

EMOTION IN SCHOLARLY DISCOURSE: DENIAL, DECONSTRUCTION, REINSTATEMENT

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This article does not focus upon the aesthetic function of emotion in a literary or artistic work; rather, it addresses its *absence* in the meta-language that we use to analyse and discuss such cultural phenomena. For although emotion has been valued as an essential component of knowledge in some epistemological contexts, the overwhelming dominance of the scientific paradigm in the English-speaking world today means that scholarly texts produced across the disciplinary spectrum are expected to espouse a kind of prose that is, apparently, objective, neutral and entirely rational. That is to say, emotion seems to have *no place* in modern English academic prose, even in the humanities.

This assumption is supported by the advice given in the many academic style manuals on the market. A survey carried out in 2007 (Bennett 2009) showed that most writing guides were instructing their students to be “impersonal and objective,” “emotionally neutral” (Cottrell 2003, 177 and 157), “unemotional, impartial, objective” (Oliver 1996, 1), etc. Indeed, “emotive” or “emotionally-weighted” language is considered by some authors to be a “dubious persuasive technique” (Fairbairn and Winch 1996, 180) that should be avoided at all costs, on a par with “false syllogisms, begging the question, sweeping generalizations... and non-sequiturs” (Hennessy 2002, 90).

Hence, the discourse preferred in these English style manuals is clearly a *discourse of positivism*, predicated upon a philosophy of *linguistic realism*. That is to say, it purports to offer a transparent window onto the outside world through the use of clearly-defined terms and a simple straightfor-

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ward syntax, with the studious avoidance of all artifice and manipulation. Moreover, devices such as the passive voice and nominalizations shift the focus away from the human observer to the object of study, removing all traces of subjectivity – and therefore emotion – from the text. Indeed, emotion is distrusted, as we have seen, not only for methodological reasons, but also because it draws attention to an interpersonal dimension that has no place in this worldview.

The fact that, in English, the humanities and social sciences now predominantly deploy this discourse too is evidence of the prestige enjoyed by the scientific paradigm in today's world. Despite having once been based on an entirely different philosophy of knowledge, these disciplines have now to present themselves as "scientific" in order to be taken seriously.¹ Indeed, the linguist Jim Martin (1993, 220) claims that today there is "an essential continuity between the humanities and science as far as interpreting the world is concerned."

Interestingly, in the Catholic countries of Continental Europe where the scientific paradigm is a relatively recent import, a quite different discourse prevails that is more literary and holistic in nature. A descendant of the much older Rhetorical tradition that was ousted in England by the onset of the Scientific Revolution, this discourse gives much greater attention to the interpersonal dimension, and therefore to emotion, which is cultivated and transmitted in a number of ways.

This article thus seeks to trace the way in which emotion has been denied, deconstructed and, to some extent, reinstated in scholarly discourse over the course of the last five hundred years, focusing particularly upon the prose of the humanities in English and Portuguese.



Before the Enlightenment, which elevated reason to the epistemological status that it enjoys today, the pursuit of knowledge was a much more holistic affair. That is to say, human emotion was believed to be an important faculty, not only as a means of accessing vital truths, but also for persuading others of them.

¹ This also involves a continued emphasis upon empiricism. In the style manuals, even humanities students are instructed to base all their claims upon evidence. For example, Pirie (1985, 109) and Fairburn and Winch (1996, 77-89), writing for literary students, emphasise the need for *close observation of the text*, while Storey (2004, 2), addressing history students, insists that all inferences need to be made from *sources*.

It was cultivated particularly through the art of Rhetoric, a discipline that was taught in Mediaeval universities as part of the language-based Trivium, but which really came into its own during the Renaissance with the arrival of Humanism. According to this tradition, there were three aspects to language that an effective writer/orator needed to consider: *logos* (the referential dimension), *ethos* (the ethical dimension) and *pathos* (emotion). There were also three main styles, from which the orator could choose in accordance with the occasion and public, and of these, the Ciceronian “grand” style, in particular, aimed to arouse the audience to states of heightened emotion.

However, after the Reformation, the Ciceronian grand style of rhetoric began to fall into disrepute in England. It was naturally distrusted by Protestants, who eschewed ornamentation and artifice in all realms of life, and its appeal to the emotions began to be condemned as sophistry or unfair manipulation. Hence, of the three Classical styles, the “plain” style was gradually reified as the only worthy vehicle of the “truth” (Croll 1969).

