

1 Language as Hope

“Can only those hope who can speak?”

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953)

1.1 3,720:1

If the classic 1977 film *Star Wars: A New Hope* (Lucas, 1977) is a film about hope, then it might be said that the 1980 sequel feature, *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (Kershner, 1980), is one of hopelessness. The Galactic Empire, which had been decimated in the former film, “strikes back” with a vengeance in the sequel, leaving the once upstart Rebel Alliance in states of disarray and desperation. If there is one recurring trope throughout the film, it is that the Rebel Alliance cannot seem to catch a break, facing one setback after another. Within the hopeless film, however, there are minor and at times intriguing instances of hope nonetheless. One such example is the moment when the film’s protagonists are about to fly their malfunctioning spaceship the Millennium Falcon through an asteroid field in a last ditch attempt to escape enemy starfighters. C-3PO, the relentlessly cautious and annoyingly pessimistic droid, warns that “the possibility of successfully navigating an asteroid field is approximately 3,720 to one!” The pilot, Han Solo, simply offers a dismissive reply to C-3PO’s panicked exasperation, “Never tell me the odds.” Han Solo’s response represents at first glance a refusal to acknowledge mathematical probability and thus the dire circumstances that he and his crew find themselves in. However, it also tells us something about the ways in which hope cannot only be found in language, but through language.¹

¹ One might be tempted to argue that Leicester City’s historic and improbable winning of the 2015–2016 Barclays Premier League Championship, which had been set by bookmakers at 5,000:1, is a real-life example of even greater odds being overcome. However, it has been argued that such extravagant odds were designated in a deliberately hyperbolic manner simply to tantalize bettors, with 2,000:1 or even 1,000:1 being a more realistic probability (Gaines, 2016). In other words, since sports betting is one of the few consistently documented forms of articulating probability in relation to the outcome of probable and improbable occurrences, it can be argued that the Millennium Falcon’s ability to navigate the asteroid field despite the 3,720:1 odds is the most improbable outcome, at least in terms of what has been numerically scaled. Even so, Leicester executive chairman Richard Scudamore’s comments in an interview following the title are somewhat relevant to our understanding of hope in relation to temporality, as will be

The utterance of the probability (3,720:1) is a way of not only articulating, but more specifically speaking into being the reality of the situation. It is an instance of performative language (Austin, 1962) in that it makes certain, in very precise, mathematical, and probabilistic terms, the unlikelihood of their survival, an unlikelihood that was, prior to the utterance, though perhaps understood, ultimately and merely speculative. In other words, while common sense would lead one to presume that it is not a good idea to enter an asteroid field, there is something particularly discouraging about knowing the mathematical probability of survival, as it allows one to conclude without question that it is *in fact* not a good idea. However, if C-3PO's utterance is a way of actualizing the hopelessness of the situation, Han Solo's rejection of the utterance can be conceived of as a negation of the hopelessness, effectively reconstituting the situation: not necessarily to a hopeful one per se, but at the very least to one that is not nearly as hopeless as it once was. To be sure, one could argue that the refusal to acknowledge the odds does not make them simply untrue. And of course, though Han Solo and his crew do make it out of the asteroid field alive with only minimal damage to the Falcon, we cannot say that his articulated refusal of the odds is what enabled them to survive. Hanging in the cockpit of the Falcon, after all, is a small but conspicuous pair of dice, signifying the rogue pilot's knack for leaving things to chance.

A related scenario of refusal is perhaps found in Brazilian philosopher Danilo Marcondes's (1998) treatment of the Lewis Carroll (1895) parable "What the Turtle Said to Achilles." In the parable, Achilles and a turtle are discussing a classic theorem, and Achilles wants to accept a seemingly logical conclusion found in the Euclides Transitivity Principle:

- A) Duas coisas que são iguais a uma terceira são iguais entre si.
 - B) Os dois lados deste triângulo são iguais a um terceiro.
 - Z) Os dois lados deste triângulo são iguais entre si.
- A) Two things that are equal to a third are equal between themselves.
 - B) The two sides of this triangle are equal to a third.
 - Z) The two sides of this triangle are equal between (or to) themselves.

What the turtle does is not accept that Z is a logical conclusion of A and B. The turtle and Han Solo might be said to share the same mindset of hope, or perhaps even attitude to hope, if you will. Unlike Han Solo, though, she does not actually accept it, but she considers the mathematical possibility, placing an intermediate Z conclusion delaying her and Achilles reaching the Z as such. This is referred to as a regress to infinity, and the turtle actually critiques the whole paradigm of logical necessity by showing that when time is included,

discussed throughout this chapter: "If this was a once in every 5,000-year event, then we've effectively got another 5,000 years of hope ahead of us" (Duffield, 2016, n.p.).

a logical necessity is not natural, but something only reachable at some point in time. One might then read, then, Han Solo's attitude as similar to that of the turtle. He seems to be including an intermediate temporal possibility to the logical necessity of minimal chances of survival. In terms of our approach to hope, he imagines language (and semiotic resources, including temporal and logical ones) otherwise, and in this sense he circumvents despair and keeps going.

Our point, in other words, is to foreground the role of language in shaping our orientation to a given present and the range of possible futures, including especially those that may seem unimaginable. This chapter then aims to present a theorization of language as hope. In order to do so, we proceed by describing our conceptualization of languaging, reflective of an understanding of the dynamic and ontologically constitutive outcomes of the deployment and circulation of communicative resources. We afterwards survey a range of philosophical, ethnographic, and sociolinguistic treatments of hope that we view as foundational to our general, though not always generalizable, approach to hope. In so doing, we offer a working definition of the phenomenon of languaging hope, understood as the performative production of conditions of hope via language. As we shall see, languaging hope represents, in effect, the fundamental theoretical core to the project of *Language as Hope*.

1.2 Linguaging

Our conceptualization of language as hope demands an understanding of language as performative and more specifically as reconstitutive. Han Solo's reconstitutive language depicted above is reminiscent of the strategy of refusal in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) description of disinterpellation. The theory of interpellation was popularized by Louis Althusser's (2001) work on ideology and subject formation, illustrated by his famous analogy of an individual being hailed from behind by a police officer and becoming a subject of the state the moment they accept the address and turn around.² Sedgwick (2003) meanwhile describes disinterpellation as a "nonce, referential act of a periperformative," analogous not merely to "I dare you," but instead to, "Don't do it on my account" (p. 70). As Sedgwick (2003) additionally notes, "Such feats are possible, are made possible by the utterance itself" which is

² Here is Althusser's (2001) influential description: "I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really* him who was hailed' (and not someone else)" (p. 118).

itself bound to a series of “presumptive relations” (p. 70). Consider, after all, the paradox of both assuming the authority to issue a dare while simultaneously absolving one’s accountability for its issuance. While we need not dwell on the question of disinterpellation at length for our purposes, it points to the role of language in subverting the expected order of things, whether we are talking about overcoming odds by simply refusing them, setting the terms of a dare into motion without actually issuing it, or, in accordance to our interests, doing hope by reconstituting not only the regimes of signification, but also temporality and the conditions of everyday life.

