’ (Santos, 2018, p. 185) we share Santos’s view that ‘demonumentalizing interventions’ (p. 186) are required for inclusive ecologies of knowledge to be engendered from which ‘epistemic-political’ intercultural communities ‘demanding other kinds of rhetorical argumentation’ (p. 187) might be created:

Instead of technical language, vernacular language; instead of monological narrative; dialogical narrative; instead of explanation, translation; instead of methodological accuracy, intelligible results; instead of contributing to science; contributing to society; a balance between new realities and new questions; neither certainties nor immoderate doubts. (Santos, 2018, p. 187)

This requires us to rely also, in intercultural communication, on the immanent critiques over and above the transcendent (MacDonald & O’Regan, 2013) whilst producing immanent forms which might act as changed, oralised, and capacious vessels for the epistemologies and ontologies of the field. The changing of the keynote form is one such place of oral intercultural experimentation and instigative of narrativised, non-propositional logics.

In the keynote, speech is representing text and ideas which in the normal run of the academy, are represented as an oral form – just as in teaching the scholarship is made again in rhetoric and speech, that of the lecture and that of debate, discussion, and dialogue. In this respect all presentations of academic papers in the conference or symposium space are in their own way inter-generic, moving between genres of written word and paper, to an originary mode of engagement and respect, in the oral tradition.

As such this keynote as performance and interruption, offers an additional breach and sensation because of the real time and live performance of the keynote. This creates a dynamic which shifts onto the oral plane from the written, and takes flight from the structures of the academy suggesting that the real work is not to be found in the written text but in what Rose (1990, p. 37) called ‘the promise of the field’ a field which is embodied, not produced for transmission and mobility (Carson, 1998).

By insisting on a poetic and dramaturgical mode of creation in the keynote a messiness is introduced which makes the artist a figure, alongside the translator, who is seen as a trickster, not entirely to be trusted and rightly so. The artist is playing with affect, with feeling, as well as operating in a space which has been disciplined intensely through rehearsal, organisation, precision and argument for the moment of presentation, and for the moment of the pause and interruption. This also brings in multiple roles noted above which are a key constituent of enabling intercultural dialogue and respectful relationships in a peace-building context (Goerzig, 2010) see also (Phipps, 2014).

The amount of rehearsal and synthetic sense of freestyle that comes from the performance means we are in point of fact standing with our feet on the ground but able to be one with birds, in performance. In this respect, this joins the understanding of intercultural translation and translation as discussed in LAIC by Michael Cronin (2002) who suggests translators, are those moving between languages and making worlds of new understandings through this trafficking between worlds which are otherwise impenetrable to one another.

It is intentionally a decolonial practice following Mbembe and his work decolonising knowledge.

To tease out alternative possibilities for thinking life and human futures in this age of neoliberal individualism, we need to connect in entirely new ways the project of non-racialism to that of human mutuality.

In the last instance, a non-racial university is truly about radical sharing and universal inclusion. (2016) (online publication)

Theatre often takes the form of mischievous intervention in the pasichigare traditions in Africa. In many settings and on many occasions the Sahwira, or close friend, often plays a role akin to the 'fool' in the western tradition (Conn-Liebler, 1995, p. 403). The role is to disrupt serious, solemn, or even funeral occasions with humour as a matter of well-being and transition or transformation of grave and liminal situations. In the colonial contexts of the global south the serious experiences of these performances were overwritten by the western repertory theatre and their repertoires. Styles of acting and the ceremonial and ritual performances required to move grave situations along, which are part of the ritual dimensions of performance, were turned into more commodified forms of theatre for the colonials or those mimicking and adopting these lifestyles.

In bringing such foolery and sahwira dimensions to the keynote through interruption the authors are attempting to reinstate and reinvigorate ancients' practices of drama which can be found worldwide.

### *Towards a practical theory of the interruption*

Our attention to the thickness of the moments of interruption but also the wrapping, rehearsal, readiness to improvise depending on the sensed requirements of the audience rest upon theories of hospitality. As a fundamental human activity how a space of encounter is set and rendered convivial is a dimension in intercultural communication and has been applied to contexts in higher education (Claviez, 2013; Derrida & Fourmantelle, 2000; Fassetta, Al Masri et al., 2020; Phipps, 2012; Phipps & Barnett, 2007). In addressing and troubling the cognitive empire in its high form of the keynote the protocols and taboos of this social and cultural space are breached and their inequitable and often unjust ways of managing and conveying knowledge are unmasked. This, as an activist-intellectual and socially engaged mode of decolonising space requires, we would argue here, a great deal of care so that the breach is not so fundamental as to render future actions and considerations out of play. The space needs to be held such that the intervention might be made, as a form of direct action (Graeber, 2009), but also done so with safety and as showing that the goals of knowledge and understanding as democratic pursuits require interruption. What is left, however, is not destruction but poetic forms, story, even astonishment after the keynote is over. The Audience, in short, are respected enough to be offered more not less.