The Scientific Revolution of the Seventeenth century brought even more profound changes, with a shift away from the language-based knowledge of the Scholastics and Humanists to a focus on the things of the outside world. Halliday (1993a) argues that an important cognitive shift took place at this time according to which the world was linguistically reconstrued to make it more amenable to the new science. By means of two grammatical metaphors (first, nominalization; later, the agentless passive), a new discourse was created that presented the world as made up exclusively of things – static and devoid of all subjectivity, and therefore of all emotion.

Let us look in more detail at each of these devices in turn. Nominalization is the practice of reformulating whole clauses into noun phrases,² which enables complex information to be repackaged in a more compact form. In the discourse of science, this both facilitates argumentation, by allowing it to move forward in logical steps, each one building on the one before, and enables the creation of technical taxonomies (Halliday 1993b). However, it also has the effect of removing the observer from the scene, thereby presenting subjective experience as objective fact.

This process was continued by a second grammatical metaphor (the agentless passive) that seems to have made its appearance in the Nineteenth century (Ding 1998). With this, the active agent is removed alto-

2 Simple examples given by Halliday (1993b, 79) are: *he departed à his departure*; *she spoke recently concerning poverty à her recent speech on poverty*; *how quickly cracks in glass grow glass crack growth rate*.

gether, leaving a world utterly devoid of all subjectivity. This erasure of the interpersonal dimension not only eliminates emotion from the discourse, it also removes human responsibility. That is to say, of the three dimensions of speech recognized by the rhetorical tradition, only *logos*, the referential aspect, now remains; both *ethos* and *pathos* have been swept away by a process of grammatical transformation.

The prevalence of these features in modern academic discourse can be seen in Appendix 1. Both features are very marked in the harder sciences (A-C), as we might expect. As for the social science and humanities texts (D to J), although these seem to have less passives, they do use other kinds of impersonal verb forms (such as the impersonal active and existential structures), and there are plenty of nominalizations. This means that the worldview they display is essentially the same as that of the hard sciences, offering evidence of the colonization of these disciplines by the discourse of science.

Today, however, the situation is a little more complex than this picture might suggest. Since the 1960s and 70s, the scientific paradigm and the worldview it represents have come under sustained attack from a variety of perspectives, and the criticisms levelled at it have epistemological, ethical, political and social dimensions. In all cases, the elimination of emotion seems to be paramount. That is to say, it has now been acknowledged by many that scientific discourse, by means of a linguistic manoeuvre that effectively removes subjectivity, has managed to: i) present as universal incontrovertible fact observations and affirmations that have been humanly constructed; ii) mask the fact that knowledge is mediated by language, which is culture-dependent and historical, and therefore fallible; iii) eliminate the ethical dimension, leading to all kinds of abuses; iv) silence other voices whose experiences and knowledges fall outside the pale of its jurisdiction.

Moreover, science's intimate connections with Western capitalism and globalization now mean that it is viewed by many, not as the purveyor of universal truth, but rather as an instrument of colonialism. The Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2001), has coined the term "epistemicide" to describe the way in which Western science systematically silences other knowledges that are not consistent with its worldview. And as we have seen, this is not a problem that afflicts only the developing world. Even here, in Continental Europe, there are other forms of knowledge that are now struggling to survive in the face of the relentless advance of the scientific paradigm.



As we have seen, the Scientific Revolution was essentially a Protestant phenomenon, bound up with the values of the Reformation. It is scarcely surprising, then, that with the Counter Reformation, Catholic countries should have deliberately cultivated a different attitude to knowledge and discourse as a marker of their distinct identity.

With the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Scholasticism was reinstated as the official intellectual method of the Church, offering training in grammar, humanities and rhetoric. Implemented primarily by the Jesuits in their vast network of schools, colleges and universities, it ensured that a very different worldview to that promoted by the scientific paradigm became profoundly ingrained in the countries of Catholic Europe and their dependencies.

One of the consequences of this was the development of different discourse to that preferred in the Anglo-Saxon world. While the English scientists cultivated, and eventually reified, the plain style of discourse as the only appropriate vehicle for “truth,” the Jesuits showed a marked preference for the high-flown Ciceronian style of rhetoric, which valued the component of *pathos* as an important means of persuasion. Indeed, Cypriano Soares’ *De Arte Rhetorica* (1562), which was used in most Portuguese schools right through to the Pombaline reforms of the 18th century, placed a remarkably high premium on emotion on the grounds that this is what *moves* the souls of men (Conley 1990, 154). This might go some way to explain why much academic writing produced in Portugal today is so difficult to translate into English. Emotion was never eliminated from it as it was in the Anglophone world, and features such as emotively-charged vocabulary, poetic diction, value judgments, the use of the active voice with personal subjects, and rhetorical devices designed to create emotional response in the reader are prevalent throughout the humanities and in many social sciences (Bennett 2010).