It is appropriate, therefore, to approach the issue at hand not as a phenomenon of language, but perhaps as one of languaging. Languaging, as opposed to classic Saussurean and Chomskyan alternatives such as “language’s own order” (Saussure, 1986, p. 43) or the “normal use of language” (Chomsky, 1972, p. 11), invites us to foreground, in no subtle terms, the reconstitutive nature of language. Indeed, while alternatives such as the “immanence of language” or the “normal use of language” are derivative of a conceptualization of language as a “purified” (Bauman & Briggs, 2003), restrictivist (Agha, 2007), and independent grammatical system, languaging underscores the dynamic and transformative capacities of language. Miyako Inoue’s (2004) notion of indexical inversion offers a productive means to outline our understanding of languaging. By historicizing the metapragmatic discourse around women’s language in the Japanese context, Inoue has demonstrated how indexical orders (Silverstein, 2003) can be manipulated in accordance with ideological priorities. At the turn of the twentieth century, when modernizing efforts led to the creation of high schools for women, male educators condemned what they heard as a sign of corruption: “Schoolgirl speech,” also known as “*teyo-dawa* speech” based on the frequent use of “*teyo*” and “*dawa*” verb endings, was deemed “unpleasant to the ears” (Inoue, 2004, p. 45) by the male observers. These commentators retroactively positioned their own perception of corruption, unpleasantness, and impurity as the foundation of women’s speech. Inoue explained that a second order of indexicality (where signs are seen as having a “creative,” “entailing” value) was inverted to being the first order of indexicality, or “the foundational or presupposed” value (p. 44). This inversion becomes more evident when examining the indexical shifts in the late twentieth century, and the booming economy that was accompanied by an increasing number of women joining the labor force. At this time, male scholars, writers, and educators focused their attention on the language spoken by the new professional women. The male observers mourned the ostensibly lost soft and elegant schoolgirls’ language, indexed precisely by verb endings such as *teyo* and *dawa*. In other words, the once unpleasant traits of discourse were reindexicalized as proper “women’s language,” and as “ideal” (p. 50).

Inoue's framework of indexical inversion lays bare the ways in which hierarchical social relations come to be naturalized as *a priori* products of necessity or nature. The fact that the "lost" elegance and softness of Japanese women's language had never existed as such serves as a reminder that temporality is not neutral or linear, but vertically stratified, multiple, and subject to contestation. While the indexing sign (e.g., a footmark on sand) and its indexed object (the foot that stepped on sand) are commonly understood as subject to a temporal succession based on a causality between the indexed and the indexing, inverse indexicality offers a way to view the former as a subsequent occurrence legible as a memory of the past. As Inoue (2004) writes, "The temporality encoded in a particular mode of indexicality produces, at an ideological level, a historical narrative, which, in turn, organizes indexical temporality" (p. 39). In addition to being key to understanding the dynamics of languaging practices, Inoue's analysis of the performative production of temporality through inversions and reinterpretations of indexes of time anticipates our discussion about the nonlinear, situated, and flexible dynamics of the temporality of hope, which is in turn premised, as we argue, on languaging.

Though there have been numerous theorizations of languaging over the years, perhaps A. L. Becker's (1995) is among the most commonly referenced. Becker's idea of languaging reflects the reality that a person "does not simply *use* language but is compelled, for one reason or another, to think carefully and repeatedly *about* it" (p. 3). He recalls a moment when reflecting on the function of the grammatical structure of a language and realizing how inconsequential it can in fact be:

At that moment, as I was trying to remember the Burmese I thought I had once known, grammars and lexicons seemed beside the point, just things we do with languages, not things that are *somehow within* languages, not part of their being as languages. People like me *make* grammars and dictionaries – these artifacts are not in the minds of the users of languages. Grammars and dictionaries were not what was buried in my memory. This came to me with a force of a revelation. (Becker, 1995, pp. 3–4)

For Becker, the form of language matters less than its function, a function that is made possible by an approach to language that accounts for the (embodied and textual) memories it invokes and the contexts in which it operates. As Pennycook (2010) notes, by adopting this approach to languaging rather than language, "[R]ather than viewing grammar as a system of rules that maps abstract relations onto textual relations, we can view grammar in terms of time and memory, in terms of textual relations that accumulate over life" (p. 125). Languaging, put differently, signals an understanding of the orientation to temporality not possible through language as such alone.

Becker (2006) wrote that one of the sources from which he learned the concept of languaging was the work of Chilean biologist Humberto

Maturana.³ Maturana was known for his work on the “*biología del conocer*,” or “biology of knowing,” an approach to seeing our ontology as “habitualmente num modo de vida centrado em interações históricas, recorrentes, consensuais, recursivas e contingentes na linguagem” (habitually unfolding in a manner of living centered in interactions that are historic, recurrent, collaborative, recursive, and contingent on language) (Magro, 2002, p. 217). Maturana (1997) noted that words, gestures, and bodily postures do not make sense in isolation, but only in the “fluir de interações recorrentes que constituem um sistema de coordenações consensuais de conduta” (recursive flow of consensual and coordinated forms of conduct) (p. 168). Of fundamental importance for our theorization of languaging hope, Maturana formulated that the flow of human beings in language is also an emotional or affective one. Hope, we should note, has been primarily defined by philosophers as an emotion or affect – as a particular form of our being affected by and affecting others. Maturana (1997) added, “As palavras constituem operações no domínio de existência, como seres vivos, dos que participam na linguagem, de tal modo que o fluir de suas mudanças corporais, posturas e emoções tem a ver com o conteúdo de seu linguajar” (words articulate moves in the domain of existence of those who partake in language as living beings, such that the flow of their bodily changes, postures, and emotions is contingent on their languaging) (p. 168). In defining emotions as bodily dispositions for action, Maturana suggests that bodily life and languaging are mutually influenced: “O que fazemos em nosso linguajar tem consequências em nossa dinâmica corporal, e o que acontece em nossa dinâmica corporal tem consequências em nosso linguajar” (what we do in our languaging has consequences for our bodily dynamics, and what happens in our bodily dynamics has consequences for our languaging) (p. 168).

Becker and Maturana’s pioneering approaches to languaging turn out to be fundamental to our understanding of the communicative enactment of hope; we learn from them that language is not a static thing, but part of a dynamic, collective, embodied, and affective flow of activities. At this point, a meta-physical voice could ask, if languaging in general and languaging hope in particular are part of a flow of different activities, how do we account for the singularity of languaging? Or else, how do we understand its essence in such a complex course? Here, Wittgenstein’s later philosophy would be instructive to locate hope in the flow of semiosis. In *The Blue and Brown Books*, which he dictated to his class at the University of Cambridge and served as preparatory notes for the magnum opus of his later philosophy, *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1965) offered some critical remarks about the

³ It is interesting that a likely source of languaging is the Department of Biology at the Universidad de Chile and not exactly a Department of Linguistics or Modern Languages; the concept thus seems to be transdisciplinary from the start (see Maturana, Mpodozis, & Letelier, 1995).

activity of “expecting.” He asked, “What happens if from 4 till 4:30 A expects B to come to his room?” (p. 20). In this thought experiment, Wittgenstein noted that very likely not a single “process or state of mind” happens in this interval, “But . . . a great many different activities and states of mind” (p. 20). He gave examples: “At four o’clock I look at my diary and see the name of ‘B’ against today’s date; I prepare tea for two; I think for a moment ‘does B smoke’ and put out cigarettes; towards 4:30 I begin to feel impatient; I imagine B as he will look when he comes into my room” (p. 20). Wittgenstein noted that many other activities, both mental and practical, could take place in the interval – and yet it should be clear from the multiplicity of these activities that they cannot be reduced to a single sensation or state of mind. We can see a similarity in them, but this similarity does not amount to a fixed set of necessary and sufficient conditions. In his words, “If one asks what the different processes of expecting someone to tea have in common, the answer is that there is no single feature to all of them, though there are many common features overlapping” (p. 20). We now know that by saying the latter, Wittgenstein was teaching his students at Cambridge the concept of family resemblance – that is, the different activities that we call “expecting at so-and-so-interval” do not have a single essence, but instead have “a family likeness which is not clearly defined” (p. 20). Yet for our discussion of languaging hope, perhaps what is most salient in Wittgenstein’s thought experiment is the following: subjects perform situated activities in the flow of language not because that activity may be essentially defined, but because in relying on “time, memory . . . and textual relations that accumulate over life” (Pennycook, 2010, p. 125), we are able to interpret and enact those activities as particular moves in languaging; expecting or hoping, for instance.