The Host needs care so they can care for their invited audience. The Audience need guidance through the drama, from its abruptness and through its unfolding. The Performers need self-care both ways so they can hold this.

The interruption is about risk-taking. It is about high stakes. It is about courage. It is anchored on the precious reputation of a Celebrated Scholar, who takes the risk of inviting a third party, a random element, into an otherwise secure space. Whilst the risk is not taken lightly, it is also not held heavily, a glinting sense of mischief overrides it, and turns this into an exciting point of intellectual experimentation.

The interruption is about timing. It is about the biting point – the grinding of emotional and sensorial gears until the shift. It is about the shuffle of dramaturgy till it clicks. It is about stranger hospitality, free styling, improvisation, and role play. It is in the same structure as stranger hospitality, where extra care is taken to accommodate the textures of a first encounter.

The interruption is about a gift economy, what we offer to the space and what is offered back. All the actions, expressions, conversations, reflections, and ideas shared as a direct result. All these are present in this paper. Performer – 'the stage loves you'.

Given the focus of our work within the UNESCO RILA Chair it's important to note that what this structure also allows us to enact is the breach of hospitality experienced by refugees, those seeking asylum, and many caught up in the inhospitable flows. That this is the context from which we speak means this point will not be lost on our audience, but again, does not require us to line out its logics. The moment itself is uncomfortable and represents a breach of etiquette, calling attention to

the authority of The Speaker and conditions which made of The Speaker's authority, showing how speech is held in place structurally and through operations of historical and ongoing violence.

Ensuring decolonial practice is indeed a practice – rehearsed, tried out, devised, and improvised rather than theorised for cognition alone requires a translation into the body of shock, change, difference, diversity, reflection, and humour. All concentrated into a tight instance of the interruption can allow for change.

## Conclusions

This article has focused on a strand of research in LAIC which, whilst present in the journal, has not received a great degree of critical attention, that of the use of drama and interruption as a way of reorienting relationships in real time. It has also engaged with the literature on hospitality, and on decolonising knowledge and the call for an engaged, *equitizing* approach to knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge presentation as relevant for intercultural communication. In a forthcoming publication Alison refers to this as 'equatorial epistemologies' (Phipps, 2022). To do this we have taken the keynote as a dramatic, oral form within the academy, destabilising the knowledge/power nexus at play in the keynote through the use of Brechtian style interruptions. We've investigated this through a variety of lenses and considered the many breaches in protocol and expectation and their role in enabling an unmasking of the hidden power and limitations of the cognitive empire, as presented by Santos (2018). For the democratic and critical project that is represented by LAIC we posit that multivocal, multigenre real time interventions in the form of such direct action on knowledge hierarchies can shift the field in new directions.

At the heart of this paper is the question of hospitality and its limits. How far can the form of the keynote be stretched? Where is its biting point when it is interrupted and an attempt is made by an insurgent, migratory power, to change the traditional form? What kinds of stylistics and poetics might enable this and, to use Gramling's term, might 'hospice' interculturality and multilingualism in the very fields where this is the subject of academic attention (2021). The authors are clear that wherever discussion focuses on migration and hospitality then interruptions of traditional forms are not only possible and effective, but also shocking and uncomfortable. It is therefore necessary for there to be a fusion between artistic and academic modes of (dis)orientation. For the artist to disorientate, to show and do without explication; and for the academic to draw out the propositions and critical dimensions that are the bedrock of intercultural translation (Santos, 2018). Gramling's use of 'hospicing' is critical here as it allows both for a gentle accompaniment into memory and history of forms which have now potentially outlived their usefulness, but also – taking the other face of the 'hosp/t' etymological root – to allow for entertainment, conviviality and good will. In previous work Alison has described how entertainment – from *entre-tenir* – describes the actions of holding a space between worlds, artists, audiences, and people for the purpose of hospitality (Phipps, 2007). To this end it is fitting that 20 years on from its first publication, LAIC might offer hospitality and – thanks to the generosity of reviewers and editors – 'make room' for this critical performance of hospitality as academic interculturality.

This said, whilst the authors argue here that the keynote interruption and artist/academic encounter is especially pertinent and suited to fields where hospitality, borders, boundaries and migratory intercultural praxis are the subject and convention the authors do not see this as the limit. In work not discussed here they have also used arts and interruption in keynotes with Royal Society of Pediatrics; The Centre for Population Health; The Australasian Society of Anaesthetists; Module 1 of First Year Civil Engineering; and in named public lectures on wide thematics including the Minerva Lecture of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow.