With the appearance of Poststructuralism in France in the final decades of the Twentieth century, the language-oriented knowledge of the humanist tradition gained a new lease of life.³ In Portugal, it was absorbed unproblematically by many scholars in the humanities and elsewhere, with repercussions on the kind of discourse produced in those departments (Bennett 2010). But in the Anglo-Saxon world, where it was entirely alien to a mindset formed by empiricism and linguistic realism, it caused a major

3 According to Holsinger (2005), poststructuralism represents a continuation and updating of the medieval Scholastic tradition which had survived in France, like in Portugal and Spain, through the pressure of Catholic theology.

upheaval. Bitterly opposed by those who respected the rigour of science, it was derided as nonsense and ridiculed by events such as the Bad Writing Contest⁴ and the Sokal Hoax.⁵ Moreover, when the University of Cambridge decided to award an honorary doctorate to Derrida in the early 1990s, there was an uproar. The philosophy department, along with many other prominent academics, prepared a letter of protest, in which they claimed that Derrida's work "does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour" and described his philosophy as being made up of "tricks and gimmicks."

Despite this opposition from the mainstream, poststructuralism in general (and deconstruction in particular) proved very attractive to opponents of the hegemonic culture. Under its auspices, a number of counter-hegemonic discourses sprang up, apparently offering a major challenge to the dominant discourse of academia. Some, such as the dense opaque prose of Critical Theory,⁶ were highly cerebral and thus did little to reinstate the emotional dimension that had been banished from English academic discourse for so long. Others, though, deliberately foreground emotion in an attempt to give voice to subjectivities that had been systematically silenced by the scientific paradigm. This can be seen particularly in the various emancipatory discourses that arose in literary departments following the demise of the national canon (feminist and postcolonial writers, for example, often make use of narrative or stream-of-consciousness styles which give an important role to emotion), while many of the discourses of qualitative research that have emerged in the Social Sciences also foreground

4 Sponsored by the scholarly journal *Philosophy and Literature* (John Hopkins University Press), this ran between 1995 and 1999 with the aim of publically shaming academic writers of "stylistically awful" prose. In practice, the awards were mostly attributed to writers working in the fields of poststructuralist theory, such as Fredric Jameson, Judith Butler and Homi Bhaba.

5 In 1996, the fashionable American cultural studies journal *Social Text* (no. 46/47) published an article entitled "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," a work of postmodern science criticism couched in a typical (though not radical) postmodern style. In a subsequent article entitled "A Physicist Experiments with Cultural Studies," published in *Lingua Franca* 6 (4) (May/June 1996), the author, Alan Sokal, admitted that the first had been a hoax, perpetrated deliberately to expose the hollowness of such discourse. "Like the genre it is meant to satirize – myriad examples of which can be found in my reference list – my article is a *mélange* of truths, half-truths, quarter-truths, falsehoods, non sequiturs, and syntactically correct sentences that have no meaning whatsoever... I also employed some other strategies that are well-established (albeit sometimes inadvertently) in the genre: appeals to authority in lieu of logic; speculative theories passed off as establishment science; strained and even absurd analogies; rhetoric that sounds good but whose meaning is ambiguous; and confusion between the technical and everyday senses of English words" (Sokal 2008, 93-94).

6 This tends to involve complex neographisms and coinages designed to highlight the surface texture of the text and illuminate covert meanings present in the language that might not otherwise be perceived. See, for example, the writings of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, etc.

subjectivity, with the use of personal narratives, impressionistic tales, polyphonic texts, etc.⁷

As far as Anglophone culture is concerned, it is debatable as to whether these experiments will have any lasting influence. Texts written in these styles are now often described as “passé” or “so last century,” and books have appeared with titles such as *After Theory* and *What’s Left of Theory* (apud Holsinger 2005, 10). It appears, then, that the hegemonic culture (which of course has all the power of modern capitalism, industry and technology on its side) has successively repelled the epistemological invader on its own soil and reasserted its claims to determine what may legitimately be considered knowledge.

Internationally, though, the situation is more complex. With the globalization of research, the two epistemological currents are increasingly coming into contact, generating all manner of tensions. On the micro level, the conflict between them is evident in individual acts of translation, when a text conceived in one epistemological context has to be reformulated in terms of another, often resulting in the destruction of the underlying ideological framework (Bennett 2007). Then, on the broader social plane, the pressure upon non-English academics to adopt the hegemonic model in order to achieve international recognition, status and funding brings tensions of a different kind.