Recently, scholars in sociolinguistics have found it increasingly productive to adopt the concept of languaging to capture the dynamic realities of communication in society. One case in point is Alim’s (2016) usage of “languaging race” to refer to the effort to “theorize race through the lens of language,” toward an “understanding of the processes of racialization by highlighting language’s central role in the construction, maintenance, and transformation of racial and ethnic identities” (p. 7). On the one hand, much of our description of languaging hope inevitably attends and must be accountable to questions of race. In many parts of the world, racialized populations tend to be subject to a disproportionate number of challenges resulting from systemic discrimination and violence. But, as we will see in the case of Brazil, racialized populations have found ways to be particularly resourceful in navigating conditions of hopelessness to produce hope, a point that will be elaborated on in the following chapter and throughout this book. But additionally, as we briefly discussed with regard to Wittgenstein’s thought experiment, we are interested in language as a continual process of becoming, akin to hope rarely being a stable or predictable intention or static mental state. Our usage of languaging

hope therefore is likewise aimed at theorizing hope through the lens of language: in what ways can hope be conceptualized and pursued via language? Linguaging hope, we argue, is a crucial response.

Our usage of linguaging is in many ways evocative of metapragmatic iterations such as polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008) and translanguaging (Li, 2018), while also attending to the dynamics of indexicality (Inoue, 2004; Silverstein, 2003). While static renditions of the “speech community” or “language varieties” tend to focus on product (Blommaert, 2010), languaging and indexicality focus on effects. This is, as Pennycook (2010) indicated, more generally reflects a turn of attention towards discourse as practice that has led to novel understandings of time and space (see Blommaert, 2010; Hanks, 1996; Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Milani & Levon, 2016). The conventional variationist framework of sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972) has focused on differences among spoken language patterns based on regional differences or other demographic attributes. Within this paradigm, based on the empirical measurement, quantification, and documentation of language variation, time and space are treated as givens against the background of language use. Inversely, within the “practice turn,” our sense of time and space is conceived as produced via language (Blommaert, 2010; Li, 2011). Claire Kramsch’s (2005) description of this orientation to practice is instructive: a theory of practice “explores not the conditions that make the real world possible, but the conditions that make possible the very exploration of the real world. It is a reflexive form of knowledge on the conditions of possibility of the research itself” (p. 560). In studies of languaging, the -ing suffix suggests a recognition of the possibility that language in use does not necessarily abide by fixed grammatical norms, but that its pragmatic conventions are emergent via the practice of language. The capacities of -ing become salient in Li’s (2018) theorization of translanguaging, which he described as a “*process of knowledge construction* that goes beyond language(s)” (p. 15). It is in this regard a “practical theory of language” that “comes out of practical concerns of understanding the creative and dynamic practices human beings engage in with multiple named languages and multiple semiotic and cognitive resources” (Li, 2018, p. 27). Though our focus here is not on *translanguaging per se*, this depiction of human communication as exceeding the bounds of language as such, invoking the availability of a range of other communicative resources, is nonetheless related to our understanding of languaging hope because, as we will see, languaging hope demands a fundamental reconsideration of the taken for granted expectations of communication as such. In order to proceed with our description of languaging hope, we will next discuss how scholarly fields such as philosophy, anthropology, and sociolinguistics have addressed hope in relation to language, and how such engagements inform our understanding of language *as* hope.

1.3 Hope

Reviewing theories of hope as a category of cultural and psychological description, the anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano, in 2003, shared his astonishment in finding that “unlike desire, which has been a central focus in the social and psychological sciences, hope is rarely mentioned, and certainly not in a systemic or analytic way” (p. 5). Crapanzano’s observation of hope as an undertheorized if not completely ignored category of experience and a meta-discourse, is curious given that hope has been described in philosophy as early as Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (written between 335 and 322 BC; see Gravlee, 2000), and in Descartes’s *Les Passions de l’âme* (published in 1649), not to mention its important place in diverse political, social, and religious formations in different historical sites. Crapanzano speculated on some reasons for this theoretical neglect. First, perhaps a supposedly ineffable condition of hope would have kept it away from scholars’ interests in objective description. Yet Crapanzano (2003) himself countered that “[h]ope is certainly no more difficult to define than desire” (p. 5), an affect that has received far more attention than hope in academia. Second, perhaps associations between hope and piety would immediately spark a sense of rejection in “our determined secularism” (p. 5). Third, possibly crystallized views that “passivism and resignation [are] inherent in the notion of hope” might have diverted attention away from hope thus understood and towards contemporary “aggressive individualism or to a consumerism that cultivates an instant gratification that is at odds with the waiting time of hope” (p. 5). Whatever the reasons, Crapanzano concluded in 2003, “Hope, however understood, has been ignored” (p. 5).

Writing the book *Hope without Optimism* more than a decade later, the literary critic Terry Eagleton (2015) made a similar assessment. He wrote that hope “has been a curiously neglected notion in an age which, in Raymond Williams’s words, confronts us with ‘the felt loss of a future’” (p. xi). While we begin by mentioning these diagnoses about the scarcity of theory and analysis of hope in fields such as social theory and literary criticism in the past decades, our point here is not to lament the historical lack of academic attention to hope. Actually, as we discuss below, the practice of hope has increasingly attracted the attention of social scientists, including sociolinguists. Our point is that the relatively marginal attention to hope invites the non-trivial observation that hope, as an epistemic object, tends to be dismissed as ineffable or spiritual rather than material, or even neglected as a useful concrete asset for thinking of interested human action, consociation, and metalinguistic imagination (see Borba, 2019a; Lempert, 2018). Against this view of hope as immaterial, as parasitic to, or even a distraction from serious linguistic-ideological problems, our approach, as we have indicated, is

to focus on hope as a practical affect that is crucial for “ethnographic and other cultural and psychological descriptions” (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 4), especially for linguistic-ethnographic descriptions.

We imagine this theoretical review as having a political thrust inspired by works such as Raymond Williams’s (2015) “Resources for a Journey of Hope,” his (1980) “The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament,” and Monica Heller and Bonnie McElhinny’s (2017) dense critique of sociolinguistics and political economy in *Language, Colonialism, and Capitalism*. Through different epistemic paths and discourse strategies, these texts pursue not disinterested diagnoses but intellectual reimaginings and affective investments in suggesting alternatives to problems that would otherwise be seen as inevitable. Raymond Williams (2015) aimed to imagine the future through “a new politics of strategic advantage” (p. 195), a political strategy at once progressive and realist, hopeful and not optimist. In his critique of nuclear armaments, for instance, Williams recognized that hope was a key imaginative exercise in avoiding the paralyzing affect of despair, which emerges for example from a sense of the inevitability of the “laws of economy and laws of war” (p. 218). The critical task for Williams (1980) was precisely “making hope practical, rather than despair convincing, [just so we] resume and change and extend our campaigns” (p. 42). Heller and McElhinny bring the work of artists, environmental, indigenous and feminist activists, philosophers, and others to bear on their historical critique of inequities in capitalism and in scientific imaginations of language. They begin and end their book by engaging with artist Junot Diaz’ reflection on radical hope, a form of “imaginative excellence” (Lear, 2006) that differs from blind optimism. Crucially, they invite their readers to practice the reimaginings of time predicated in hope, particularly through “walking backward into the future” (Heller & McElhinny, 2017, p. 260), one that changes “as we reimagine language, land, love, and much more” (p. 260).

Our account of hope thus relies on linguistic-ethnographic as well as philosophical descriptions of hope as an entailment of language. In our own ethnographic work, we observe formations of hope primarily as “precipitates of interaction or interlocution” (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 6), that is, as language. Simultaneously, proceeding from an understanding of the performative and reconstitutive capacities of language, we also conceptualize language as a resource of hope. Yet we would like to emphasize upfront that like other social processes and metadiscursive formations, hope is not a “thing” – it is not an object with clear-cut boundaries which people would use, for instance, to operate with the future. While our analytic concern is with the work of hope in social formations where the dispossessed peoples of increasingly neoliberalized markets dwell, it is nonetheless productive to understand the general characteristics of hope as an affect that may be cultivated under

certain conditions as people grapple with time, the sociolinguistic resources they hold, and the field of the struggle over these resources.