For each keynote we consider for interruption a different pace, pattern, and etiquette are required. We should also note that whilst we have, as trained performers, found ourselves to possess critical levels of trust this has not been something only undertaken by ourselves, exceptionally. Within the UNESCO RILA Chair we have also joined in co-creating and improvising interruptions

in keynotes. From Cambridge University to the European Parliament, Argentina to Harare, interruptions to ‘invited keynote voices’ have been staged. Each live performance is different, each is redolent with interculturality and multivocality. What we have described here is largely based on the UNESCO RILA Inaugural lecture as a composite but it now has many forms and variations and I – Alison – have also seen other scholars invite the artist-scholars I work with to interrupt their own speech too, and to put a toe in the interruptible keynote waters.

There is precious little formal training in the academy for delivering a keynote. It is a form of oratory which is alien to many cultures, or which bears traces perhaps, of the discourse of an elder in a circle of wisdom; the preaching of a pastor to a congregation; the dispensing of knowledge which is heavy; important; defining; setting direction to a gathering of young and old. There is virtually no literature critically considering the form. There are few lessons given on how to deliver a keynote to an audience that is made of up speakers of many languages and many cultures, which is, of course, what the conferences in higher education mean. Yet it is the quintessential oral form for hospicing knowledge in performance, delivered in the quintessential form – the conference or symposium or congress – of academic intercultural hospitality. We turn here to Gramling’s own description of how to hospice monolingualism:

Instead of wishing the linguistic world and its impertinent lingualisms would quickly ‘conform to our will,’ hospicing late mono/lingualism can mean a number of longer term conscientious and interactional projects, including:

- (a) seeing clearly and describing how mono/lingualism works in various settings, and what its effects are for whom.
- (b) not abandoning attention to its workings for utopian alternatives, if doing so means leaving behind, and unattended, a dangerous edifice for others to break down for us, or to which others remain subjected to, and
- (c) taking part as listeners and learners amid the imagining of alternatives that many Global Southern thinkers have been offering all along (Heugh and Stroud 2018) so as to grasp the ‘long durée of intelligences of multilingualisms within ecologies of ongoing rather than recent change’.
- (d) caring for the language ‘entities’, bounded or unbounded, that people say matter to them and their meaning-making lives. (Gramling, 2021, p. 132)

This work of hospicing requires a collective, expansive, decolonial, and convivial praxis. The keynote is one form where it may connect past with future; grassroots with elite and in our examples northern with southern epistemologies in a call and response performed to an audience of meaning makers themselves.

Disturbing empire means at the very least being cautious with the discourse and language of empire. It means speaking differently; languaging; bringing in the poetic; the coarse; the high flow; the academic neologism; the playful and the pun. The relation of new language is evidence that thinking is occurring and the strain between reality as normatively described and the biting point reached, ‘elongated to breaking point’ – to quote Benjamin again – requires the work of poetic imaginations and wordsmithery. Often this language will come up from the streets; the everyday crucible of new speech and new poetic form.

A keynote, then, and especially so in the contexts of LAIC, is akin to the spoken word performance – it’s about how you do it and sense it – it isn’t something you can coach easily, but it can be directed. There are, however, no roles for keynote theatre directors who might destabilise the cognitive empire and its reproducibility in anything other than the normative forms of scholarship. The keynote drama is not yet a form, but we have found that the principles of dramaturgy are critical to this pedagogic art of hospitality and of hospicing.

As LAIC looks forward to the next two decades and back on the last two it also stands at a breaking point and biting point, not least with the erosion the rights of migrants, and those seeking asylum and refuge, who are rendered invisible and precarious, re-formed with degrees of resilience. These require new languaging and, from the point of view of our own experimentations: new forms: new notes: new keys.

This insight allows us to call, in conclusion, for pedagogies of hospicing and interruption; of hospitality and *communitas*; of the kinds of artistic criticality that can indeed gentle us through to the end of the cognitive empire.

who shouted daybreak in the middle of the night?

that was just me daydreaming in darkness

## Notes

1. A live recording of one of our keynote Interruptions can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoLXfXzmMZY>  
TM 27.50
2. Translation: The audience member of the dramatic theatre says: yes, I have also already felt that. That's how I am. That is natural. That's how it will always be. The suffering of this person shakes me to the core because there is no way out for them. This is great art. It is self-evident. I am crying with those who cry and laughing with those who laugh. The audience member of the Epic theatre says: yes, I have not thought that. That's not what people should do. This is really noticeable. Its barely believable. That has to stop. The suffering of this person shakes me to the core because there is a way out for them. I am laughing with those who cry and crying about those who laugh.

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