As regards the results of this contact upon English academic discourse, the only lasting consequence that I can see has been a tentative opening-up to the possibility of allowing more subjectivity. For example, the Survey of Academic Style Manuals (Bennett 2009) revealed a controversy amongst authors about whether the Active or the Passive voice is preferable in academic prose, and also about the acceptability of value judgments. This at least indicates that there is recognition in some circles of the contribution that subjectivity can make to knowledge.

There are also some signs of a tentative return to the rhetorical attitude, as we can see by the publication of books with titles such as *The Recovery of Rhetoric* and *Rhetoric: The New Critical Idiom*. However, the hegemonic paradigm has a lot to lose by ceding too much. It has built its reputation on its capacity to reveal the objective truth about the outside world, and the admission of emotion into the picture will set it on the slippery slope towards epistemological relativism. Certainly the powers of industry, technology and capitalism, which have invested so much in the scientific paradigm, will want to avoid that situation at all cost.

7 See Woods (2006) for an overview.

APPENDIX 1

*Examples of English Academic Discourse**Italics – Nominalizations; Underlining – Passives**A. Physics (research article)*

The *thermal properties of glassy materials at low temperatures* are still not completely understood. Thermal conductivity has a plateau which is usually in the range of 5 to 10K and below this temperature it has a *temperature dependence* which varies approximately as T^2 . The *specific heat below 4K* is much larger than that which would be expected from the Debye theory and it often has an additional term which is proportional to T . Some progress has been made towards understanding the *thermal behaviour* by assuming that there is a *cut-off in the photon spectrum at high frequencies* (Zaitlin & Anderson, 1975a,b) and that there is an *additional system of low-lying two-level states* (Anderson et al., 1972; Phillips, 1972). Nevertheless, more experimental data are required and in particular it would seem desirable to make experiments on *glassy samples whose properties can be varied slightly from one to the other*. The present investigation reports attempts to do this by using *various samples of the same epoxy resin which have been subjected to different curing cycles*. Measurements of the *specific heat (or the diffusivity)* and the *thermal conductivity* have been taken in the temperature range 0.1 to 80K for a set of specimens which covered up to nine different curing cycles.

B. Geology (abstract)

Igneous intrusions were emplaced prior to and contemporaneous with *horizontal shortening of the crust in the Late Cretaceous to late Eocene magmatic arc in north Chile (21°45'–22°30'S)*. Temporally changing major and trace elements of magmatic rocks from this paleo-arc system chronicled *gradual crustal thickening prior to and substantial crustal thickening contemporaneously with crustal shortening*. Balanced structural cross sections indicate a *minimum of 9 km of arc-normal shortening* that occurred simultaneously with *dextral arc-parallel movements* accounting for *orogen-parallel lengthening of 10 km*. This shortening produced *5.4 km of tectonic crustal thickening* and resulted in a *minimum of 42 km late Eocene Andean crustal thickness*. Temporal and spatial geochemical changes diagnostic of *crustal thickening* indicate that the remainder (2.6 km) was accommodated by *basaltic underplating at or near the base of the arc crust prior to and during transpression*. The ratio of tectonic to magmatic crustal thickening is 2:1. Whole-crustal magmatic addition rates during the 12 m.y. duration of arc transpression are 35 km³ per kilometer of *model arc length per million years*. *Mafic underplating* may have thickened the Andean crust considerably, but most *pre-Neogene crustal thickening* was due to *discrete episodes of tectonic shortening*.

C. *Biochemistry (research article)*

A growing body of evidence suggests that *the distribution of CFTR between the plasma membrane and endosomes is at dynamic equilibrium. The rapid internalization of CFTR seems to be mediated by clathrin-coated pits in both polarized and non-polarized cells. Accordingly, the expression of CFTR was detected in isolated clathrin-coated vesicles. Endocytosis of CFTR was inhibited by PKA-dependent and protein-kinase-C-dependent phosphorylation and caused the diminution of the internal CFTR pool. As a corollary, the cell-surface density of CFTR was increased in both polarized and non-polarized cells on stimulation with PKA, as detected by immunofluorescence microscopy.*

D. *Psychology (student textbook)*

Psychologists have studied *the role of experience in perception* by controlling the *type of visual stimulation* an animal receives during its early development. For instance, *single cell recordings taken from newborn kittens* have shown the same types of *feature detector cells that are found* in adult cats (Hubel and Wiesel, 1963). This result suggests that the *neural structure for perception* is largely available at birth. However, the *visual experience* of the animal determines how well that structure will function.