Hope as a Philosophical Problem

In this section, we will pursue some insights concerning the work of hope in philosophy, particularly in pragmatic (Blöser, 2019; Wittgenstein, 1953), Marxist (Bloch, 1986; Levitas, 1990), and anthropological (Lear, 2006) philosophies. Our goal, it should be said, is not to offer a single, universally applicable definition of hope. A pragmatic approach to hope – one that is neither universalistic nor relativistic – would precisely remind us that hope, like any practice, is not and cannot be universally and uniformly realized in all societies. As Blöser (2019) proposes in her pragmatic account of hope, “We hope in a great variety of ways” (p. 212). This entails that, conceptually, there may be multiple realizations of hope making it ultimately impossible to point to supposedly necessary and sufficient conditions for its expression in *all social formations*. Yet, while hope is irreducible, it is not undefinable. Blöser opposed the skeptic-relativist claim – for example one cannot understand what hope is; it is too diverse – by returning to Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein’s famous proposal to understand language avoids the invocation of universal conditions to define concepts. For instance, using the conceptual category of “games,” which includes “board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on” (§66), Wittgenstein (1953) reminded us that we do not need to resort to the foundationalist assumption that “[t]here must be something in common, or they would not be called ‘games’” (§66). He rather proposed that “we *look* and *see* . . . family resemblances,” that is, “similarities, relationships, and a whole series” of criss-crossing correspondences, as opposed to necessary and sufficient characteristics instantiated in every activity we call “game” (§66). Likewise, defining hope as a family resemblance concept entails *looking at* and *seeing* modes of responding to inequality and violence in the peripheries of Brazil and how these responses resonate within other contexts where inequities of capitalism stand out.

One of the most paradigmatic accounts of hope in philosophy is Bloch’s (1986) *The Principle of Hope*. Bloch did not exactly attempt to locate hope within particular political formations, but instead looked at hope as a principle of philosophical explication. From the very beginning of his three-volume book, Bloch argued that as much as we “learn (to) fear,” we can learn to hope: “It is a question of learning hope . . . Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness” (p. 3). For the German philosopher, hope makes people expand rather than contract: “The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them” (p. 3). Bloch thus saw hope both as an affect – that is, as a mode of being affected or

touched by the Other, by ourselves, and by the world and its events – and as a form of practical reason, that is, a “*directing act of a cognitive kind*” (p. 12). A Marxist philosopher, Bloch geared his reflection mostly toward transforming reality. The cognitive direction of hope therefore leads us to a “better world,” to the anticipation of the future as a practical rather than a merely contemplative activity. In his words:

Only thinking directed towards changing the world and informing the desire to change it does not confront the future (the unclosed space for new development in front of us) as embarrassment and the past as spell. Hence the crucial point is: only knowledge as conscious theory-practice confronts Becoming and what can be decided within it, conversely, contemplative knowledge can only refer by definition to What Has Become. (Bloch, 1986, p. 8)

This passage summarizes Bloch’s embrace of practical utopia (as discussed below) and the pragmatic and agentive directionality he attributed to the temporality of hope. For Bloch, the temporality of hope is the future seen as “the unclosed space for new development in front of us,” a future that may be acted upon on practical grounds. This temporal space of decision is opposed to a future seen as “embarrassment” and to a past “seen as spell” – a past that imprisons the future. Bloch’s *The Principle of Hope* critiqued philosophical accounts that posit the past as “overwhelming what is approaching” (p. 8). His philosophical critique included Plato’s theory of anamnesis, “the doctrine that all knowledge is simply re-remembering” (p. 8), and Freud’s eternal return, the idea that individuals are psychically compelled to repeat traces of a primeval past. As opposed to the regressive account of the unconscious in psychoanalysis, Bloch appraised our potential for the “Not-Yet-Conscious,” consisting of a series of “progressions” rather than regressions (p. 56). Thus, instead of concerning himself with the nightmares that are the focus of psychoanalysis, Bloch was interested in “daydreams,” that is, dreams of a better life, “by which life is pervaded and of which the figurative arts are full” (p. 8).⁴

The role of the “dream” figures prominently in Lear’s (2006) description of the cultivation of hope as a pragmatic response to cultural devastation. Lear built on the case of the Crow people, a nomad, warrior, and hunting indigenous group who originally lived along the Yellowstone River Valley in the Midwest of the United States. The Crow were confined into a reservation in Montana by

⁴ It is important to situate Bloch’s critique of Freud in space and time. It is relatively common for socially oriented works to critique a presumed regressive and individualistic approach in psychoanalysis, and indeed there are psychoanalytic works that follow this trend. Voloshinov (1976), for instance, published a pioneering Marxist critique of Freud. Yet, in this chapter we draw on philosophical and anthropological works that do a different reading of psychoanalysis – namely, Lear’s (2006) account of the interpretation of dreams as a form of cultivating hope among the Crow in the U.S., and Briggs’s (2014) engagement with Freud in his discussion of the poetics of mourning among the Warao in Venezuela.

the U.S. government at the end of the nineteenth century and subsequently experienced a breakdown in their way of life. Lear focused on the narration that the leader Crow, Plenty Coups, relayed to Frank Linderman, a friend of the group who rendered Plenty Coups's story into writing. Lear drew attention to the fact that Linderman "was unable to get Plenty Coups to talk about anything that had happened after the Crows were confined to a reservation" (p. 2). The footnote reads:

Plenty Coups refused to speak of his life after the passing of the buffalo, so that his story seems to have been broken off, leaving many years unaccounted for. "I have not told you half of what happened when I was young," he said, when urged to go on. "I can think back and tell you much more of war and horse-stealing. But when the buffalo went away the heads of my people fell to the ground, and could not lift it up again. After this nothing happened. There was little singing anywhere. Besides," he added sorrowfully, "you know that part of my life as well as I do. You saw what happened to us when the buffalo went away" (Linderman, 1962, as cited in Lear, 2006, p. 2).

This passage revolves around the collapse of temporality and the system of cultural references of the Crow. Plenty Coups points out that after the buffalo went away – that is, after they were confined to a reservation and suddenly their nomad, hunting, and warrior way of life stopped to make sense – *nothing happened*. Using temporality as "a name for time as it is experienced in a way of life" (p. 40), Lear wrote that Plenty Coups (and other Crow members) witnessed the demise of a temporal framework: There was no longer a time *when* the buffalo would be hunted, a time *when* the warriors would plant sticks in preparation to battle the enemies, a time *when* they would move to a different part of the river valley.

In his discussion of the poetics of mourning among the Warao in Venezuela, Briggs (2014) reminded us that the "poetics of lament are crucial . . . in suggesting how mourners repeatedly [take] images from a shattered external world and imbue them with wholeness, immediacy, and a sense of the real" (p. 319). Thus, Plenty Coups's "witnessing of the breakdown of happenings" is reflected in the very poetics of his narrative by his refusal to speak of the time after the passing of the buffalo. As the ethnographic record has documented, in territories where populations face violence or political destruction, silence may be a sign of the victims' struggle to make sense of a shattered world by scaling the experience down to the ordinary (see Butler, 1997; Das, 2007; Silva, 2017). In other words, in his narration of the collapse of temporality, Plenty Coups, the designated mourner of the Crow, engaged the past strategically by breaking off his narrative and refusing to speak of the traumatic past, and instead narrating the vibrant time before things ceased to happen.

The hope that helped the Crow overcome despair and a massive disorientation caused by the consequences of confinement has an important sociolinguistic

dimension. The Crow calibrated a varied sort of communicative practices, genres, and other resources that enabled them to cultivate the appropriate virtues and affects to survive the devastation and strive as a group, among them the interpretation of dreams. As a common habit of the Crow, Plenty Coups was sent as a young boy off to nature to dream. The dream Plenty Coups had on this quest would be pivotal in two different moments of his life: in his early years, as a prophetic vision that he would become an authoritative figure in the group, and after the passing of the buffalo as a resource for grappling with an order that had changed. In his dream, Plenty Coups dreamt of a “Buffalo-bull who he knows is a Person who wants him” (Lear, 2006, p. 65). The Man-Buffalo first showed Plenty Coups a feeble old man and young Plenty Coups felt pity for him. Then the Man-Buffalo showed him the Chickadee-person, a man who is frail yet strong of mind, and told young Plenty Coups that the Chickadee “is a good listener” who “never intrudes, never speaks in strange company, and yet never misses a chance to learn from others” (p. 70). The elders interpreted the dream as an indication that the “buffalo will go away forever,” and read the feeble old man as Plenty Coups himself at a later age. The generic activity of cooperatively interpreting and recounting dreams was further nurtured to build up a practical reason in the aftermath of their subjective collapse. The tribe thus used Plenty Coups’ dreams as resources to “struggle with the intelligibility of events that lay at the horizon of their ability to understand” (p. 68). The Crow also pursued other resources, like writing and formal education, as practical forms of rebuilding their cultural frameworks. Witnessing the death of an entire form of life, Plenty Coups strategically collaborated with his white friend in order to have the story of the Crow preserved in writing. Additionally, his dream-vision was recontextualized in later Crow efforts to implement formal education within the group. The future generations were stimulated to cultivate the Chickadee’s virtue of active listening to learn from others by engaging in formal education.

Lear (2006) concluded that the hope that guided the Crow through an imaginative, cognitive, and temporal collapse caused by the “passing of the buffalo” – that is, by their confinement to a reservation by the U.S. government – was radical. Just as the elders interpreted the young Plenty Coups’s dream as indicating that their traditional way of life was “coming to an end,” they pursued novel resources – including education and a refashioning of temporality and collective interpretation of dreams – to imagine a possibility of survival. Lear suggests that this modality of hope was radical because it relied on modes of thinking and being that did not yet exist: “There would be ways of continuing to form oneself as a Crow subject – ways to flourish as a Crow – even though the traditional forms were doomed. This hope is radical in that it is aiming for a subjectivity that is at once Crow and does not yet exist” (p. 104).

Engaging Ethnography: Temporal Communities of Hope

Lear (2006) frames his theorization of the Crow's survival of cultural collapse within anthropological philosophy. He justifies his epistemic choice in these terms: "I am not primarily concerned with what actually happened to the Crow tribe or to any other group. I am concerned rather with the field of possibilities in which all human endeavors gain meaning" (p. 7). Although the ethnographic and historical record from which Lear drew concerned itself with what actually happened to the Crow, Lear was instead interested in what *would* happen to a human group if, from a certain moment on, *nothing happened*. In this section, we will diverge from Lear's method and look at ethnographic approaches to hope that are concerned not with "what would happen if" a given problem occurred to a group, but rather "what happens when" a given problem emerges. Unlike Lear, Cheryl Mattingly (2010) locates her study on the practice of hope at the border zone where Black families caring for children diagnosed with cancer encounter health professionals at a Los Angeles hospital in a "philosophical anthropology." The noun phrase "philosophical anthropology" – where "philosophy" figures as the modifier instead of the head of the noun phrase – gives precedence to her interest in a situated, rather than potential or universal, description of human action. Mattingly (2010) explains her theoretical orientation in these terms:

Philosophy is not required to do what anthropology does, namely to bring theoretical frameworks into conversation with the complexities of the "real world." So I have also found it important to render close descriptions of social events and situate them within broader historical landscapes, including individual, family, community, and cultural worlds. This close-to-the-ground attention to the everyday offers, as Clifford Geertz famously put it, "the sociological mind with bodied stuff on which to feed." (Mattingly, 2010, p. x)

Our point here, of course, is not to claim that philosophers of hope did not build their work on the real world, or that they relied on linear examples of realities that, empirically, are neither linear nor unified. Our interest in this section is in contrasting the imaginative exercise of a philosophy of hope to approaches that turn their "close-to-the-ground attention to the everyday." In other words, our interest is, to borrow an expression from Wittgenstein (1953), to bring the philosophical pursuit of hope down to the ordinary, or to the forms of dialogue that we as ethnographers may generate with those who experience the processes on the ground.

An example of how the comparative and situated activity of anthropology might complexify a philosophical view of hope is Bloch's (1986) treatment of the future in his account of the affect. For Bloch, hope lies in "the horizon of the future to be attained" (p. 131). This "not yet" is what gives the present its meaning – "It gives to the flow of the present specific space, the space of new,

feasibly better present” (p. 283). In his philosophical account, this orientation to the “new” places “the past as the ante-room,” and, through a Marxist dialectics, “gives reality its real dimension” (p. 285). Yet while at a given situation we may indeed hope for something that will happen in the future, in particular for something new that may overcome uncertainty or precarity from the past, the examination of empirical situations may locate hope in other renditions of temporality – in the immediate present, for example.

Perhaps echoing a Western ideology of linear time, Bloch (1986) indicated that the practice of hope lies “in the horizon of the future” (p. 131). But what should we say of hope in conditions where “time [is] without horizons or [with] very foreshortened horizons” (Del Vecchio Good et al., 1994, p. 856), as is time, for instance, for patients diagnosed with terminal cancer? Is there still any space for hope as a temporal practice? This is one of the questions underlying the work of Eleonor Antelius (2007), who studied a group of therapists and patients at a rehabilitation clinic for people diagnosed with severe brain damage in Sweden. Of four similar rehabilitation day centers in her fieldwork, this center – which she calls Boost – received the most acutely debilitated patients, both physically and verbally. Given the severity of their injury and their motor and verbal disability, the prospects for full recovery were either minimal or nonexistent. However, rather than hopelessness, Antelius found among most of the patients and especially among the therapists a reorientation of hope toward the present. The dominant narrative among therapists – cultivated in the context of the clinic but also in broader discourses of nursing as a practice of hope (Kylmä et al., 2001) – was that while the condition of many of the patients was certainly not going to improve, it might deteriorate if the daily rehabilitation work was not carried out. Rather than *transformative*, hope in this context was *conservative*: Physical and speech therapy were oriented to at least maintaining a condition that, without proper work, might worsen. Of course, this did not prevent some patients from hoping for a drastic transformation for the better; but such a transformation for most of them was out of reach, given the severity of their respective conditions.

Alongside this temporal imagination, patients cultivated small goals – which the therapists called “carrots” – so that they might perform immediate, local, and attainable actions daily to prevent a deterioration of their physical condition. For Boost patients, time seemed fixed and foreclosed, but this did not prevent a persistent, daily action aided by therapists. Some patients did sometimes surrender to despair, but a narrative plot prevalent among Boost therapists led the latter to motivate disheartened patients to pursue the small goals of daily physical therapy. In this context, Antelius (2007) suggests, hope must still be thought of in relation to time. But it is precisely time that needs to be reconceived here: instead of being about linear time – or about a teleological future – “hope is an opening of time” (p. 325). For therapists, opening or

recalibrating time means, for instance, avoiding talk about a past prior to the injury (which could cause distress, given the patient's new condition). Further, it means avoiding discussions of a long term future and locating hope in the immediate present made up of "carrots," small actions that can help to preserve a physical condition seen as contextually satisfactory. We should note that hope here remains a modality of action: "Although action taken today might not bring about any positive change in the future, it will allow for no negative change" (p. 334). Antelius concludes that, instead of being about the (better) future, hope "in relation to people with severe disabilities needs instead to be about the present and about achievements, right here, right now" (p. 339).

Kroskrity (in press) also takes issue with universalizing theories of hope. Revisiting his five-decade ethnography with members of the Village of Tewa in Arizona and looking more closely at their moral call for action during the COVID-19 pandemic, he suggests that the hope driving actions to preserve Tewa culture and language is "conservative" rather than "prospective." In contrast to the Crow's "radical hope" – the hope for the emergence of a Crow subjectivity that did not exist yet – Kroskrity argues that the Tewa are "motivated to use their Indigenous traditions, including their distinctive language, in the present in order to bring about a future good life" (p. 29). Whereas the Crow were pressed to invent a radically new way of life because their traditional life had stopped making sense, the Tewa have preserved their traditional ways of life, including their linguistic ideologies of compartmentalization and purism, which have served the purpose of ensuring their survival as a group. Aimed at preserving a past to bring about a good present and future, the Tewa have aimed their actions not at the "novum" or "not yet" theorized by Bloch as the core of hope, but "at actions that would ensure they never have to confront a 'not anymore'" (p. 30; see also Lempert, 2018).