E. *Linguistics (reference book)*

A *non-finite clause*, on the other hand, is by its nature dependent, simply by virtue of being non-finite. It typically occurs, therefore, without any other *explicit marker of its dependent status*. Hence when a *non-finite clause* occurs without a *conjunction*, there is no doubt about its *hypotactic relation in a clause complex*; but there may be no indication of its *logical-semantic function*. Here therefore the same question arises.

F. *Culture (abstract)*

This essay explores *the relationship between Israeli public and educational discourse* and, in particular, how, by implementing various *pedagogical strategies* aimed at inculcating *a typology of national heroism* during the state's first three decades, *the state sponsored curriculum "translated" ideological discourse into educational text*, integrating *the state's ideological value-system* into a *series of educational messages. The mapping of heroic prototypes in the national curriculum was conducted* along the *classic time-axis of Jewish history. The earliest prototype was the ancient Hebrew hero of the Bible* and the most recent *the "soldier as redeemer" of the Six Day War. At the same time, specific values constantly shifted to reflect changing perceptions and definitions of the heroic, including, eventually, the heroism of the Holocaust "survivor."* What remained invariable was the *symbolic importance* Israeli children living in a society accustomed to wars and continuously threatened violence were taught to attach to *the ideal of the national hero and heroism* itself.

G. *Education (conference paper)*

Although *the use of career dilemmas* constitutes a technique still in its infancy, its use *has revealed* encouraging results. Therefore, a *more systematic analysis of its potentialities* is necessary, namely through recourse to samples with characteristics different from those which we have used and other forms of presenting dilemmas, namely through the use of *dramatizations or films*, which allow for *a more rapid involvement with the situation under analysis.*

H. History (monograph)

Systems of patronage differ. It may be useful to distinguish five main types. First, *the household system*: a rich man takes the artist or writer into his house for some years, gives him board, lodging and presents, and expects to have his artistic and literary needs attended to. Second, *the made-to-measure system*: again, a personal relationship between the artist or writer and his patron, but a temporary one, lasting only until the painting or poem is delivered. Third, *the market system*, in which the artist or writer produces something “ready-made” and then tries to sell it, either directly to the public or through a dealer. This third system was emerging in Italy in the period, although the first two types were dominant. The fourth and fifth types had not yet come into existence: *the academy system* (government by means of an organisation staffed by reliable artists and writers), and the *subvention system* (in which a foundation supports creative individuals but makes no claim on what they produce).

I. Literary Criticism (article in specialist journal)

There is, of course, a significant role-reversal in this story, in the sense that Robalo, the guardian of the law, is portrayed as the outlaw, the character who is out of step with the rest of the community and who is unable to live within the law of the land (as opposed to the law of the State). This point is reinforced by the references in the text to God. Firstly, as part of *the narrator’s preparation of the reader* for the change in Robalo’s outlook, he writes “o Diabo põe e Deus dispõe” (30), thus relativising *the traditional roles of God and the Devil*; and then, when Isabel, the criminal in the eyes of the patriarchal state, appeals to Robalo for mercy when he catches her crossing the border, she appeals to him as an “homem de Deus” (35). These references deepen the significance of her plea to him: effectively by using these words, Isabel asks Robalo to abandon his *previous self-appointed role of quasi-divine authority* in favour of a *recognition of their shared status as imperfect human beings*, conscious of their own fallibility. To be able to continue living in Fronteira, therefore, Robalo must reject the role which he originally accepted (symbolically that of the father) and submit himself instead to the will of the mother, that is, the land.

J. Dance Therapy (abstract)

The author presents *a theoretical, literature-based study of the body image concept. Conceptualizations of body image in philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, and dance/movement therapy are briefly reviewed. A tripartite model for the concept of body image is proposed* in order to clarify the meaning of *body image*. The author differentiates body image into three interrelated aspects: *image-properties*, *body-self*, and *body-memory*. *Image-properties* refer to one’s *perceived appearance of the body* and to *societal and cultural attitudes regarding the body*. *Body-self* is the *body-based interactive, experiencing, and emotional core self*. *Body-memory* stores the lived experiences and serves as a *background for evaluating present experiences*. *The tripartite model is then discussed* in relation to *conceptualizations of treatment goals and intervention* in dance/movement therapy.

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