As we discuss later in this book, the movement of mourning for Marielle Franco predicates the participants' hope in the present – an opening of time that reinscribes Marielle as politically and morally present even if biologically no longer among mourners. Our ethnographic case, like Antelius and Kroskrity's cases, differs from philosophical renditions of the temporality and universality of hope. Yet while anthropology has a considerable record of ethnographic critique of philosophical universalization – as, for instance, in the critique to the universality of speech act theory by Rosaldo (1982) and Cicourel (1987) and the ethnographic revisions of Gricean inferences by Ochs Keenan (1976), Haviland (1997), and Hanks (2002) – the discipline has more to offer to our understanding of hope than situated critique of philosophical models. Mattingly's (2010) rendition of a "temporary [and] tenuous" (p. 216) community of hope at a children's hospital that receives chronically ill Black patients in Los Angeles is a case in point. Mattingly bridges medical anthropology and narrative theory in examining what she

calls the paradox of hope: “Biomedicine offers no cure. For many children, the prognosis is bleak. Thus cultivating a hopeful stance is paradoxical; it involves an ongoing conversation with embittered despair. To hope is to be reminded of what is not and what might never be” (p. 4). Even though her interactions in the hospital with patients, family members, and health professionals revealed that, paradoxically, “hope is on intimate terms with despair” (p. 3), she perceived among Black caregivers a narrative work focused on cultivating hope, even in the face of a prognosis that is “bleak” (p. 3). Mattingly found that even as Black family members navigate systemic inequalities, poverty, and structural racism, their narrative and semiotic work was grounded in avoiding despair. She suggests that narratives told by families connect “small scale dramas – particular historical events as experienced by particular historical actors in particular contexts – to larger social histories” (p. 217). Interlocutors like Andrena – the mother of Belinda, a child diagnosed with cancer who would eventually die – offer a good example of the “tactics,” in de Certeau’s (1984) sense, that peripheral subjects employ to navigate long standing inequities. In Andrena’s case, these tactics were also crucial to circumvent a sense of abandonment by the oncologist who treated Belinda. Even though her daughter did not survive, Andrena became active in local volunteer cancer organizations and eventually created her own foundation to raise funds to support parents with severely ill children. Andrena sought to advise parents in similar situations about basic everyday issues that were however ignored by clinicians and policymakers alike. Additionally, Andrena’s elder daughter pursued nursing training and eventually went on to work “at the same hospital where Belinda had been treated and Andrena volunteered” (p. 220).

Mattingly’s (2010) conclusions about the practice of hope are manifold. They range from the importance of cultivating appropriate narratives for avoiding despair, to the complex connections between large-scale social problems including structural racism, and the micro-practices of care in everyday life. But fundamentally, in aid of our ensuing empirical examination of strategic cooperations between *faveladas/os* and subjects from other social groups, Mattingly’s argument about the “practice of creating communities in clinical borderlands” (p. 36) is particularly instructive. The use of the word “borderland” in Mattingly’s ethnography goes beyond the idea that borders in the contemporary world are porous. It refers to “*practices* that bind people together who otherwise wouldn’t belong together . . . It designates that flexible space in which healing is carried out, not only by health professionals, but also by patients and families” (p. 7). In her work, border spaces such as the hospital lobbies are privileged as sites of encounters across racial, economic, and cultural divides. These encounters involve frictions, hierarchies, and power, but they are also provisional spaces where hope is built: on the one hand,

histories of the construction of medicine as a social force and the trajectories of racialization of Black people produce hierarchies and other patients as racially different; on the other hand, the collective practices of care for the sick demand “creating borderland communities between clinicians, patients, and families” (p. 216). Mattingly concludes that the “cultivation of hope depends upon the politics of this relational work, however temporary, however tenuous” (p. 216).

Another relevant ethnographic approach to hope and the making of community is Stefania Pandolfo’s (2018) depiction of a “spiritual community of pain” (p. 7). Pandolfo carried out fieldwork in a psychiatric hospital in Morocco, and observes practices of psychic healing in both the psychiatric context (concerned with the *psyche*, the Greek word for the soul that became the focus of Western medicine) and Islamic spiritual practice (concerned with the *nafs*, the Islamic rendition of the soul). Pandolfo addresses the intersection of colonialism and psychic suffering in Morocco, and follows the spiritual work invested in healing a condition that one of her interlocutors, a Qur’anic therapist, called “soul choking.” In Pandolfo’s (2018) words:

“Soul choking” describes in his words a crippling of the ethical faculty, a disablement of the soul fostered in existential and political trauma, in the confrontation with evil, and in the illness of melancholy as it leads to suicide. This is how he describes the experience of despair among the youth, crushed by the political violence of the state and the mass pull towards undocumented migration. (p. 8)

From this description, it is possible to understand that the imams that Pandolfo was in dialogue with are at once spiritual leaders and observers of the political and colonial situation in Morocco. She identifies a similarity between the work of some imams and the type of healing that Frantz Fanon pursued in the context of French colonialism in Algeria. Fanon had diagnosed a similar situation of “soul choking” among his patients in the psychiatric hospital, whose symptoms were at once psychic and political. As a psychiatrist and political activist, Fanon perceived a disruption of culture in places where the colonial enterprise had advanced. For example, in “Racism and Culture,” a lecture delivered to Black artists and writers, Fanon (1964) described the “agony of culture,” a “destabilization” of Indigenous reference systems under colonial domination that is similar to the “disablement of the soul” (p. 34) described by the Qur’anic imam. In Fanon’s (1964) words:

The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. (p. 34)

“Culture in agony” is also a form of death in life experienced by subjects living under colonialism. Notice that Fanon contrasted the opening of cultural

time (the “culture . . . once alive and open to the future”) and the fixity of colonial oppression. Pandolfo (2018) comments that an “undead” culture is “a culture that Fanon sees as incapable of performing its work, ‘the work of culture,’ *Kulturarbeit* (parallel to *Traumarbeit*, the ‘dream-work’), which Freud had seen as the condition of possibility of human fellowship, in the sublimation of unconscious drives into symbolic and spiritual creations” (pp. 7–8). Overcoming this state of mummification, in Fanon’s terms, involves a recognition of the conditions of oppression that make the work of culture fail. Identifying his experience alongside the suffering of the people of Algeria, where he lived in his late years, Fanon found that “the people dispersed and undead found a novel cohesion in [their] suffering, a spiritual community of pain, which became a rampart of the Algerian revolution” (Pandolfo, 2018, p. 7). Challenging the border zone between life and death (where they remained “dispersed and undead”), subjects under French colonialism nevertheless reconfigured their individual suffering by identifying in other companions some traces of their own suffering and thus forming a “spiritual community of pain” (p. 7). Pandolfo points out that both the Qu’ranic therapist and Fanon pursued a diagnosis of the colonial situation that would enable them to lead others into resisting it. The imam suggested a “pedagogy of imagination” that is at once a spiritual cure and “a necessary shock, towards the reanimation of the soul” (p. 8). Fanon further imagined a “leap” as “the creative offspring of a realization of loss, an interruption that is also a fugitive coming to life, one that resists hardening into an identity” (p. 8). Against the paralysis and silence caused by colonial fixity, Fanon’s imagining of this leap is also a form of imagining the practice of hope. In this sense, Pandolfo quotes these lines from his *Black Skin, White Masks*: “I am not a prisoner of History . . . I must remember at all times that the real leap (*véritable saut*) is bringing invention into existence” (Fanon, 1952, as cited in Pandolfo, 2018, p. 8).

Crucially, the temporal communities of hope that we addressed in this section – the village of Tewa, the border community at the rehabilitation center and the hospital, the Algerian and Moroccan spiritual communities of pain – are cultural formations that collectively resist despair through reimagining semiotic resources – for example, language compartmentation and preservation, recasting of action into the present, strategic cooperation, a leap to reinvention – and through enacting more or less provisional, more or less cohesive, more or less spiritual forms of attachment. Ethnography and contextual reading are necessary to understand their historical situationality and their political promises. In the next section, we will turn to sociolinguistic accounts of hope.

Hope in Sociolinguistics

The academic field of language in society has increasingly made visible the word “hope,” both as a research topic and as a “reorientation of knowledge” (Miyazaki, 2004, p. 16) within the area. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the world, spawning uneven effects across a global spectrum of race, class, geographic region, gender, and sexuality. Given a crippling and uncertain scenario, scholars themselves have pursued resources to propel different modes of knowing, feeling, and relating to others. A few months after the World Health Organization declared the spread of the virus a pandemic in March 2020, the editors of *Open Anthropology*, a journal that thematically groups articles from the American Anthropological Association journals, centered their July 2020 issue on hope. In their editorial, Sallie Han and Jason Antrosio (2020) were explicit about the reasons for choosing this topic: “We have chosen ‘hope’ as the theme of the July 2020 issue of *Open Anthropology* because collectively we are living in times that feel rather desperate” (n.p.). In December 2020, Mie Hiramoto, Rodrigo Borba, and Kira Hall, the editors of *Gender & Language*, a journal that intersects studies of gender, sexuality, and sociolinguistics, dedicated their editorial to “Hope in the Time of Crisis.” They were unequivocal in explicating a view of hope as practical affection: “Hope, as an affective agency fuelling forms of refusal, carries the potential to change established gender orders. Hope is not an elusive, immaterial feeling; it is tangible in the ways people harness the strength to act” (p. 352). As in *Open Anthropology*, *Gender and Language* editors not only framed hope as an affective practice, but also emphasized it as an epistemic stance that can reconfigure the very ways we think about knowledge. With this in mind, in this section we will draw from some recent works in the field of language in society that explicitly call for refocusing matters in the field, in particular by balancing, juxtaposing, or confronting broader structural dynamics of domination to the work on the ground of subjects engaged in resisting and surviving the patterns of inequality we observe.

Particularly central to our inquiry is the fundamental sociolinguistic account of hope in Monica Heller and Bonnie McElhinny’s (2017) critical history of sociolinguistic scholarship and its entanglements with the conditions of late capitalism. They have offered an avenue to advance our understanding of philosophical takes on hope, such as Bloch (1986) and Lear (2006), by embedding metadiscourses of hope in the actual production of value in contemporary economic arrangements. By locating aspirations of hope in the bearings of language in social processes, Heller and McElhinny tell a reticulated story of how a specialized field like sociolinguistics has been produced in tandem with the emergence of the welfare state in the postwar period, out of the need to handle linguistic diversity in schooling, and other policy preoccupations. The

increasing dismantling of the welfare state since the 1990s has also presented challenges for the field, and especially for the responses of social groups to the consequences of neoliberalism's policies and cognitive frameworks that led to rising inequality and the dissolution of policies of redistribution, in addition to the incarceration of dispossessed populations, urban violence, among other problems. Hope, for Heller and McElhinny (2017), is located in metadiscourses that respond to the disjunctures of the existing neoliberal governance across nation-state boundaries. Like the Crow metadiscourse of hope, these responses might involve new forms of "thinking about time, about place, and about personhood" (p. 228). While the structures of feeling (Williams, 2014; see also Park, 2015) in current geopolitical arrangements have fostered hatred against groups such as immigrants, sexual minorities, and racialized populations, grassroots movements and their coalitions have also searched for "forms of solidarity independent of state boundaries" (Heller & McElhinny, 2017, p. 234), for "new possibilities of a democratic cosmopolitanism" (p. 234), and especially for "recapturing the commons" (p. 252), in other words, those terrains within commodified regimes that may provide more horizontal, less hierarchical forms of belonging, engaging, and flourishing. For Heller and McElhinny, alternative forms of projecting, describing, and using language are the core of these possibilities of reimagining the terrains, temporalities, and semiotic regimes where those who are most affected by political-economical inequalities may be able to strive.

A very direct call to adjust the focus of attention in studies of language in society is found in Bonnin's (2021) essay, "Discourse Analysis for Social Change: Voice, Agency, and Hope." In it, he unpacks an ethnographic scene that, as seen from the perspective of his theoretical review of "voice" (Agha, 2005; Bakhtin, 1986; Bonnin, 2019) and "agency" (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Hayles, 2012; Pennycook, 2018), points to the salience of the method of hope among those experiencing the effects of economic inequality. Bonnin recounts a scene from an interview with Ana, a woman who had worked for the Buenos Aires subway for twenty-five years. Ana offered him a well-humored response about her participation in building the subway union. Rather than focusing on categories of oppression such as the strenuous workload and even restrictions impeding their use of the bathroom, Ana provided an example of how workers mocked "supervisors and rulebooks alike" (p. 70). One of the rules imposed on subway workers in 1994 was that they could only drink *mate* with the *bombilla* (a drinking straw). Ana says that in 1997, as the workers had become bolder, they went about hiding the *bombilla* when the supervisor approached: "When we saw him coming, we would hide it. He would say 'you're drinking *mate*,' and we'd reply 'but without a *bombilla*!' (*laughs*)" (Bonnin, 2021, p. 69). In his analysis, Bonnin illustrates not only the complexity of voices that Ana embeds into her utterance, "the voices of the rulebook, of

the supervisor and of the workers who collectively reinterpret institutional regulations – literally – in order to resist them” (p. 70), but also how Ana, “a spokesperson for the group” (p. 70), and union workers temporally built agency through engaging semiotic resources such as creativity, collective work, and humor. From 1994 to 1997, workers went on to “propose not simply to disobey the regulation, but to act on it – on its literal text – collectively, by combining objects, words and actions to generate an alternative interpretation” (p. 72). In the face of such an interactional text, Bonnin’s position is that the typical interest of critical language studies in dimensions such as “the denunciation of linguistic inequality, of dominant ideologies, of racism, of sexist discourses” (p. 75) should not eclipse the production of voice, agency, and hope among those who experience inequality on the ground. As usually a drive to denounce inequalities accompanies critical work in sociolinguistics, Bonnin pointed out two limits to using academia as a platform for such work. The first has to do with the reach of our publications: we tend to write for our peers in outlets that are unlikely to be read by (or afforded access to) the stakeholders in the realities we seek to critique. The second limit has to do with focus: “If we only privilege the analysis of practices of social control, ideological domination, discursive hegemony, sociolinguistic orders or dominant ideologies, we block our perception, and even our own imagination, to those voices that act for change” (p. 75). Bonnin’s conclusion resonates with similar ones in studies on agency, resistance, and hope (e.g., Awayed-Bishara, 2021; Charalambous, Charalambous, Zembylas, & Theodorou, 2020; Milani, 2022; Mahmood, 2001, 2005; Moita Lopes, 2020; Rampton, Charalambous, & Charalambous, 2019), as well as our own perception of the agentive, non-melancholic, and proactive stance of *faveladas/os* when faced with the dynamics of social domination. In this regard, Mattingly’s (2010) words about the frictional interplay of structure and agency are as critical as they are blunt: “Reality needs to be exposed as a space of possibility and not only of imprisonment or structural reproduction. Despite the immense power of oppressive social structures, reality is not summed up by their existence” (p. 39).

Miguel Pérez-Milans and Guo (Grace) Xiaoyan (2020) provide an interesting reading of the dialectics of agency and structure that turns out to be applicable to our orientation to languaging hope. Ethnography becomes all the more pertinent to their study because they observe a form of communicative practice and structure of feeling – religion – that in secular discourses, including within academia, is readily conflated with uncritical adherence to domination on the part of pious subjects (see Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2005). In their ethnography on returnees to China who had converted to Christianity, Pérez-Milans and Guo critique the binary view that associates secularism with “values of rationality, reason and impartiality” (p. 204) and religion with the opposite of modernity (i.e., “backwardness, irrationality, emotion and bias”

[p. 204]) as they instead attempt to see what claims and justifications their interlocutors found in religion “amid neoliberal pressures for professional success” (p. 199). In contrast to the image of the “successful” returnee in China – that is, someone who attained higher education at a prestigious school in the West and obtained one of the most prestigious jobs back in China – the profiles of Pérez-Milans and Guo’s interlocutors didn’t meet the standards of the “outstanding” student who climbs up the market ladder in China through “prestigious talent-attraction schemes” (p. 198). Their interlocutors on the ground found that such “schemes were out of reach for them,” and additionally had to cope with “a strong sense of isolation and overwhelming stress in coping with family and societal expectations for them to succeed academically and professionally” (p. 199). Such pressures and anxieties about professional “success” are well known and documented in the literature on the political economy of language (e.g., Del Percio, 2018; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Heller, 2011; Martín Rojo, 2018; O’Regan, 2021; Park, 2021; Urciuoli, 2010). What makes this study singular is that, as Bonnin (2021) and Mattingly (2010) suggested, its participants do not surrender to the “romance” of power and structure decoupled from the work on the ground of precarized subjects who tend to be semiotically erased from corporate and academic renditions alike. In other words, Pérez-Milans and Guo sought to identify hope as a “technology” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 181) that their subjects build within religion – which allows them to simultaneously produce a discourse register and a space “to build social relations of solidarity with others” amidst a “general state of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their experiences at university and work” (p. 200) – while at the same time attending to how both this space and register “(dis)enable . . . larger structures of inequality” (p. 200). Pérez-Milans and Guo handle the irreducible tension between structure and agency through a dialogue with interlocutors who feel inequality in their daily lives. The result is an epistemic effort to make visible “practices, experiences, feelings and subjectivities of those who seem to fall behind the official accounts of successful return” (p. 199) and, we should add, of those whose voices also fall behind some scholarly accounts.

The complex relationship between language and temporality that guides our work is a key them in Branca Fabrício’s (2022) work, which draws on renditions of temporality from Afrodiasporic traditions and Brazilian popular music to outline a general orientation in sociolinguistics for “hopeful futures” amidst “the sound of the past and the fury of the present” (p. 1). Fabrício recontextualizes a Yoruba saying that goes, “Exu matou um pássaro ontem com uma pedra que arremessou hoje,” or “Exu killed a bird yesterday with a rock he threw today” (p. 2). She intertwines this nonlinear view of time where the interpretation of the past is modified by actions in the present with lyrics that became emblematic of the struggle against Bolsonaro’s far-right agenda: “Já

não posso sofrer no ano passado. Tenho chorado demais, tenho chorado pra cachorro. Ano passado eu morri, mas esse ano eu não morro . . . Revide,” which translates approximately to “I can’t keep suffering for what has happened. Enough bleeding, enough crying. Last year I died, not this year . . . Tomorrow cannot be the same old yesterday with a new name . . . Fight back” (p. 2). In 2019, a few months after Bolsonaro’s inauguration, these verses were performed by Emicida, a leading rapper in Brazil, Majur, a non-binary trans singer, and Pablo Vittar, a drag queen artist, in a concert featured in the Netflix documentary *AmarElo: É Tudo Pra Ontem*, released in English as *AmarElo: It’s All for Yesterday*. They quickly became a symbol of strategic alliances of racial, economic, and sexual minorities against the conservative offensive that has attempted to crush Brazilian democracy. These lyrics echo different voices, including the original verses of Belchior, an artist born in Ceará, a state stigmatized as inferior in the country’s political and economic geography. Fabrício foregrounds these alternative ways of interpreting time, life, death, and sociality to think about the 2021 sociolinguistic scholarship on gender and sexuality. In the face of a pandemic that took millions of lives, Fabrício was particularly interested in asking “how colonial yesterdays and futures were reimagined with the stones thrown at the current gloomy timespace” (p. 3). In arguing that “there is only hope on a tightrope” (p. 13), she gauges the indeterminacy, friction, and multiplicity predicated in “agentive responses” to colonial, racist and heteropatriarchal reminiscences (p. 20). Through unsettling, crystalized views of time and space – for instance, by “moving southward” and seeking alternative alliances “beyond the traditional circuits of knowledge” – the works she revises project time, space, gender, sexuality, and language otherwise.

Finally, the last text that inspires our orientation to languaging hope returns us once more to the Brazilian context: Borba’s (2019b) empirical analysis of a collective of activists in Rio de Janeiro that confronted hate speech by calibrating a “method of hope.” Building on Miyazaki’s (2004) ethnographic argument that hope should be seen less as a subject and more as a method of reorienting and uniting knowledge and one’s stance on the future, Borba studied how the collective *À Esquerda da Praça (To the Left of the Square)* reoriented their collective action in 2015, when a stationery store in Praça São Salvador, a square in an upper-middle class neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, was vandalized with slurs in graffiti linking queer people to Dilma Rousseff, who at the time was facing impeachment proceedings. By connecting non-heterosexuals and the left with corruption, the vandalism simultaneously shunned them from the public space. For Borba, temporality was differently predicated in the iterations of hate and in the reinscriptions of hope. Borba (2019b) writes that hate recycles the past: it is “past oriented; it encapsulates an encroached history of citations that produces semiotic vulnerability and by

doing so materializes in the here and now macrosociological discourses” (p. 177). Instead of walking back into the past with additional hate speech, the activists reclaimed the square by spray-painting on the same wall two hands holding one another with rainbow beams emerging from them. The activists explored the indexical potential of language to reorganize a wounded past and propel action into a more affirmative future. This situated approach to language in relation to temporality is central to our understanding of languaging hope, a phenomenon that we intend to engage in fuller detail in the pages that follow.

1.4 Conclusion: Languaging Hope

In this chapter, we have harnessed extant theories of languaging and hope in order to outline the theoretical premises guiding our conceptualization of languaging hope. To summarize, we situated our examination of hope in a view of language as *languaging*. In other words, we embrace a communicative perspective that we believe is useful to explain the semiotic action of socially and historically situated subjects who reflexively move through laminated practices saturated with power and inequality. As conceived in the pioneering works of Becker (1995) and Maturana (1997), and in contemporary theories on the dynamics of indexicality and metapragmatic iterations of languaging such as polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008) and translanguaging (Li, 2018), languaging is a useful framework to describe the communicative enactment of hope; we learn from these theories that language is neither static nor bounded but intertwined with a dynamic, collective, embodied, and affective flow of activities. We then revisited theories and analyses of hope as affect, practice, and method in the academic fields of philosophy, anthropology, and sociolinguistics. While philosophical approaches of hope such as those of Bloch (1986) and Lear (2006) offer key elements to understand the communicative, practical, temporal, and collective dimensions of hope, we have found that ethnographic analyses of hope – such as those of Antelius (2007), Mattingly (2010), and Kroskrity (in press) – point to a situated dimension of both the practice and temporality of hope, which invalidates universalizing assertions like “hope is necessarily about the future.” In addition, we focused on the critique that has been leveled in anthropology and sociolinguistics at works that observe dynamics of domination, inequality, and suffering without examining the on-the-ground action of subjects who survive these practices. Joel Robbins’s (2013) discussion of the “suffering slot” in anthropology has become emblematic of this critique. In his words, “Today, it is hard to miss the importance of work on suffering. But it is also possible to spot a number of lines of inquiry that, while each still somewhat small or even marginal in themselves, may be poised to come together in a new focus on how people living in different societies strive to create the good in their lives” (Robbins, 2013, p. 457). Our theoretical review

thus privileged works that attend to the dynamics of power and symbolic domination alongside practices of production of agency, voice, and hope. Seen from this perspective, hope turns out to be a method of “reorienting the direction of knowledge” (Miyazaki, 2004, p. 12) not only for the communities we observe, but for our own epistemic critique of scholarly works that invisibilize the production of more livable and ethical lives by those who strategically recast temporality, engage in tactical cooperation, and reimagine sociolinguistic resources in and through their everyday languaging.